



Skills and Development Policy

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Overview

In line with our Vision and Values Transport for the North (TfN) wants to ensure that the appropriate support and investment in learning and development is available for employees to be the best that they can be. 'Making a difference' and being 'driven to succeed' are key values and behaviours that require energy, drive and passion to innovate and continuously improve. TfN values the contribution all employees make to achieving our vision and will provide appropriate learning interventions as an enabler to personal and organisational success.

1. Introduction

The development of all our employees is central to the success and achievement of Transport for the North's (TfN)'s Vision and strategies. We recognise that success will only be achieved by releasing and realising employees' potential.

TfN's learning processes aim to ensure that those who have identified gaps in knowledge, skills or behavioural application receive the right experiences and development required to perform and progress.

TfN will define learning and development requirements and provide necessary interventions to build competence and capability to ensure employees become responsible for their own development.

TfN is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity. No employee will be excluded from learning and development on the grounds of gender, age, marital status, disability, racial grounds, sexual orientation, religion, belief or any other protected characteristic, responsibility for dependents, trade union membership or employment status.

Learning and development is a self-directed, employee-led, work-based process leading to increased competence and flexibility.

1.1 Aims

The main aims of this policy are to:

- support and aid the delivery of strategic objectives through the development of employees
- provide and demonstrate a fair, equitable and consistent framework and commitment to continued professional development
- ensure employees take responsibility for their own learning and development by providing the necessary resources and tools
- enable employees to broaden, deepen, further enhance and utilise behaviours, knowledge and skills.

1.2 Methods of Learning

A learning 'intervention' can be defined as any event that is undertaken to initiate learning to take place such as courses, coaching, reading etc. Employees, with their Line Manager, should include all methods such as this in their Personal Development Plan/review as part of the Annual Appraisal Process.

1.3 Systems and Tools

To focus learning and development on the achievement of objectives and to meet personal development needs systems and tools have been introduced to ensure efficient and cost-effective delivery.

Employees are required to take part in the Annual Appraisal Process that:

- Provides an opportunity for two-way discussion around previous performance and development against objectives and targets
- Link TfN's strategic aims through the Integrated Planning Process to individual objectives, targets and development
- Assesses employee competence, using role profiles set against best practice behaviours and skills, these link to our organisational values that aid in the identification of development to support performance
- Develops a Personal Development Plan to support employees in meeting the required level of competence and support their talent for future career opportunities.

Line Managers in dialogue with employees are primarily responsible for defining and ensuring fit for purpose learning interventions are identified for their employees. TfN's HR & Skills Team will aid Line Managers in the identification of suitable learning and development interventions and offer professional guidance on how to ensure all such interventions meet individual, team and organisational needs.

TfN's Online LEARN system containing bespoke and off the shelf material in the Learning Management System and e-learning platform (LinkedIn Learning) offer an alternative and complementary option for employees to obtain the skills and knowledge they require to perform effectively. These tools offer a personalised e-learning dashboard and library with unlimited access 24 hours a day with the ability to monitor your progress therefore allowing employees to take control of their own learning and development. Any additional training, e.g. 'on the job' with buddies, mentors or coaches can also be captured through the dashboard and added to the learner's profile.

As a further complementary learning tool TfN also has a number of 'kindle' devices pre-loaded with an extensive range of business-related resources which are available for loan from the HR & Skills Team.

1.4 Application Process

All learning and development undertaken must be linked to the employees Personal Development Plan.

The process for applying for learning and development interventions is contained within **Annex A**.

1.5 Financial Considerations

The Head of HR will allocate, through the annual integrated planning process, a central learning and development budget based on strategic priorities. Funding and study leave guidance is contained at Annex B.

1.6 Responsibility & Authority

Employees are required to drive their Personal Development Plan through participating positively in performance reviews; identify opportunities for self-development; attend booked interventions; record their development; evaluate their development; participate in lifelong learning and share their learning back into the organisation. In business areas where Apprentices are employed it is particularly important that knowledge sharing takes place to support their ongoing development journey through knowledge acquisition.

Line Managers are responsible for reviewing employees at regular intervals through the Annual Appraisal Process; support the development of Personal Development Plans; provide equality of access to development; evaluate learning and development; monitor the increase in skills and the effectiveness of their application. Appraisal Reviews and PDPs should be recorded appropriately in TfN's on-line PERFORM system.

The HR & Skills Team supported by relevant Heads of Service are responsible for collating respective business area training plans; monitoring progress on delivery; ensuring there is a robust process in place for authorising applications for learning and development.

Operating Board Members are responsible for signing off their directorate training plans; monitoring progress on delivery; informing the Head of HR of corporate or departmental generic development requirements prior to the commencement of the annual integrated planning process.

The Head of HR is responsible for liaising with Operating Board Members to meet organisational learning and development needs; developing learning and development strategies, processes and interventions that meet the strategic aims of the TfN; providing support to Line Managers through the HR & Skills Team; supporting the delivery of the Performance Management process; delivering, monitoring and reporting back performance against the Corporate Training Plan.

1.7 Conclusion

The Skills and Development Policy provides guidance, advice and procedure to ensure employees' and Line Managers' work together collectively to facilitate learning and development that will meet the aims and objectives of the organisation whilst balancing this with the individual need of self-fulfillment and advancement.

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to respond to organisational change.

Annex A. Study support and Application Process

Definition: Study support represents an opportunity for additional learning and development, beyond job related training, e.g. supporting the aspirations of high performance within the current job role and potential career progression.

Interventions are sourced by the employee externally through Higher Education Route or aligned to Professional Institutions/bodies relating to the core skills set for the role. A clear business case and return on investment must be evidenced. Learnings must be transferable into business following the investment from the Training Budget. This process outlines conditions for supporting applications.

All employees to:

- Make themselves aware of and adhere to the Skills and Development Policy and positively participate in the Appraisal/Performance Review Process
- Identify the cost of training and any additional fees and expenses. This should be identified at the time of request through the completion of a Personal Development Plan (PDP) (only costs indicated on the PDP can be claimed unless prior written authorisation is obtained from the Head of HR)
- Ensure the development intervention has been approved by their Line Manager and HR & Skills Team prior to attending
- Complete an evaluation form after any period of development and return to the HR & Skills Team
- Claim authorised expenses related to the development within one month of each singular event taking place
- Inform their Line Manager and the HR & Skills Team of the intention to withdraw from development – note fees may be recharged to the employee

Employees undertaking (non-mandatory) training to obtain a professional qualification ("the Training Course") (other than to support organisational statutory compliance) will be required to repay a stipulated proportion of the fees ("the Costs") associated with such training courses (dependent on personal circumstances) as follows:

- If the Employee ceases employment before they attend the Training Course, but TfN has already incurred liability for the Costs, **75 per cent** of the Costs or such proportion of the Costs that TfN cannot recover from the course provider shall be repaid up to this amount
- If the Employee ceases employment during the training course or within 6 months of completing the course, **75 per cent** of the Costs shall be repaid
- If the Employee ceases employment more than 6 months but no more than 12 months after completion of the training course, **50 per cent** of the Costs shall be repaid
- If the Employee ceases employment more than 12 months but no more than 18 months after completion of the training course, **25 per cent** of the Costs shall be repaid

The Employee shall not be required to repay any of the Costs as set out above in the following personal circumstances:

- TfN is entitled to and did terminate the Employee's employment summarily following completion of the relevant TfN procedure(s); or
- TfN is entitled to and did terminate the Employee's employment due to competence (unsatisfactory performance) or capability (ill health) following completion of the relevant TfN procedure(s); or
- TfN is entitled to and did terminate the Employee's employment by way of redundancy following completion of the relevant TfN procedure(s); or
- The Employee retires from all paid work due to ill health (and where applicable qualifies for the early release of their pension in accordance with the relevant LGPS regulations/rules); or
- The Employee becomes a full-time carer and has to stop all paid work entirely to provide full-time carer support; or
- Any other similar significant life-changing personal circumstances to those set-out above as determined and agreed by TfN's Chief Executive on a case-by-case basis.

Line Managers to:

- Define and source all learning and development interventions identified for each of their employees and ensure the required Personal Development Plan (PDP) is submitted to the HR & Skills Team. Reasons for non-approval to be put in writing and returned to the applicant and a copy sent to the HR & Skills Team
- Ensure departmental/team needs are met whilst employees are away from their duties on development
- Ensure they and their employees are aware of all elements of the Skills and Development Policy. Particular attention should be brought to the clause relating to repayment of fees if the development carries a recognised qualification
- Carry out an evaluation following an intervention linking it with the employee's performance review and PDP
- Monitor development requests and ensure records are kept of all development undertaken.

HR & Skills Team to:

- Administer the booking of Learning and Development interventions based on the information submitted via the Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Obtain final authorisation from the Head of HR to applications submitted
- Ensure procurement processes are adhered to with appropriate documentation raised and approvals obtained
- Provide confirmation to the employee and Line Manager that the intervention is booked
- For interventions which carry a professional qualification, ensuring line managers and employees are aware of TfN's repayment of fees policy and that a learning agreement between TfN and the employee is in place
- Provide monitoring information on learning and development interventions and evaluations carried out to managers, OBT and SMT as required
- Ensure records are kept of all development undertaken.

Annex B. Funding and Leave Guidance

TfN's Investment in Skills and Development must provide a return on investment through the increased performance and movement towards its strategic objectives.

Funding Principles:

- All development applied for must be identified and approved in the Personal Development Plan
- All costs (fees, expenses and subsistence) **MUST** be agreed and signed off before the commencement of development using the current Training Request Form obtained from the intranet
- Any Textbooks recommended for development must be procured through the HR & Skills Team
- Expenses will be reimbursed in line with TfN's standard conditions relating to travel and subsistence

Fees Entitlement:

- The majority of budget allocated to learning and development will be allocated to those interventions that progress TfN towards reaching its strategic objectives. In these instances, the organisation will cover development fees
- The organisation does recognise the importance of personal career development but believes this should be a partnership arrangement between TfN and the employee
- Professional qualifications will be subject to an individual learner agreement and will require the employee to invest towards their own fees unless they have been assessed for and are studying as part of an agreed structured organisational development programme such as leadership, high potential, succession etc. Contact the HR & Skills Team for more details.

Development Leave:

National guidance for study leave is applicable to all development approvals, this list is a guide and not exhaustive contact the HR & Skills Team for further clarification.

Course	Study Leave Quota per annum unless specified differently
40 credit course	Up to 20 taught study days or equivalent for distance learning
30 credit course	Up to 15 taught study days or equivalent for distance learning

20 credit course	Up to 10 taught study days or equivalent for distance learning
10 credit course	Up to 5 taught study days or equivalent for distance learning
Programmes of study requiring minimal attendance (including masters, Degrees, Diplomas, top up or open learning courses)	Taught study days plus up to 6 hours per month (pro – rata for part time)
Master's Level	Flexible learning where possible to be agreed by line manager to a maximum of 50%
Doctorate	Flexible learning where possible to be agreed by line manager to a maximum of 50%
Examinations – if an employee fails and exam they can repeat this allowance once. Following this further resits must be undertaken in their own time.	½ day revision per exam ½ day to carry out examination
Conference (delegate)	Leave allowed
Conference (presentation)	Leave allowed
Short courses (up to 5 days attendance)	Taught study day(s)/session(s)
E - learning	Number of protected hours as per course guidance
NVQ's (external)	Off the job training days to secure underpinning knowledge- a maximum of up to 20 days or flexible working where possible

info@transportforthenorth.com
0161 244 0888

Transport for the North
Level 6, Town Hall Extension,
Lloyd Street
Manchester
M2 5DB