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## Apprenticeship Policy

This document is available in Welsh please see Polisi Prentisiaeth



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## CONTENTS

1. Policy Statement.....	1
2. What is an Apprenticeship? .....	1
3. Apprenticeship Training: Level and Delivery.....	2
4. Workforce Planning & Progression .....	2
5. Supporting Apprentices .....	2
6. Annual Leave and Travelling Expenses.....	3
7. An Apprentice's Level of Responsibility .....	3
8. Working Hours .....	4
9. Study Leave.....	4
10. Managing an Apprentice.....	4
11. Health and Safety .....	5
12. Conclusion.....	6

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

Since its establishment in 2012, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has continued to recruit apprentices across a wide variety of service areas on an annual basis. With training and development at the heart of every apprenticeship, the Council recognises that once in post, apprentices should have access to the highest degree of support, advice and guidance that their service area can offer. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds enter the Council as apprentices every year; as an organisation, we must be prepared to meet their needs once they are in post.

This policy is designed to advise and guide service managers on how to establish a supportive and inclusive workplace designed to best facilitate the development of their apprentices. The core aim of this policy is to enable managers to provide the best possible support for their apprentices, to ensure apprentices realise their maximum potential throughout their apprenticeship.

## **2. WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?**

An apprenticeship is a combination of employment and training (the apprentice obtains a nationally recognised qualification upon completion) for anyone above the age of 16. Employers train individuals within the context of their organisation, so apprentices contribute to the organisation's productivity while developing their own skills. Some differences in terms of the level of funding provided and training required exist in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but the core features of the apprenticeship model remain the same across the four nations.

All apprenticeships include the following elements:

- An appropriate competency qualification of the Qualifications and Credit Framework for Wales (QCFW)
- Essential Skills Wales qualifications: Literacy; Application of Number and Digital Literacy (the level required will depend on the qualification)
- Other qualifications or requirements as specified by the particular occupation

An apprenticeship provides essential job-specific skills, knowledge and professional qualifications. Apprentices will work towards a work-based qualification which will be at least Level 2 from the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Apprentices can begin their training at a variety of different levels. These levels determine the content of their qualification and the standard they are required to work to in order to complete the apprenticeship. They are:

- Intermediate Level Apprenticeships (Level 2).
- Advanced Level Apprenticeships (Level 3).
- Higher Level Apprenticeships (Level 4+).

Apprenticeships have received increased attention in recent times for their value in offering people a direct and affordable route into skilled jobs and careers, as an alternative to a university education. They are also an effective way for employers to develop their own talent, with the current and future skills needs of their organisation.

### **3. APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING: LEVEL AND DELIVERY**

The kind of training that we will need to provide depends on the level and nature of the work undertaken by the apprentice. The training will be delivered by various colleges and training providers. Depending on the course, some apprentices will be permitted day release to a selected college, whilst others will be assessed in their workplace. Apprentices must be given reasonable time whilst in work to work towards completing their qualification. Any release days required for college or training towards qualifications are to be credited as working time.

Apprentices will have a full induction and receive an in-depth training plan with set timeframes. Managers will receive copies of the training plan and be involved in the learning process to ensure it meets the needs of the apprentice. The Apprentice Coordinator will act as a point of contact for the training and liaise with the manager and apprentice to ensure the provision is of the highest standard.

### **4. WORKFORCE PLANNING & PROGRESSION**

Workforce planning is a key factor when considering a department's bid to host an apprentice. Prior to submitting a bid to host an apprentice, departments must be able to demonstrate how their apprentice could potentially fit into a department's future workforce once their apprenticeship ends. Having invested considerable resources in their development, the Council benefits greatly from retaining apprentices at the end of the programme. Whilst apprentices can be offered the chance of progression and continued employment with the Council, service areas can continue to benefit from the input of highly-trained and qualified members of staff and fill any gaps identified through workforce planning.

### **5. SUPPORTING APPRENTICES**

(Remember, an apprentice is with you because they want to be) – Apprentices have made an active choice to learn on the job and a commitment to a specific career, so it is imperative to build on this commitment and give them the appropriate levels of responsibility but also the support they will need to succeed. Therefore managers must:

- Ensure apprentices are working closely alongside experienced members of staff at all times to aid their learning and development;

- Give apprentices a clear outline of expectations and a safe, supportive environment to learn and develop;
- Encourage them from the start to own and drive their programme targets and to seek regular feedback to self-assess their performance;
- Up-skill and develop line managers so they can coach their apprentice and act as a role model;
- Put a workplace-learning mentor in place to further enhance the experience, add and create a proactive environment that builds on their eagerness, motivation and commitment

If an apprentice is new to the workplace environment, has specific learning needs or any disabilities, this should be factored into the programme and reasonable adjustments, such as one-to-one coaching or adapted learning materials, must be provided.

## **6. ANNUAL LEAVE AND TRAVELLING EXPENSES**

As with all Council policies, apprentices, as employees of staff at Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, are subject to the Annual Leave, Statutory Holidays and Time off in Lieu Policy and the Scheme for Payment of Travelling Expenses, Subsistence Allowances and Redeployment Expenses. All apprentices have the same annual leave entitlement as all other Council employees with a service of less than five years and are entitled to the same rate of mileage payments when travelling on Council business.

Apprentices will be informed of leave and expenses allowances during their induction. Managers should review an apprentice's annual leave and expenses claims regularly through 1-1 meetings to ensure the apprentice understands the Council's policies, is using their annual leave allowance and is claiming expenses accordingly.

## **7. LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The level of responsibility you give to your apprentices must align with the responsibilities outlined in the apprentice's job description. Their level of responsibility will also depend on their capability and workload capacity. As with other members of staff, it is the manager's responsibility to properly gauge the capability and capacity of the apprentice and afford them responsibilities which reflect this.

Apprentices should not feel overwhelmed or unchallenged by the level of responsibility afforded to them. An apprentice's progress and workload must be reviewed regularly in 1-1 meetings. A balance should be made between level of capability and level of role.

## **8. WORKING HOURS**

An apprentice's working hours will be outlined in their contract. The working hours of younger apprentices – those under the age of 18 – will be bound by the Working Time Regulations for Young People. Managers must not allow young apprentices to work over 8 hours a day, or 40 hours a week. Young apprentices are also entitled to 48 hours of rest per week and a daily rest break of 12 consecutive hours (the break between finishing work one day and starting work the next).

## **9. STUDY LEAVE**

As described in the Training, Learning and Development Policy, all employees, including apprentices, are eligible for study leave for the purpose of pre-examination study, preparation of theses, dissertations or preparation for other recognised formal qualifications. Managers must use their discretion in awarding study leave, and further advice can be gained from the learning and development team. Agreement on study leave should be reached prior to the commencement of the learning activity.

## **10. MANAGING AN APPRENTICE**

Many apprentices will be relatively new to the world of work, so the way that they are managed is crucial. Just like any other employee, good management and supervision will help the person to develop more quickly, but this is also about providing support to the individual, in terms of building up their confidence and demonstrating that they can play a positive role in the world of work and become a trained professional.

The apprentice's manager must set clear work plans, provide informal coaching, ongoing feedback and evaluate tasks undertaken to aid the apprentice's development.

Aside from their manager, each apprentice must be assigned a workplace mentor to assist and guide apprentices throughout their day-to-day work. A mentor can provide the apprentice with advice and further objective feedback, outside the more formal relationship with their manager. Managers should assign an employee as a mentor who is naturally helpful, good with people and has the desire to support learning in the workplace.

It is important that apprentices are supported in making the sometimes challenging transition into a new organisation. Managers and mentors are responsible for providing the required degree of pastoral care to properly facilitate this transition. Pastoral care consists of any help afforded in respect of personal needs and problems, and could consist of an informal conversation about an apprentice's overall state of wellbeing. The degree of pastoral care required will depend upon the needs of the apprentice. Good

managers and mentors with effective people management skills can fulfil this responsibility by picking up on any issues which may affect the apprentice's wellbeing or performance at work, and discussing this at the earliest possible instance.

However, apprentices are still employees and subject to the same contractual obligations as any other employee

## **11. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

As well as other general health and safety responsibilities, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, the Council has a duty to ensure that young people we employ are not exposed to a risk due to their:

- Lack of experience;
- Being unaware of existing or potential risks and/or;
- Lack of maturity.

For low risk work places, such as offices, this should be straightforward, however, in other environments and/or activities, such as work on highways, work at height, manual handling tasks etc. the risks are likely to be greater and more consideration will need to be given ensure they are properly controlled. For example, you should consider whether the work the young person will do:

- Is beyond their physical or psychological capacity, e.g. check a young person is capable of safely lifting weights and of remembering and following instructions;
- Involves exposure to any hazardous substance, e.g. check what substances the young person may come into contact with and ensure adequate controls are in place;
- Involves a risk of accidents that cannot reasonably be recognised or avoided by young people due to their insufficient attention to safety or lack of experience or training;
- Has a risk to health from extreme cold, heat, noise or vibration.

Providing adequate supervision for young workers and monitoring their progress will help you identify where any additional adjustments may be needed. You should already be familiar with the risks associated with your workplace and work activities and be in a position to consider what is or is not appropriate.

Further advice and support may be obtained from the Council's Health and Safety Team.



## 12. **CONCLUSION**

Providing apprentices with the appropriate level of support, advice and guidance means they can get the best out of their apprenticeship and, in turn, make a significant contribution to the delivery of public services. Managers are at the core of this support, and through studying this policy and utilising the guidance provided, they will be able to provide apprentices with all the advice and guidance they need for the best possible experience at Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.