

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Partners in this agreement are the employer Kent County Council (KCC) and the trade unions UNISON, and GMB.

(1) Aims

This Agreement has been drawn up to establish a Learning Partnership between the employer and trade unions:

- To promote a proactive, strategic and sustainable approach to workplace 'Skills for Life' and 'Lifelong Learning' for employees within all directorates embedded within the employers overall plans and it's Workforce Development Plan.
- To build on Government learning initiatives such as the 'GO' AWARD, support the employers' commitment to Learning and Development and the Investors in People Standards and uphold the trade union(s) commitment to meeting its members needs in regard to skills, knowledge and personal development.
- To ensure access to and delivery of learning and training meets our Equalities and Diversity Policy Statement.
- To establish a Lifelong Learning Partnership Group (comprising representatives from both the employer and the trade union(s) to work collaboratively to promote 'Skills for Life' and 'Lifelong Learning' in the workplace.
- To set out the role of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) and the commitment and responsibilities of union and employer to support them and establish and support joint working arrangements around workplace learning and development.
- To disseminate information on matters relating to learning in the workplace using a range of strategies which will enable all employees to have equal access to information and will ensure that all employees and managers are aware of opportunities.

(2) BENEFITS

- Improved self confidence, skills development and flexibility within the workforce increasing job satisfaction.
- Demonstration of an effective partnership approach by the employer and the trade union(s)
- Promotion of the use of KCC in-house learning services, Skills Plus centres and Trade Union learning opportunities i.e. through partnership working with WEA, Unisons Open College Network and the OU and work with other organisations such as local colleges and other learning Services to ensure a broad range of provision.
- Evidence equal opportunities for all employees across the workforce

(3) CONDITIONS - THE AGREEMENT INCLUDES

- All KCC employees.
- A commitment that learning takes place as part of an employee's normal working week, where possible.
- Employees will be given reasonable time off with pay to access a ULR or to attend a learning promotional event, subject to the needs of the service.
- The employer will undertake that this Agreement will not be used as an alternative to collective bargaining with the Unions and agrees to maintain and use existing negotiating procedures and arrangements in addition to those specified in this agreement.
- Any 'Learning Audit' or 'Learning Needs Analysis' will not be used in relation to other issues such as pay, performance appraisal, redundancy, disciplinary procedures etc.
- Although participation by employees will be on a voluntary basis the trade union(s) agree to actively encourage their members to engage with the learning initiatives and take up opportunities for development.

(4) Lifelong Learning Partnership Group (LLPG) – The role

The partners agree to establish a joint Union/Employer Lifelong Learning Partnership Group (LLPG) comprising of at least four members from both the Employer and Trade Unions to develop, promote and monitor learning initiatives and work to ensure the aims and conditions of the Learning Partnership Agreement are met.

The group will appoint a chair and secretary and commit to meet regularly. The selection of members of the Learning Partnership Group is entirely for the respective parties, the employer will place at least one senior member of its management team on the LLPG so that the group is able to make effective decisions.

The group will work to create a culture of learning across KCC, supporting the work of the ULRs and exploring new opportunities to access funding or sources for learning and promoting joint learning ventures such as 'LEARNING AT WORK WEEK'.

The LLPG will report its activities to the Joint Consultative Committees and to council members through the Corporate Consultative Forum.

(5) Union Learning Representatives

The Employment Act 2002 gives ULRs the same statutory rights as other union representatives. These rights came into force in 2003 and are set out in the revised ACAS Code of Practice April 2003. In line with KCC's Facilities Agreement ULRs are entitled to reasonable paid time off to carry out their duties.

ULRs will provide information and support to *all* employees in order to meet both the business objectives of the employer as well as the individual learning and development needs of the employee.

The trade union(s) undertake to provide training for the ULRs in accordance with the regulations. To qualify for paid time off as a Union Learning Representative a union member must be formally trained by either their Trade Union or the TUC to carry out their duties within six months of their appointment.

KCC will support ULRs in training relevant to their role.

This agreement recognises that ULRs are crucial to the success of the 'Skills for Life' and 'Lifelong Learning' aims of this agreement. In

order that employees can receive the support and encouragement of a trained workplace colleague, the recruitment of ULRs from the trade union membership is critical.

(6) Lifelong Learning Co-Coordinator (LLLC)

Trade Union(s) within the partnership will appoint a trained Union Learning Representative to this role. In recognition of the importance of the success of employer/trade union(s) learning partnership, KCC recognises the legitimacy of this role within the Facilities Agreement for the LLLC to undertake their duties which will include:

- . Recruitment, support and provision of relevant training for ULRs in workplaces
- . Liaison with the Employer Heads of Learning and Development
- . Liaison with other Trade Unions and Providers of training
- . Sharing information about funding streams and/or new learning resources/opportunities with partners

The LLLC will be accountable to the LLPG.

Initially the role will be supported by an investment of £4000 by the County Council. This is for the first year only, with further discussion and negotiation on future Life Long Learning representation and coordinating roles.

(7) Equal Opportunities

This partnership affirms our Equality and Diversity policy and recognises that some people may have specific learning difficulties and agrees to make every effort to support those employees and meet their learning needs.

(8) Resolving Disagreements

Should disagreements arise between Partners about any matters covered by this agreement, they will in the first instance (a) be discussed at the LLPG meeting. If the matter remains unresolved it will (b) be referred to appropriate senior officers of the Branch Trade Union(s) i.e. Branch Secretary or Full time officer and a nominated senior officer of the employer.

A dispute arising out of either the application or the interpretation of this agreement which cannot be solved by either (a) or (b) shall be dealt with through KCC's agreed grievance procedures.

(9) Review and Monitoring

It is recognised that changes may occur which may affect any of the parties to the agreement. The LLPG will be able to negotiate minor or urgent revisions to the agreement. Any major change will need to be considered through joint consultation at an annual review of this agreement. *Should any party wish to terminate the agreement they must give six months notice of their intention.*

(10) Commitment to Lifelong Learning

The Partners, Kent County Council, UNISON, & GMB take collective responsibility for the success of this partnership to the benefit of the employees of the Kent County Council.

Signed on behalf of Kent County Council

Unison

GMB
