

Learning and Development Policy

People Services

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1. Purpose

Riverside recognises learning and development as an essential part of delivering safe, effective and high-quality services. This policy sets out Riverside's approach to learning and development, including the responsibilities of colleagues, managers and Riverside in supporting continuous learning, maintaining role competence and upholding professional standards.

In addition some roles are subject to specific professional regulatory or statutory requirements, and colleagues in these roles must meet the learning, development and competency standards relevant to their profession or area of practice.

It also explains Riverside's learning frameworks, development routes and the support available to help colleagues build the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for their current and future roles.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all colleagues within Riverside. Where specific requirements apply only to particular roles, this is stated in the relevant section. This includes applicable roles where colleagues deliver services to tenants or have a direct or indirect impact on tenant safety, service quality or regulatory compliance. These roles are subject to additional competence requirements in line with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing's Competence and Conduct Standard.

Relief workers are required to complete role-specific training and mandatory learning to ensure they can carry out their duties safely and competently. However, as relief workers are not employees of Riverside, the wider provisions of this policy do not apply to them unless explicitly stated.

3. Legislation

The Learning & Development Policy has been written in compliance with all relevant employment, health and safety and social housing legislation. This includes but is not limited to

- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

4. Principles

4.1 Our Approach to Learning

We believe that offering learning opportunities and continually developing skills and capabilities is a core part of having a successful career in Riverside. In turn it allows colleagues and teams to produce improved results, and Riverside to deliver on our corporate strategy. We believe that learning from experiences with your role and supporting conversations are just as important as time spent in a

formal training environment.

Learning from customer experience

Riverside recognises that customer feedback and lived experience are important sources of learning. Learning programmes, professional development priorities and organisational learning plans will be informed by customer feedback, complaints learning, satisfaction data, scrutiny activity, customer insight and regulatory findings. Where appropriate, customers may contribute directly to the design, delivery or review of learning materials so that services reflect customer expectations and experiences.

We ask that:

Colleagues

- Adopt a growth mind-set; seeking opportunities to develop, try new approaches and recognising that skills improve through practice, feedback and effort.
- Complete induction, mandatory training and role essential learning within required timescales to help keep themselves, colleagues and customers safe and supported.
- Take accountability for their learning by participating in regular check-ins, creating and maintaining a personal development plan, acting on feedback and keeping up to date with changes in their role.
- Undertake and successfully complete any professional qualifications required for their role, demonstrating commitment to continuous professional development and maintaining the standards expected within their profession.
- In applicable roles, demonstrate and maintain competence in line with required standards, including completing any required assessments, certifications or qualifications.
- In applicable roles understand how their role and development contribute to customer safety, service quality and regulatory compliance.

Managers

- Help to create an environment and experiences for colleagues to grow and develop in their role e.g. by creating opportunities and time for on job learning, offering feedback and coaching in regular check-ins and by supporting colleagues to create Personal Development Plans to meet current or future aspirations
- Ensure mandatory and role essential learning is on track for their team emphasising the importance of staying compliant and up to date with role specific training requirements
- Ensuring that new starters complete both a Riverside induction a localised induction during their probation period and (for new managers) that they also attend the management induction
- Hold development conversations with their team and supporting their development goals
- Identify applicable roles within their team that require professional qualifications and ensure colleagues in these roles meet enhanced competence, training and development requirements.
- Provide assurance that colleagues in applicable roles are competent in practice, not just that training has been completed.

People Services

- Develop, maintain and periodically review Riverside's learning and development framework,

policies and supporting guidance.

- Provide and communicate mandatory learning, corporate induction programmes and organisational learning opportunities; Ensuring fairness and equality of access to opportunities for all colleagues
- Maintain learning systems, records and reporting to support the monitoring of training, qualifications and compliance requirements.
- Publish mandatory learning requirements and refresher programmes and provide assurance reporting to managers and senior leaders on completion levels.
- Support managers and colleagues by providing advice and guidance on learning and development opportunities, professional qualifications and funding routes.
- Identify and maintain a register of applicable roles that are subject to enhanced competence, qualification or regulatory requirements, working with business areas to review these regularly.
- Monitor compliance with regulatory learning and competence requirements, including those arising from the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Competence and Conduct Standard.
- Facilitate access to professional qualifications, apprenticeships and other development programmes in line with Riverside's learning and development priorities and available funding.
- Analyse organisational learning needs, compliance data and feedback to inform continuous improvement of learning provision.
- Provide regular assurance and management information to senior leaders on learning compliance, professional qualifications, competence requirements and associated organisational risks.

Personal Development Planning

Our People Performance Policy promotes regular personal development check-ins to discuss personal development goals, PDPs, and career aspirations. An annual PDP should be created in one of the first check-ins held in May or June and plans should be revisited and updated regularly.. There is no one size fits all approach to PDP however, things that might be discussed and included in PDPs are:

- Acquiring new skills, knowledge, or behaviours to keep up to date with advances in technology, new projects, processes, or changes in responsibilities or legislation impacting the role.
- Gaining additional skills, knowledge, or behaviours to achieve performance goals
- Learning new skills to provide stretch and keep skills and knowledge up to date with the latest best practice
- Learning and practising new skills to prepare colleagues for their next role
- Closing gaps in performances where someone is new in post, returning to work or where performance has dipped

PDPs are also an opportunity to discuss development within a colleague's role and future aspirations where appropriate. Conversations for each colleague can be different, it is not always about the next promotion, it could be about, specialising in a specific area or topic or taking a complete change of direction. This type of conversation is a discussion about a colleague's aspirations and how managers, or Riverside might support development to help achieve these aspirations.

4.2 Our Learning Frameworks

We understand that colleagues learn in different ways and have varying development needs depending on their aspirations. Our learning framework outlines the opportunities available to colleagues throughout their Riverside careers. Our expectation is that learning time is broken down by 70% in role, 20% coaching and 10% formal learning.

Great Start Induction

To be successful every new starter needs a comprehensive and engaging induction plan that equips them with the skills and knowledge to do their role well, acquaints them with their new colleagues and introduces them to Our Riverside Way Everyday (ORWE), which defines our values and behaviours. Riverside provides the tools, templates, and processes for managers to oversee a colleague's induction training. This includes the provision of mandatory e-learning modules, templates to design bespoke induction plans and processes for conducting check-ins. All new starters are also required to attend Great Start Induction.

In addition, all managers and leaders are expected to attend Management Induction. .

For more information around induction, please refer to our Induction and Probation Policy.

Mandatory Training

Each year People Services will publish a refresher programme of mandatory learning and it is important that colleagues complete this training in the scheduled timeframes and that managers monitor compliance within their team. Where colleagues fail to repeatedly complete mandatory training within the required timescales, and no reasonable justification has been provided, this could result in disciplinary action.

Role Specific Training – Role Essentials

Becoming competent in the core knowledge, skills and behaviours for your role is a priority for all colleagues. Staying current and up to date is equally important.

Some courses or qualifications will require updates and/or re-certification. Certain business areas, have a matrix that covers all essential role specific training rather than just HSE training and all elements need to be kept up to date.

In applicable roles additional expectations apply. These roles may be subject to enhanced training, competence requirements and, where relevant, mandatory professional qualifications in line with regulatory and sector standards.

In particular, Riverside recognises the emphasis on professionalisation within the social housing sector, including guidance from the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and regulatory direction following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. As a result:

- Certain roles may require colleagues to undertake and achieve recognised professional qualifications (e.g. CIH or equivalent) within a defined timeframe
- These qualifications may become a condition of appointment (for new colleagues) or ongoing employment (existing colleagues) where mandated by regulation or Riverside policy

- Colleagues in applicable roles will be expected to maintain their professional knowledge and competence through ongoing development, including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) where relevant

Riverside will support colleagues to meet these requirements through structured learning pathways, access to qualifications and ongoing development opportunities. Managers will ensure that colleagues understand the requirements of their role and are supported to achieve and maintain the necessary standards of competence.

Failure to meet required training or qualification standards may result in further support, review, or formal action, in line with Riverside's performance and people policies.

Personal Growth - Best You

We encourage colleagues to develop themselves beyond the basics and ask managers to actively support them to take time for themselves so they can develop their personal skills and maintain a healthy work-life balance. This enables colleagues to be the best they can be, both inside and outside of work and stands them in good stead for any future potential changes.

Under our 'Best You' offering, colleagues will find a range, of virtual courses, e-learning and resources to focus on themselves, reflect on best practice and develop their performance and careers.

Management Development

Managers are crucial to the development and wellbeing of the team but getting it right every time is not always straightforward. Under our 'Management Hub' offering, managers will find a range of resources, virtual courses, and professional qualifications to either equip them with the basics of management or to push their performance to the next level.

Professional Development

In some roles colleagues will be required to undertake and successfully complete professional qualifications to secure or remain in certain roles. In other instances, colleagues may want to embark on qualifications to gain additional knowledge, demonstrate competence and put themselves in a better position to progress.

In both instances we aim to support colleagues' ambitions to gain and retain professional qualifications subject to the guidance outlined in this policy. Support is also dependant on sufficient budget or monies available in our apprenticeship levy pot.

Professional development is defined as any programme that is offered by any college/university or external training provider, resulting in a qualification or certification being awarded. Professional Development can be accessed via two routes:

1. Apprenticeship route (fully funded through our government levy pot)
2. Professional sponsorship route (funded via Riverside Professional Qualification budget).

Anyone interested in completing a professional qualification regardless of the route should initially discuss it with their manager and then incorporate their intentions into their PDP as well as complete the relevant RIV1 application form which can be found on the Learning & Development RIC Pages.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships offer colleagues the opportunity to gain nationally recognised qualifications while developing their skills in the workplace. Programmes are available across a wide range of subject areas, from Level 2 through to Level 7. Apprenticeships are delivered through a combination of on-the-job learning and dedicated off-the-job training. Time for study should be agreed with managers in advance and scheduled in a way that supports both learning and business needs.

To access funding via the apprenticeship route, colleagues must meet the following criteria as set out by Riverside and the Department of Education:

- Have successfully passed their probationary review
- Have a permanent contract or a contract which exceeds the qualification duration by at least 3 months.
- Not already hold a similar qualification at the same level or duplicate any qualification already achieved.
- Be in a role which satisfies the qualification standards (this will be decided through a skills scan assessment performed by the training provider).
- Spend at least 50% of their working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship

As apprenticeship training is funded through the apprenticeship levy, training costs cannot be recovered from colleagues if they resign or are dismissed. However, the business reserves the right to recover any additional costs that fall outside levy funding, such as professional membership fees or other associated expenses.

For colleagues in Scotland, apprenticeships are administered through Skills Development Scotland and delivered by approved learning providers against the relevant Scottish Apprenticeship framework. Eligibility, funding and programme requirements differ from those in England and will be determined at the point of application. Support will depend on the apprenticeship's relevance to the colleague's role or agreed career development, the availability of an appropriate framework and provider, and operational requirements. The colleague, manager and learning provider will agree the necessary workplace learning, study time, assessment and ongoing support arrangements.

Professional Sponsorship

Professional sponsorship may be available for colleagues who wish to undertake a qualification or development programme that cannot be funded via the Apprenticeship Levy.

Line managers are encouraged to support study requests, however they need to consider their availability to support colleagues, how they will create 'in role' learning opportunities and the impact on current workloads.

To request approval for professional study, colleagues will need to complete and submit a RIV1 application form. This must be endorsed by their line manager and Director/ROM.

Although applications can be made at any point during the year, requests are only reviewed and either approved or declined by People Services once a quarter. Once approved, colleagues will be enrolled on to the next available cohort.

Colleagues applying via the professional sponsorship route must meet the following criteria:

- Be a permanent colleague who has passed their probation period prior to applying
- Provide a clear business case which demonstrates that the development supports them in their current role or is clearly linked to a defined career progression route.
- Ensure the choice of professional study programme will not impact on the needs and requirements of the business and the ability of the individual to adequately perform in their role.

Colleagues can apply for professional sponsorship up to the value of £1,500 per annum for up to a maximum of 3 years. Where sponsorship is provided, colleagues will need to reimburse Riverside should they resign (with or without notice) or be dismissed (excluding redundancy). Monies will be reclaimed from colleague's final pay as per the scale below.

Timescale	Monies to be repaid
Prior to commencement of the course if The Riverside Group has incurred liability for the costs	100% of costs which cannot be recovered from the provider.
Prior to completion of the course	100% of sums paid to date
Within 12 months of completion of the course	100% of sums paid to date
Between 13-18 months after completion of the course	50% of sums paid to date
Between 19-24 months after completion of the course	25% of sums paid to date
25 months after completion of the course	0% of sums paid to date

The business also reserves the right to re-claim, from the colleague, any costs incurred through exam resits or failed assessments during their professional qualification.

Time off For Training and Professional Qualifications

Where there is a requirement from Riverside for a colleague to attend Professional Qualification, training, or development outside of normal working hours, colleagues will be re-imbursed, through time off in lieu, for the time they attend. Managers and colleagues should discuss this before enrolling on any programme.

Riverside wants colleagues undertaking professional development to be successful in achieving their qualification, therefore we will allow colleagues to take one day's paid study leave for each examination up to a maximum of six days per year, in addition to paid time off to attend examinations.

Professional Memberships

Riverside will allow colleagues to claim back the cost of one professional membership subscription per year where the qualification is a requirement of their role. Colleagues claiming this cost should submit an expense claim via People Hub

5. Further information and support

People Performance Policy

Probation and Induction Policy

Learning and Development SharePoint Pages

6. Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities are set out in section [4.1](#)

7. Risks

Risks may arise where learning and development opportunities are not effectively planned, communicated or accessed, resulting in skill gaps, reduced performance, or non-compliance with mandatory training requirements and regulatory requirements. To mitigate these risks, Riverside will maintain clear learning and development processes, monitor training completion where appropriate, and regularly review learning provision to ensure it meets organisational and colleague needs.

8. Appeals and complaints

Any concerns arising because of, or in connection with the Learning & Development Policy, should be explored and resolved informally wherever possible.

If concerns cannot be resolved informally, the Grievance Policy may be considered.

9. Monitoring and assurance

Compliance with this policy is supported through the recording and monitoring of mandatory and role-related learning within People Hub. Completion rates are regularly reviewed and reported through the 4Cs reporting framework to Chief Officers, providing oversight of compliance levels and enabling targeted action where completion rates fall below expected standards. Riverside also monitors completion of the annual Performance and Goals process, with reporting provided at directorate level to promote accountability and encourage timely completion. These assurance measures help ensure colleagues maintain the knowledge, skills and objectives required to perform their roles effectively and support the organisation's wider performance and development objectives.

10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Riverside is committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with Riverside's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.