



# Workforce Development Strategy

Children's Services

**2024 - 2027**



**WOKINGHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Document Control Information

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# INTRODUCTION

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*Wokingham a great place to live, learn, work & grow and a great place to do business*

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*“A Borough in which all children and young people are safe and cared for, enjoy and achieve, are healthy and resilient, grow up ready for adulthood, and feel happy, hopeful and loved”*

## Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to shape the implementation of an effective and responsive learning and development offer in Wokingham, which ensures the continual improvement of our workforce and the services we provide for children, young people, and families.

The strategy aims to build on previous achievements and provide a framework to guide future activities, seeking to engage our Children’s Services Workforce in a shared vision and commitment to continual improvement and the development of a strong learning culture.

This strategy seeks to shift the perception of what learning means. It embraces the notion of continual workforce development, and the ongoing sharing of skills and knowledge - with staff contributing to creative learning opportunities and reflecting on and sharing best practice.

A successful learning culture is also dependent on the support of senior leadership, managers, practice consultants and educators alongside a strong desire for cultural change. We therefore feel that our workforce (at all levels) must be at the heart of the strategy and be actively encouraged to utilise all types of learning opportunities.

The strategy will support our equality, diversity and inclusion visions, underpinning anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice in the delivery of services. We will provide learning opportunities around cultural diversity, intersectionality and unconscious bias and equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded in all learning and development opportunities

Training provided by subject matter experts will be supported by various tools and self-directed learning opportunities to provide staff with the skills they need to develop their practice. Access to current research, legal and legislative changes, practice guidance and emerging areas of focus will be available to support self-directed aspects of continued professional development.

With a focus on personal and professional development, our aim will be to help staff to stay motivated and increase their professional confidence and competence to better understand and support the needs of children, young people, and families within the local area which is currently going through a period of rapid growth and changing demographic.

Our agile and holistic practice model continues to evolve, responsive to the changing needs of the families we work with. The foundation of our model, Signs of Safety is supported by complementary strengths-based, relationship-based theories, practice and approaches including systemic, trauma-informed, attachment and contextual safeguarding - helping staff to deliver the best possible outcomes whilst adapting to changing circumstances and challenges.

## Background

This strategy is a refresh of the Learning & Development Strategy 2021 – 2024. We have reviewed and developed our priorities with a strong focus on providing an inclusive, high quality training offer to meet the needs of our workforce, while also reflecting corporate priorities and ensuring alignment with the Council Plan.

Building on the foundations of the previous strategy, we will retain the broadly welcomed core principles of the 70:20:10 model of learning (experiential learning: mentoring/coaching: formal learning) and our work to embed a learning culture which embraces different approaches and styles of learning. The new strategy will build upon this foundation whilst strengthening approaches to support the development of our workforce in line with our vision and core values.

## GOALS - WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

A successful Workforce Development offer will:

### **1. Develop a resilient, diverse, and competitive workforce:**

*supporting the retention of staff, improved performance and facilitating career development - ensuring that the best people are in role with the skills and experience to fit. As part of this, the offer will create a workforce that is actively engaged in learning, instilling a desire amongst staff to develop within their existing roles and/or progress within the organisation*

### **2. Instil an organisational learning culture:**

*where people and teams are committed to development, and to the sharing and embedding of good practice through active holistic learning behaviours. Encouraging self-reflection and challenge whilst providing staff with the tools to follow a model of continuous learning, including engagement in collaborative audits, L&D activities, participation in learning events including Practice Week, as well as team activities, peer and self-directed learning opportunities.*

### **3. Be responsive to need:**

*developing an agile and accessible L&D programme, using blended, collaborative approaches which facilitate new ideas and allow staff to grow and develop from their own experiences, best practice, and high-quality learning opportunities. Our Practice Consultants identify learning need support our newly qualified staff, run events and focused bitesize workshops. Training will also support our practice framework and align with the Knowledge Skills Statements, the Professional Capabilities Framework, Social Work England professional standards and Wokingham's Children's Services Strategic Plan.*

### **4. Support and improve leaders at all levels:**

*including the provision of opportunities for staff to enhance their skills as practice supervisors and embed good working practices to uphold standards and develop their teams through supervisory approaches.*

### **5. Reinforce strategic objectives:**

*creating a programme which is aligned to the organisation's strategic priorities and other national drivers of change, and which is responsive to the learning from quality assurance activities and the identified needs of individual teams.*

### **6. Provide value for money:**

*with all services commissioned with due diligence when tendering for providers, and value then scrutinised via attendance rates and evaluation of subsequent impact on service delivery. Value will also be sought by ensuring that internal resources are utilised where possible, and with train the trainer opportunities explored where appropriate.*

## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

In order to work towards the goals set out above, we will focus on the following areas:

**1. Further strengthening our culture of learning:**

*by encouraging staff to maximise learning opportunities, reflect, share and feedback to form a continuous learning cycle, and establish a strong responsive development offer. Our management training offer will also continue to provide leaders with skills, knowledge, and confidence to support and champion workforce development within their services.*

**2. Continue to review how learning opportunities are delivered:**

*by ensuring professional development is supported in various ways, including e-learning, self-directed learning, tools, practice consultant workshops, team-based sessions, peer learning sets, sharing knowledge and experiences, conferences, webinars, and classroom training.*

**3. Improve the commissioning and delivery of programmes:**

*by ensuring these are linked to the elements of our practice framework which meet identified learning needs and that staff, at all levels are given the skills and knowledge to improve practice and service delivery*

**4. Maintain a responsive and agile approach:**

*by ensuring that the Learning and Development offer is linked to learning from QA activity, complaints, emerging local and national themes, commissioned reviews and significant research and legislative reports.*

**5. Adherence with national frameworks and standards:**

*by maximising the use of the Professional Capacity Framework (BASW), Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) and the Social Work England professional standards to inform our learning offer. Whilst helping to provide high quality learning opportunities for the whole workforce, staff members who are required to complete their CPD record will have relevant recordable training opportunities.*

**6. Ensuring an evidenced approach when evaluating our programme:**

*by evaluating all learning to evidence positive outcomes, developmental pathways, and improved service delivery, which will in turn inform future commissioning as part of our commitment to develop and enrich our learning offer.*

**7. Utilising national themes and learning opportunities:**

*by engaging in regional and national learning programmes or events and providing themed learning opportunities which align to national awareness days/weeks.*

## **HOW WILL WE GET THERE?**

We will provide a comprehensive learning programme which delivers on identified learning requirements, with a strong focus on personal and professional development opportunities. This will empower our workforce to be confident in providing best practice and supporting the needs of children, young people and families while adapting to changing circumstances and challenges.

We will seek to strengthen the way in which learning opportunities are shared with the workforce by utilising existing service bulletins/newsletters and improving current communications and developing new approaches. Our practice consultants are integral in identifying knowledge gaps, supporting our newly qualified staff and facilitating learning opportunities across the workforce based on identified learning need.

Where there is overlap with other L&D departments (Adult Services, Corporate and Health & Safety) a collaborative approach will be used to support staff and provide a one team approach to staff development, as well as supporting effective budget management.

We will measure the effectiveness of the programme by employing a process of evaluation and feedback, staff surveys, audit reviews and improvement actions to develop training plans. Working within Quality Assurance processes we will measure the impact of learning and development activity. This will include looking back to measure the success of training delivery and looking forward to identify emerging priorities. The analysis of this evaluation data will be utilised to inform our future training and development needs.

We will support all learning styles and individual requirements to help inspire staff, increase professional confidence, and develop a holistic, diverse and inclusive approach to learning.

By implementing an effective and responsive learning and development offer we will ensure the continual improvement of our workforce, which will in turn support our ability to improve outcomes for the children, young people and families that we work with.

## **GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Learning and development activity will be overseen by the Quality Assurance Board, which will monitor progress and provide critical challenge against the aims and objectives outlined in the revised Learning & Development Strategy. Reports will be submitted to the Board on a quarterly basis.