



Provanhall Housing Association Limited

POLICY

Learning & Development Policy

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DRAFTED	APPROVED	NEXT REVIEW
May 2025	May 2025	May 2028

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1. Introduction

One of our strategic objectives is to be an employer of choice. The opportunity to learn and develop is an essential part of the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of our most valuable asset, our people.

Learning and development is an integral part of our strategic planning and we will support employees to make the most effective use of their talent, skills and abilities to achieve our strategic objectives.

We are committed to developing our employees to support professional and personal development and build capabilities across the organisation to meet the current and future needs of our customers.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

In line with our commitment to diversity and inclusion, this policy can be made available in a variety of formats, including large print, translated into another language or media. Reasonable adjustments will also be made to assist individuals who have a disability.

2. General Principles

This policy applies to all employees; it is not intended to be prescriptive and will be flexible to meet the changing requirements of the business.

Learning and development opportunities will be delivered using a variety of methods including:

- On the job learning
- Job shadowing
- Coaching and mentoring
- Knowledge sharing sessions
- Courses, formal training programmes and training workshops
- Using our e-learning platform
- Webinars and attending conferences

Our Performance Management process is a key tool in identifying and addressing skill gaps, building leadership skills and promoting the desired behaviours within Provanhall Housing Association (PHA). Learning and Development is a key component of this process ensuring learning opportunities are available to:

- Support employees to have the skills, knowledge and capability in their current role to support PHA's strategic objectives
- Encourage employees to learn additional skills so they can develop their current role and move around PHA
- Support employees to work toward a new role with different or increased responsibilities

Our Learning and Development offering incorporates the statutory right for employees to ask for time off to undertake training that leads to a qualification or helps to develop their skills relevant to their job. Managers must adhere to the mandatory statutory timescales when considering requests.

When considering requests for learning and development opportunities we will evaluate the benefit of this for the individual and organisation whilst giving due diligence to the cost implications for the business.

Employees are responsible for ensuring their professional knowledge and any necessary professional registrations are kept up to date.

We will endeavour, where possible, to ensure that our internal office based learning and development events are also available to access remotely so long as this does not unduly compromise the quality of the training.

All requests for learning and development opportunities and any associated time off work will be recorded centrally to ensure the decisions taken are fair and consistent for all employees across PHA.

3. Induction

Corporate

All new employees should attend a corporate induction and managers must ensure that employees are given time to attend.

Departmental

All new employees will have an initial training programme from the first day of their employment that will support them to settle into their new role and perform their duties effectively. Along with the training plan, the employee will work with their manager to complete the new starter induction checklist which outlines the key areas to be covered by the manager on the employee's first day, first week within three months.

Role Specific

The training programme will be tailored to the employee's role and the manager will meet with the employee on a regular basis to discuss their progress and identify any training required.

New Role Or Return To Role

Where an employee has been away from their role for a period of time or moves to another role within the organisation, a further induction will be agreed between the employee and their new manager to ensure they have a full understanding of the role and are aware of any changes to the role, department or working practices.

Employees are required to complete all mandatory organisational training within three months of starting with PHA.

Managers are encouraged to assign a buddy to provide informal support and guidance to a new employee from their first day of employment.

4. Probationary Period

All new employees will have a probationary period, normally this will be for an initial three month period but this may be shorter where an employee has a short-term contract. The manager will meet with the employee prior to the end of their probationary period to discuss their progress and advise the employee of the outcome of this assessment. There are three possible outcomes - a probationary period can be:

- Signed off as successful where the employee has achieved the required level of performance and behaviours.
- Extended for up to a further three months where there are minor areas of concern and the additional time given would allow the employee to achieve the required level of performance and behaviours.
- Ended where there are serious concerns in relation to an employee's performance, attendance or conduct. The decision to end the probationary period will be in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy and Guidelines.

5. Performance Management

Performance Management is the activity and set of processes that aim to maintain and improve employee performance in line with our objectives, it ensures that our employees contribute positively to our strategic and operational objectives. Performance Management is an equal and continuous measure of achieving objectives and displaying the desired behaviours linked to our company CARES values.

Our Performance Management process is a two-way process between an employee and their manager involving regular discussion and the provision of open and supportive feedback. It is a key tool in Talent Management and Succession Planning ensuring that we:

- Identify and provide development opportunities for our employees
- Help to create a high performing workforce and workplace
- Attract, support and retain a diverse workforce
- Encourage continuous learning and improvement
- Contribute to our strategic objective of being an Employer of Choice

Where an employee's performance falls below the expected standard, they will normally be placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). A PIP is a tool to help manage underperformance, it is a formal document that details performance concerns, agrees actions to address these and confirms the expected timescales for improvement.

6. Personal Development Plans

Employees are required to have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to support career and development discussions with their Manager and guide them to reach their short-term and long-term career and development goals.

7. Organisational Training

We will develop an annual training programme offering a range of training for all employees. The programme will incorporate our strategic objectives, corporate policies, health and wellbeing, health and safety and training requested from managers and employees.

8. Management Development Programme

We will seek to provide structured development activities through 121 coaching with the Director and external coaching opportunities to develop further skills to be a more effective manager.

9. Professional & Educational Qualifications

We will support employees to improve their skills and knowledge relevant to their current job and future career development plan. This support may include full or part payment of fees, flexible working, unpaid leave or any other additional support identified by the employee or their manager.

Requests will be considered on their own merit and we will take into account the relevance of the proposed course, the approved eligibility criteria (qualifications matrix), any budgetary implications and any relevant talent management and/or succession plans.

The identification and agreement to undertake a course should be a regular part of the employee's performance management discussion and must be confirmed in their performance management objectives with progress discussed at reviews and within their personal development plan.

Where we pay for an employee to undertake a course of study they will be required to sign a Learning Agreement. We reserve the right to recover all or part of the cost should the employee leave our employment within a set timescale after successfully completing the course.

Where we have been able to attract financial support or grants from a third party to fund the course either in full or in part, we would not seek to recoup those unless there is a requirement for PHA to repay them.

Employees will not be required to repay any costs if we end their employment, except where it is as a result of under-performance, misconduct or unacceptable level of absence.

We will pay for one examination re-sit. We reserve the right to withdraw funding and expect repayment where an employee fails to pass exams or assessments. We may, at the discretion of the Head of Service/Departmental Manager, pay for any books required as part of the course of study. The books will remain the property of PHA.

Following completion of the qualification, the employee will complete an evaluation of the course which will be reviewed by management to assess the value of the course for future staff training purposes.

Where an employee attends an external training event they will be encouraged to share their learnings with their colleagues to maximise the benefit of this investment for their team. This may include sharing learning resources such as papers or presentations and/or running an internal session for colleagues to share learning. Managers are responsible for advising the HR Team prior to the commencement of the course that a Learning Agreement is required to be put in place.

10. Time Off To Attend Training Events Outwith Working Hours

Where a training event involves an employee attending during days or hours they would not usually work, their line manager will adjust their working hours for the week. If this cannot be done the employee will be paid or granted TOIL for the extra hours.

If an employee attends a training event on a public holiday, they will be paid overtime in accordance with their contract of employment.

12. Travel, Subsistence & Accommodation Expenses

Employees will be entitled to claim for reasonable travel expenses to attend training events. Travel costs must be pre-approved by their manager and claimed for as per the standard expense claim procedure.

Where a training event requires travel out with the normal working hours the employee may claim TOIL and/or attendance at training, no TOIL or pay will be given for time away from home outside normal working hours.

Where a training event requires accommodation expenses these must be pre-approved by their manager and booked by PHA unless this is provided as part of the course booking.

All travel, subsistence and accommodation arrangements must be in line with our Benefits, Payments and Entitlements Policy.

13. Study & Exam Leave

Employees can apply for paid time off to study or sit exams for up to a maximum of 3 days in any 12 month period. All leave must be pre-approved by the employee's manager.

Where a specific programme requires a set period of study leave per week (e.g. graduate apprenticeships), managers are expected to honour those agreements unless there are exceptional business reasons for being unable to do so. If the employee cannot be given set study leave, they should agree with their manager when this study time will be taken.

Managers must record any paid time off taken by an employee to allow them to study or sit exams.

14. Cancelling Attendance At A Training Event, Withdrawing From A Course Or Requesting to Defer A Course

Where an employee wishes to cancel their attendance at an internal or external training event, this should be discussed with their manager prior to advising the HR Team/internal trainer or external training provider.

Where an employee wishes to defer the attendance of their training event/or completion of a course, the employee must follow the training or programme provider's guidance and requirements. No deferral should be confirmed until the employee has discussed this with their manager who will take into account the financial and any work-related implications of this action.

The employee will be responsible for any expenses or financial losses incurred as a result of not following the provider's guidance or requirement when withdrawing from or deferring a training event/or completion of a course.

Managers must advise the HR Team where an employee cancels a training event or withdraws from a course.

15. Failure To Complete A Course Or Unsatisfactory Progress

Where an employee fails to complete a course of study within the required timescale or makes unsatisfactory progress (e.g. fails to attend or submit the required work)

and there is no reasonable explanation for this, the employee will be required to repay 100% of the costs of the course.

Managers must advise the HR Team where an employee fails to complete a course of study and confirm details of the repayment plan.

16. Professional Subscriptions

We may pay professional subscriptions if:

- You are a permanent member of staff (limited to one relevant professional subscription).
- Student membership is a requirement of a course being funded by us.
- Membership of a professional body will be an advantage to your work with us.

17. Evaluation

All employees who attend a training course or learning event should provide feedback by evaluating the training/learning event. We will use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of the event, to ensure it provides a good return on the investment made and to improve future events.

18. Training Records

Managers are responsible for ensuring the Corporate Services Officer is advised of all training attended by the employees.

Training records will be retained electronically on the HR system.

19. Monitoring and Review

We will maintain records as required and in accordance with data protection legislation.

This policy will be reviewed 5 years from the date of implementation or latest review, which will be the date the policy is approved by the governing body, or earlier if deemed appropriate. In the event the policy is not reviewed within the above timescales, the latest approved policy will continue to apply.