

# Learning and Development Policy



Sandwell  
Metropolitan Borough Council

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| Purpose        | <i>This policy outlines the framework, standards and responsibilities relating to learning and development within the Place Directorate. It sets out how Sandwell Council will identify, deliver and monitor development activity to ensure employees maintain the knowledge, skills and professional competence required to meet regulatory requirements, organisational standards and service priorities.</i> |                 |                   |

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that all employees delivering housing landlord services have the knowledge, skills, behaviours and professional competence required to deliver safe, high-quality and resident-focused housing services.
- 1.2 We recognise that the competence and conduct of our workforce directly impacts the safety, experience and outcomes of our tenants and leaseholders. This policy provides clear assurance to residents that Sandwell Council is committed to meeting, and continuously improving against, the [Competency and Conduct Standards](#) set by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 1.3 By reinforcing workforce competence, accountability, and professional standards, we aim to deliver consistent, high-quality services and foster tenant confidence, with improved regulatory judgements being a natural outcome of these practices.
- 1.4 This policy supports strong governance and effective oversight by ensuring that decision-makers receive appropriate information and professional advice, and that members and officers have the skills, knowledge and capability required to deliver safe, high-quality housing services and manage risk effectively.
- 1.5 Sandwell Council will ensure that officers have the necessary competence to undertake their roles effectively, that objectives are set and performance appraised annually, and that continuous professional development is maintained.
- 1.6 This policy aligns with the Council's Code of Conduct and reinforces the expectation that all Council employees delivering housing services act with integrity, professionalism, accountability and respect.
- 1.7 Our aims are to:
  - Ensure employees are competent to meet statutory, regulatory and professional requirements;
  - Provide assurance to tenants and leaseholders that services are delivered by competent, qualified and professional staff;

- Embed corporate values and behaviours across all services delivered to tenants and leaseholders;
- Support workforce planning and succession planning;
- Provide fair and inclusive access to development opportunities;
- Enable staff to achieve their career aspirations while supporting service sustainability;
- Ensure tenants have meaningful influence over competence standards;
- Support compliance with the Competency and Conduct Standards;
- Drive continuous improvement to be an excellent landlord.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees working across services delivered to tenants and leaseholders of Sandwell Council.
- 2.2 The policy covers corporate, organisational, statutory, professional and service-specific learning and development activities.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all staff responsible for identifying and supporting development needs, and to the Learning and Development (L&D) Team responsible for coordinating and monitoring provision.
- 2.4 The policy complements existing corporate training policies, the Code of Conduct, the Equality and Diversity Framework, and performance management procedures.

## **3. What is Learning and Development to Sandwell Council?**

- 3.1 Learning and development at Sandwell Council refers to the structured and continuous process of ensuring that employees delivering housing landlord services have the appropriate knowledge, skills, behaviours and professional competence required to perform their roles effectively. It includes mandatory training, statutory and compliance learning, professional qualifications, leadership development, and service-specific training.

- 3.2 Learning and development may be delivered through a range of methods, including e-learning, face-to-face sessions, virtual workshops, coaching, mentoring, and accredited professional programmes.
- 3.3 Learning and development is both an organisational responsibility and an individual responsibility. Sandwell Council will identify, prioritise and provide access to development opportunities that support service delivery, regulatory compliance and workforce sustainability.
- 3.4 By engaging in learning and development activities, employees are expected to actively participate, apply learning in practice, and maintain the standards of competence required for their role. Continuous professional development is an ongoing requirement, particularly where roles are subject to regulatory, statutory or professional standards.
- 3.5 Learning and development at Sandwell Council refers to the structured and continuous process of ensuring that employees within the Place Directorate have the appropriate knowledge, skills, behaviours and professional competence required to perform their roles effectively and safely.
- 3.6 It includes mandatory training, statutory and compliance learning, professional qualifications, leadership development, and service-specific training.
- 3.7 Learning and development may be delivered through a range of methods, including e-learning, face-to-face sessions, virtual workshops, coaching, mentoring, and accredited professional programmes.
- 3.8 Learning and development is both an organisational and an individual responsibility. Sandwell Council will identify, prioritise and provide access to development opportunities that support service delivery, regulatory compliance and workforce sustainability.

3.9 Employees are expected to actively engage in learning, apply learning in practice, and maintain the standards of competence required for their role. Continuous professional development is an ongoing requirement, particularly where roles are subject to regulatory, statutory or professional standards.

3.10 All learning and development activity is underpinned by the ST\*R Practice Model, ensuring that development is strengths-based, trauma-informed and relationship-centred.

## 4. Policy Statement

4.1 Sandwell Council is responsible for:

- Developing a Workforce Development Strategy for Housing Services;
- Identifying current workforce skills, knowledge and behavioural gaps;
- Embedding corporate values and behaviours;
- Ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements;
- Supporting continuous professional development (CPD);
- Ensuring tenants have meaningful influence over competence expectations;
- Aligning development with the Council's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring roles have clearly defined competency and qualification requirements;
- Monitoring and reporting compliance with Competency and Conduct Standards;
- Embedding the ST\*R Practice Model across all learning and development activity.

### 4.2 Identifying Learning and Development Needs

Learning and development needs are identified through two primary routes:

#### **Organisational Development Level**

A Workforce Development Strategy will outline:

- Current workforce profile and skills analysis;
- Identified gaps in knowledge, competence and behaviours;
- Future skills required for a sustainable Housing service;
- Employee engagement considerations;
- An action plan addressing identified gaps.

### **Annual Review Process**

All employees will have annual and six-monthly performance reviews. Quality assurance and performance management frameworks are used to identify training needs, improve workforce competence, and enhance service quality and productivity.

This will include:

- A coaching-style conversation between line manager and employee;
- Discussion of business priorities;
- Identification of development needs;
- Succession planning considerations;
- Personal career aspirations.

Following annual reviews, the Learning and Development Team will meet with service managers to prioritise development needs in line with budget and business requirements.

All discussions and development planning will reflect the ST\*R Practice Model.

## **4.3 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Line Managers**

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Identifying development needs aligned to business priorities;
- Ensuring employees meet required competency standards for their role;
- Supporting employees to achieve required qualifications within agreed timescales;

- Ensuring employees are given time to attend learning activities within working hours unless otherwise agreed;
- Monitoring the impact of development on service delivery;
- Completing post-learning evaluations linked to performance;
- Addressing underperformance in line with the Council's performance management procedures.

### **Employees**

Employees are responsible for:

- Taking ownership of their professional development;
- Raising development needs during one-to-one discussions;
- Attending scheduled training or completing required learning;
- Informing L&D if unable to attend and rescheduling;
- Applying learning in practice and maintaining professional competence.

### **Learning & Development Team**

The L&D Team is responsible for:

- Consulting with Senior Managers and Line Managers;
- Aligning development provision to business needs;
- Managing and profiling the Housing L&D budget;
- Prioritising, scheduling and coordinating training;
- Providing performance dashboards to service areas;
- Evaluating training effectiveness;
- Supporting compliance monitoring;
- Monitoring workforce competence and qualification requirements;
- Reporting risks and gaps to senior leadership.

## **4.4 Learning and Development Programme**

The Place Directorate development programme includes:

### **Corporate Compulsory Learning**

All employees must complete mandatory corporate training, including:

- Fire Safety
- Safeguarding Level 1

- Prevent
- Cyber Security
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Corporate Parenting

### **Organisational-Level Development**

Priority programmes may include:

- Leadership Development
- Management Development
- Performance Management
- Customer Service Excellence
- Digital Skills
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Employee Well-being
- Health & Safety

### **Compliance & Statutory Training**

This includes specialist technical training required to maintain professional competence, such as:

- Health & Safety certifications
- Trade-specific qualifications (e.g. electrical, gas safety)
- Safeguarding training
- Regulatory compliance training

### **Service Area Specific Development**

Policy training will be designed and delivered to reflect the responsibilities and day-to-day activities within each service area, helping staff understand how policies apply directly to their specific roles and service environment.

In addition, targeted training programmes will be developed to address the distinct operational requirements of each service area, including Local Housing Teams, Repairs, Electrical, and Gas services, ensuring all Housing Services are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to perform effectively within their specialist functions.

## 4.5 Professional Qualifications

Sandwell Council will ensure that employees in housing-related roles hold, or are working towards, qualifications appropriate to their role in line with regulatory expectations.

Minimum expectations include:

- **Frontline housing roles** (e.g., Housing Officers and equivalent positions): CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice, or equivalent.
- **Senior Housing Officers, Team Leaders, and Managers:** CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing, or equivalent.
- **Senior Managers and Strategic Leads:** CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing, or equivalent.
- **Specialist and Technical Roles:** Relevant statutory, technical, or professional qualifications aligned to the specific discipline.

New appointments to roles subject to qualification requirements will be expected to achieve these within an agreed timeframe.

Qualification support may be provided through apprenticeship routes or sponsorship, subject to business need, funding availability and performance standards.

Compliance with qualification requirements will be monitored and reported through workforce and governance arrangements.

## 4.6 Delivery of Development

Learning is delivered through a blended approach, including e-learning, virtual sessions, face-to-face training, external programmes, and coaching and mentoring.

Learning is a mix of structured and self-directed activities, designed to help colleagues provide the best possible service to tenants and residents. Wherever possible, learning takes place during working hours, with managers supporting staff to have the time and capacity to complete essential training and development.

## 4.7 Coaching and Mentoring

Sandwell Council supports coaching and mentoring as key development tools. Employees may access internal or external coaching, subject to agreement and defined development outcomes.

## 4.8 Evaluation of Development

Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that learning and development activity delivers measurable improvements in employee performance and service outcomes for tenants.

All training and development activity will be evaluated at multiple stages to assess effectiveness and impact. This will include:

- Immediate feedback following training to assess quality and relevance;
- Follow-up evaluation for key programmes to assess longer-term impact;
- Line manager assessment of how learning has been applied in practice;
- Consideration of service performance indicators and tenant outcomes.

Evaluation findings will be used to inform future commissioning of training, improve the quality of provision, and ensure value for money.

The Learning and Development Team will use evaluation data to identify trends, gaps and areas for improvement, and will report these through appropriate governance arrangements.

## 4.9 Driving High Performance

Sandwell Council is committed to supporting employees to achieve and maintain the required standards of performance and competence in their roles.

Where performance concerns arise, managers will take a supportive and structured approach, including:

- Providing clear and constructive feedback;
- Identifying specific areas for improvement;
- Agreeing achievable improvement objectives;
- Providing access to appropriate learning, coaching or mentoring;
- Monitoring progress within agreed timescales.

This approach will reflect the ST\*R Practice Model, ensuring that support is strengths-based, trauma-informed and relationship-focused.

Where performance does not improve despite appropriate support, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Council's capability and disciplinary procedures.

#### **4.10 Inclusive Access**

Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that all employees have fair and equitable access to learning and development opportunities.

We will:

- Provide equal opportunity for all employees to access development;
- Ensure no discrimination based on protected characteristics;
- Make reasonable adjustments where required;
- Monitor participation rates to identify and address inequalities;
- Offer flexible and accessible methods of learning delivery;
- Ensure access for employees across different contract types where applicable.

This approach ensures that workforce development is inclusive, supports diversity, and enables all employees to reach their potential.

## **5. Development of Policy**

- 5.1 Sandwell Council recognises that the competence and conduct of its workforce has a direct impact on the safety, quality and consistency of services delivered to tenants and leaseholders.
- 5.2 This policy has been developed in consultation with Housing senior leaders, service managers and the Learning and Development Team to ensure it reflects operational requirements, workforce priorities and regulatory expectations.
- 5.3 We are committed to ensuring that tenants and residents have meaningful influence over how competence is defined, developed and maintained.
- 5.4 Residents will be given opportunities to contribute to the development and review of this policy through:
- Consultation exercises;
  - Tenant panels and forums;
  - Feedback linked to service delivery and performance outcomes.
- 5.5 This policy provides assurance that tenant experience, safety and trust are central to how Sandwell Council develops and maintains workforce competence.

## 6. Related Documents

- 6.1 This section should reference other key documents that must be read in conjunction with this policy.
- [Sandwell Council Officers Code of Conduct](#)
  - Sandwell Council Housing Code of Conduct (draft)
  - [Tenant Engagement Strategy](#)
  - [Vision 2030](#)
  - [Sandwell Skills and Employment Strategy](#)
  - Performance Management Policy
  - [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#)
  - Workforce Development Strategy (link needed)
  - Capability and Disciplinary Procedures
  - [Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards](#)

## **7. Legal Framework**

- 7.1 This policy supports compliance with the following legislation and regulatory requirements:
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
  - Regulatory Standards issued by the Regulator of Social Housing
- 7.2 The policy also supports compliance with the Competency and Conduct Standards, ensuring that employees have the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours required to deliver safe and effective housing services.
- 7.3 Progress against these requirements will contribute to improving the Council's Regulatory Judgements and strengthening assurance to tenants, residents and stakeholders.

## **8. Equality and Diversity**

- 8.1 Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that all employees within the Place Directorate have equal and fair access to learning and development opportunities. We will take into account the individual needs of employees, including any personal circumstances or protected characteristics, and make reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure equitable access to training, professional qualifications and career development.
- 8.2 The Council will treat all employees fairly, with dignity and respect, in relation to learning, progression and professional development opportunities.
- 8.3 All managers and employees are expected to understand and uphold Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles in the delivery and participation of learning and development. Mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is monitored by the Learning and Development Team to ensure compliance.

8.4 Our approach ensures that learning provision and workforce development arrangements meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and reflect the Council's wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework.

#### 8.5 **ST\*R Model**

Sandwell Council is committed to providing a supportive, inclusive and psychologically safe learning environment for all employees. To guide this approach, we apply the ST\*R practice model, which is based on three key principles:

- **Strengths-Based Approach** – We recognise that every employee brings unique skills, experience and potential. Learning and development focuses on building on these strengths, supporting individuals to grow and maximise their contribution to the organisation.
- **Trauma-Informed Approach** – We understand that individuals may experience personal or professional challenges that impact their learning or performance. Managers and facilitators are expected to provide support in a sensitive, respectful and appropriate manner, creating safe environments for learning and development.
- **Relationship-Based Approach** – Positive, respectful relationships between managers and employees are central to effective development. We encourage open dialogue, coaching-style conversations and ongoing feedback to support continuous improvement.

By applying the ST\*R model, Sandwell Council ensures that learning and development is not only technically robust, but also supportive, inclusive and aligned with our values.

#### 8.6 **Reasonable Adjustments**

Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that disabled employees and those with additional needs are not disadvantaged in accessing learning and development opportunities. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken where appropriate to ensure that policies and practices do not create unintended barriers.

There is no prescribed list of reasonable adjustments. Adjustments will depend on the individual's circumstances and will be discussed openly to reach agreement on what is reasonable and proportionate. We will not make assumptions about whether adjustments are required or what form they should take.

Reasonable adjustments may include, for example:

- Providing materials in alternative formats (such as large print or accessible digital versions);
- Adapting training delivery methods;
- Allowing flexible learning arrangements;
- Providing assistive technology or software;
- Adjusting assessment methods where appropriate.

Employees may request reasonable adjustments:

- In person;
- In writing (email, letter, text);
- By telephone;
- Through an agreed representative;
- Or a manager may suggest an adjustment where this would support the employee.

All discussions will be handled sensitively and confidentially, on a case-by-case basis. Where a requested adjustment cannot reasonably be accommodated, the reasons will be clearly explained.

In most cases, agreed adjustments will be implemented without unnecessary delay.

For more information, please refer to Sandwell's [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#).

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

- 9.1 The policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains compliant with legislation, regulatory standards and best practice,

and continues to reflect organisational risk, workforce needs and tenant priorities.

## 10. Policy Document Version Control

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Updated By</b>       | <b>Approved By</b> |
|----------------|-------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 0.1            | 19/02/2026  | Initial draft produced by Louis Bebb and Louise Judge.   | Louis Bebb/Louise Judge | N/A                |
| 0.2            | 25/02/2026  | Amendments made to directorate terminology and section added around policy training.             | Louis Bebb/Louise Judge | N/A                |
| 0.3            | 23/03/2026  | Amendments made to policy following feedback from Joint Housing and Asset Management colleagues. | Louis Bebb              | N/A                |
| 0.4            | 02/04/2026  | Amendments made to policy wording following feedback from Nigel Collumbell                       | Louis Bebb              | N/A                |