



0601 Organisational Learning and Development Framework

ORDER NO. 6/1

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. STRATEGY

West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is committed to developing the organisation and its people to the highest levels of excellence.

The Organisational Learning and Development Framework is an approach that strives for continuous improvement by taking a whole organisation view. It focuses activities and resources towards achieving The Plan through the transformation in knowledge, skills and behaviours required in responding to the constantly changing needs of our people, partners and communities.

The achievement of this requires a holistic approach to improvement which is outward looking as well as inward. To this end, we will look to external sources for verification of our organisational performance and embrace learning from all sources.

This approach strives to bring together many activities that collectively contribute to building the strengths of the organisation. This involves both human and strategic aspects. Human, in that it is concerned with engaging employees, supporting the management of change and creating an environment for people to give their best. Strategic, in that there is integration with broader aspects across the organisation which help drive high performance levels for the long term.

Continuous improvement and the pursuance of excellence require a continuous and systematic approach. The model Plan, Do, Check, Act, provides a continuous cycle that will drive improvement across the whole organisation, departments and teams. It must be focused on improvement as opposed to outputs and must place learning at the heart of everything we do.

Whilst we are familiar with capturing development needs of the individual we also need to identify development needs for the whole organisation: we need to learn from our learning. The root cause of learning needs are to be explored in order to understand the patterns and themes that emerge, and how they can proactively address organisational needs.

This approach sets the direction for our organisational development by putting continuous learning and improvement at the heart of the organisation's culture thus leading us towards becoming a genuine 'Learning Organisation'.

2. PROCEDURES

A key element of the organisational development framework is meeting the needs of Integrated Risk Management which is captured in The Plan, the promotion of equality and opportunity for every person and a focus on improving health and safety of staff.

WMFS commitment to the IPDS code of practice provides the framework to support staff to develop the skills and knowledge required to deliver the service outlined within The Plan.

In the pursuit of excellence in everything that WMFS does, there is an imperative to build on our current and future capability by ensuring that our workforce is trained and developed to the highest standard. Organisational development is intended to build a dynamic learning community which allows our people to develop to their full potential and so deliver the best possible service to the people of West Midlands.

The organisation recognises that Individual Performance Development Review (IPDR) is an essential element of professional supervision. It is a key tool for ensuring ongoing professional development and is designed to make a positive contribution to the personal development of staff, raising effectiveness and job satisfaction.

2.1 Learning and talent development

The organisation recognises the value of growing future leaders and making the most of people's talents and this in turn enables the achievement of the organisations strategic goals.

Encouraging participation from all people can deliver high performance teams and ensure that talent is not wasted. The organisation therefore supports an inclusive approach to talent development which reflects a 'whole workforce' methodology to employee development.

This means that with the support of line managers, people are provided with the help needed to develop capabilities through a blended approach (see section 2.7, below).

Certain development opportunities are widely available and there is a special focus on the provision of learning and development opportunities ensuring that key individuals are provided with motivating challenges, allowed to grow and are provided with opportunities to learn new skills.

2.2 The role of line managers in learning

Line managers have an increasingly important role in the learning and development of their staff. Our commitment towards becoming a learning organisation requires leaders who can encourage staff to continually expand their capabilities to help shape the future. The organisation needs line managers to demonstrate leadership qualities when promoting learning and talent development. Furthermore there is a requirement for line managers to share their own knowledge and skills beyond their immediate teams in order to help grow capability and knowledge sharing across the organisation.

Line managers are critical conduits of learning: from induction, allocating objectives which offer challenge, the learning function of team working and problem-solving, and the provision of coaching, to the assessment of development needs both formally in the IPDR and informally through the work place assessment (WPA) of day to day work activity.

This requires line managers to evaluate performance, and:

- provide the right environment for people to give their best;
- carry out continual WPA with constructive feedback;
- use a coaching style to unlock people's aspirations;
- hold IPDR conversations which result in challenging and meaningful objectives; and
- embrace a more localised culture of learning by encouraging knowledge sharing and problem-solving group activities.

2.3 Identifying learning and training requirements

Choosing the right learning requires carrying out an analysis of needs. We often refer to this as learning or training needs analysis and this takes place at a number of levels:

- For the organisation as a whole - to understand the amount and types of learning needed to ensure that all employees have the right capabilities to deliver the organisation's strategy.
- For a specific department, project or area of work - new projects and opportunities require new ways of working or re-organisation, while restructuring also necessitates changes in roles.
- For individuals - linking their own personal learning and development needs to those of the organisation through IPDR.

2.4 Learning and development activities

The changing and evolving needs of the organisation will periodically require new Learning and Development activities to be introduced and current activities to be modified. This will be done through an evidence based approach, where all activities are reviewed and evaluated. A review of the needs of the Organisation will also be completed every year to ensure that the activities being delivered are appropriate and are in line with The Plan.

The Strategic Lead for People Support Services will endorse the upcoming range of activities. This provides an opportunity to re-prioritise the organisation's overall investment of time, money and resources towards improving performance and this ultimately helps in setting learning and development priorities.

2.5 Evaluation and quality assurance

In providing cost effective and meaningful learning solutions, it is essential to regularly review and assess the use of learning and development activities.

The evaluation process used provides an opportunity for people to shape future learning activity by inviting feedback about their learning experience and how it has contributed to their development.

Furthermore, the overall contribution of the learning and development function in improving organisation performance can be quality assured or measured by taking in to account information from external and internal reviews and benchmarking where appropriate. There are a range of feedback measures throughout the organisation which collectively provide rich information towards improving strategies for managing and developing people. Working and sharing information with other Directorates will help towards achieving this success.

2.6 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is an integral part of planning and ongoing review process which ensures a focus on improving performance by understanding methods and practices required to achieve excellence.

Benchmarking is a continuous activity, not a one-off project. Internal processes, for example, Ops Intel, will ensure procedures are adjusted and performance monitored.

External sources, for example, significant national events, will be used to challenge our practices and to embed appropriate learning; new comparisons will be made and further changes explored, all with the ultimate goal of achieving excellence.

An essential element for this benchmarking will be to seek performance assurance from various sources for organisational learning.

This approach complements the '3 lines of defence' principle in managing organisational risk:

- Level 1 assurance given locally by peers, for example, WPA.
- Level 2 assurance given by an internal department but external to the function, for example, PRC.
- Level 3 assurance given by an external professional body, for example, IIP and OpA.

The organisation will pursue benchmarking, at level 3, to provide continuous assessment and improvement to enhance performance by learning from successful practices such as Investors in People for which the organisation has achieved status.

The Investors in People (IIP) Standard is a national quality standard which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through its people. It provides a framework for improving our service's performance through a planned approach to setting and communicating service objectives and developing people to meet these objectives. The assessment provides a continuous improvement plan. In providing continuous and genuine commitment towards achieving the objectives of the development plan, the IIP Steering Group, consisting of stakeholders across the organisation, will continue to drive improvement and growth.

2.7 Learning methods

The WMFS is a learner led approach to Learning and Development by providing a suite of learning activities in conjunction with core role related modules. This enables staff to build tailored development programmes which incorporate both essential and personal development elements. This blended approach allows for maximum benefit to be gained from combining different types of compatible learning activities in a flexible way.

This approach also applies to leadership and management capabilities. Managers are expected to create an environment where everyone is encouraged to develop leadership capabilities. Learning how to lead is about learning how to develop interpersonal relationships. Many of the learning activities offered are centred on this theme by raising self-awareness through tools such as 360 feedback and coaching support.

The Learning and People Development team strives to provide learning environments which encourage inclusive learning, enabling people from different functions, levels, backgrounds and organisations to learn together and share experiences.

When determining learning interventions for its people, the organisation supports a longer term and broader process which encompasses a range of different methods and techniques. Broadly speaking, these include:

- Informal learning – which involves on-the-job learning such as observing or being assisted with an activity. This is usually delivered on a one to one basis at the employee's place of work. The learning is immediately relevant to the job needs and supported by the line manager through quality feedback, encouragement to try new approaches and being able to apply the learning directly back in to the role.
- Formal learning – often with an element of classroom learning and related to programmes of activity over the longer term and can include education and qualifications.
- Secondment and Shadowing – the 'man on the moon' days are a good example of this activity which provides learning with an improved insight in to the work of other sections and other external partners.
- Outdoor learning – often provided for team building and leadership development, free from the influences of the workplace, learner are encouraged to stretch beyond their comfort zones.
- Distance learning and e-learning – constantly evolving and innovating, Ecademy, which is the e-learning platform for the organisation, can provide large numbers of learners with consistent materials. Access is flexible therefore people can learn in their own time.
- Coaching – Activities are provided to allow individuals to understanding coaching principles and then apply them in their workplace. We currently offer coaching conversations, coaching for managers and a coaching pool. A coaching framework for the organisation is in place and this outlines the benefits of this service for individuals and the organisation. Coaching is a valuable tool in helping people achieve stretching and challenging objectives and to think creatively and innovatively. Coaching improves communication and thereby supports the Service's values. It also enables the business strategy by building a high performance culture and helping people be the best that they can be. It is an investment in excellence.
- Mentoring - often used in conjunction with coaching, a mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to work based issues and support personal development. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues. Mentoring provides the mentee with an opportunity to think about their performance and progress.

2.8 Learning and development resources

The WMFS is committed to providing an inclusive whole organisation approach to learning and this means continually improving and growing its resources and delivery to ensure that people receive the most up to date and innovative learning solutions.

This is achieved through:

- Flexible delivery - learning activities can be delivered locally at convenient times for learners which has the benefit of reducing attrition, time and travel tariffs. We are also delivering all our development activities in line with the organisations delivery model to enable learning for all and to ensure that the communities of the West Midlands of safer and well.
- Learning Partners - The Organisation recognises opportunities for collaborative learning with key partners in order to maximise the use of resources and to share expertise.
- Accreditation – The WMFS is an approved accredited centre and as such is able to deliver some qualifications such as BTEC, SFJ, ILM and OCR.
- Ecademy - provides a knowledge hub of learner resources with external links to other virtual learning resources such as research and publications, book reviews, software guides'. Webinars are becoming increasingly popular by providing an interactive presentation through audio and video means to remote audiences.

3. CROSS REFERENCES

Standing Order [0212 Code of Conduct](#)

4. KEY CONSULTEES

Fire Brigades' Union

UNISON

Fire Officers' Association

People Support Manager

Operations Commanders

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Initial Equality Impact Assessment did not raise any issues

6. OWNERSHIP

This Standing Order did not require SET or Authority approval.

7. RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW/AMENDMENT DETAILS

7.1 Responsible Strategic Enabler/Department

Strategic Enabler of People Support Services.

7.2 Created/fully reviewed/amended

Learning and People Development Manager, October 2016.

If you have followed any of the processes included in this Policy please complete the following debrief form by clicking [here](#)