

### 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 SBHA has identified the development of its people as a strategic priority, recognising the investment in people needed to deliver the objectives of the Association's Strategic Plan and People Strategy.
- 1.2 SBHA will prioritise its investment in learning and development to ensure delivery of strategic commitments.
- 1.3 The Association is committed to the development of skills and the expansion of learning and employment opportunities.

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to promote and support the development of employees in line with business priorities, and provide a framework for managers in relation to the processes and procedures and which should be followed. The policy builds on the Association's commitment to meeting and maintaining the Investors in People standard.
- 2.2 SBHA recognises the importance of a continuous learning programme to develop well-trained individuals whose performance will enhance the Association's ability to provide sustainable, high quality, cost effective services to SBHA's customers/tenants.
- 2.3 SBHA aims to create a learning environment where employees will be equipped to accept change, develop new skills and take responsibility for their own continuous learning, in partnership with their line manager and in line with the Strategic Plan.
- 2.4 In accordance with the Association's Strategic Plan, People Strategy and Equal Opportunities Policy, all staff will have equal access to appropriate training opportunities, subject to the provisions of para 1.3 below.
- 2.5 Learning and Development covers a wide variety of activities, not just formal training, (see **Appendix 1**) which employees and managers should consider when seeking to address an identified need.

### 3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

- 3.1 The objectives of SBHA's Learning and Development Policy are to:
  - assist SBHA in continuously developing the skills and qualifications of its workforce to enable the Association to continue to provide a high quality service in a changing environment; and
  - support employees with their continuous professional and personal development.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all employees of Scottish Borders Housing Association

## 4.0 RESOURCES

4.1 SBHA makes a significant investment in the development of employees, however there are limited resources available to meet learning and development needs and it may not always be possible to prioritise all requests. All learning and development activities will be considered in the context of the Association's Learning and Development Framework (see **Appendix 2**). In order to assess priorities, account will be taken of whether an identified training need:

- will help the Association fulfil its strategy and objectives for the year ahead, as detailed in the current Strategic Plan;
- is in the medium to longer term interests of the Association;
- is a statutory obligation to ensure the Association is compliant with legislative requirements;
- is relevant to the individual's continuing professional development.

## 5.0 INDUCTION

5.1 All new employees will receive an induction to ensure their effective integration into their new role and the organisation. Please see Staff Induction Policy and Procedure.

## 6.0 STAFF APPRAISAL SCHEME

6.1 In the interests of continuous improvement, SBHA runs a Staff Appraisal Scheme which requires a minimum of an annual meeting between an employee and their Line Manager to discuss the employee's performance in their role over the last year and to plan individual work objectives for the forthcoming year. The identification of training required to assist the employee in reaching their work objectives forms part of the Appraisal discussion.

## 7.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 **Leadership Team** – The Leadership Team will make learning and development an integral part of business planning and implementation. The team will ensure that appropriate levels and methods of learning are deployed, so that corporate objectives in the Strategic Plan and tasks set out in the departmental work plans are met. Members of the Leadership Team will ensure that staff appraisals are properly conducted for all staff under their management and within the required time frame.

7.2 **Line Managers** – The development of employees is a line management responsibility. All Line Managers are responsible for the identification of the individual learning and development needs of those reporting to them. These should take into account both the Job Description and Personal Specification for the post, and the objectives agreed with the employee. These objectives will be agreed through the induction and appraisal processes and normal day-to-day supervision and discussion. Objectives will be derived from the individual's work plan, the departmental work plan and the overall SBHA Strategic Plan. Line managers are responsible for ensuring learning and development takes place. If needs cannot be met the employee must be told why.

7.3 **Individual employees** – For the Policy to be effective, employees must take personal responsibility for and ownership of their own development (see Staff Charter). In addition to undertaking mandatory training required by law, staff are expected to avail themselves of opportunities provided and to make use of learning and development opportunities to enable them to respond flexibly to change. Where members of staff

consider they have a learning need, this should be raised with their manager as soon as it becomes apparent, and not left until the next formal appraisal session.

- 7.4 **HR Manager** – The HR Manager, through a central supporting role, will establish an Annual Learning Plan and budget. The HR Manager will co-ordinate development activity to meet individual, group and corporate needs. The HR Manager will also maintain information on available external training and development events and will maintain a central record of training attendance. The HR Manager will also be responsible for regularly reporting development activity to the Leadership Team and will liaise closely with the Leadership Team to identify group, team and corporate learning needs.

## **8.0 ANNUAL LEARNING PLAN**

- 8.1 The Annual Learning Plan will be drawn up each year based on the information collated by the HR Manager from the learning needs identified during staff appraisals. In addition to individual learning needs, the Plan will also cover group, team and corporate needs as communicated to the HR Manager by the Leadership Team.
- 8.2 This Plan, once drawn up, will be agreed with the members of Leadership Team. It will outline learning needs, resources required, timescales for completion and links to team and Association objectives with clear performance outcomes.
- 8.3 The HR Section will, where appropriate, arrange attendance for individuals at external training and development events or commission events to be run in-house to address the needs identified in the Learning Plan.

## **9.0 REQUESTING TRAINING AND AUTHORISATION**

- 9.1 The majority of learning needs for individual employees will be met through the Learning Plan. However, it is recognised that individual employees and/or their Line Manager may identify learning and development events which would address a relevant learning need identified out with the appraisal process.
- 9.2 The employee must obtain prior approval from his/her Line Manager and authorisation of the spend from the HR Manager prior to being booked onto an event. Staff must follow the procedure to request training (see flow chart at **Appendix 3**). No member of staff can authorise his/her own training costs or professional membership costs without prior reference to the HR Manager.

## **10.0 EVALUATION**

- 10.1 Prior to a learning activity, employees and their Line Managers will agree learning and performance objectives. After learning, the employee and their Line Manager should discuss how the outcomes of learning should be transferred to work to maximise the benefits of the learning to the individual, department/team and Association. The effectiveness will be reviewed by managers and staff after a suitable period, and corrective action taken where the performance objectives are not met.
- 10.2 HR will evaluate learning activities and report on the impact of the investment in people.

## **11.0 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 11.1 SBHA supports employees to develop skills and knowledge and competencies for continuous improvement in performance and the effective delivery of services to meet SBHA's objectives.

11.2 **Continuation of Employment** - Where an employee has been granted financial assistance and/or release:

- a) to gain a professional qualification, qualification of degree or post graduate level or a Higher National Diploma or equivalent; or
- b) for a course, whether or not leading to a qualification, where the tuition fees are £1,500 or more,

he/she will be required to continue in the employment of SBHA for a minimum of three years from the date of completion of the course of study.

11.3 **Repaying Financial Assistance** -

The employee will be liable to repay 100% of the financial assistance received if they:

- a) do not satisfactorily complete the course; or
- b) withdraw from the course without reasonable cause; or
- c) leave SBHA's employment before completing the course.

The employee will be liable to repay a proportion of the financial assistance received if they satisfactorily complete the course but leave SBHA employment before the end of the three year period (for whatever reason). The 100% liability will be reduced by one thirty-sixth for each full month of service completed during the three year period.

All repayments will be deducted from the employee's final salary payment. Upon notification of an employee leaving the organisation, should there be insufficient funds to allow the deduction to refund the financial assistance received, SBHA's Finance Section will arrange, in agreement with the employee, a suitable method of repayment once the employee has left SBHA.

In exceptional circumstances, the appropriate Director, in consultation with HR Manager, may waive the refund in whole or in part.

11.4 **Agreements** - Where SBHA provides financial assistance towards qualification training, appropriate agreements will be drawn up by SBHA's HR Section specifying the extent of reimbursement and/or continuation of employment period.

The Manager will notify the HR Manager, of all employees pursuing training. Notification must be given at least four weeks prior to the commencement of the training in order to allow sufficient time for the agreement to be finalised and signed.

## 12.0 REVIEW

12.1 This Policy will be reviewed every five years.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

When discussing and planning training and development activities either as part of the Performance Appraisal Review process or at any other appropriate time, consider:

1. What objectives have been agreed?
2. What will help achieve these objectives?
3. What knowledge/attitude/skills are needed to meet the objectives?
4. What knowledge/attitude/skills does the individual have?

Questions 1, 2, 3 matched against 4 will help identify the training 'gap' and point to training and development needs.

There are a variety of development activities which can cater for the varying needs—**training courses are not the only option**. Here are a few examples:

### DEMONSTRATION

*A highly visual on or off the job training method in which you can show someone how to do something and then they are given the opportunity to do it themselves under guidance. Useful for all kinds of practical activities.*

### INSTRUCTION

This breaks down the task into a series of presented or demonstrated steps or stages, explained either one to one to group. Useful for practical activities. Can be on or off the job.

### DELEGATION

Definitely an on the job activity. Entrusting part of your responsibilities, power or function, (tasks that you would have carried out) to another. It is more than just assigning work. It means making persons accountable for results, giving space to make decisions about achieving results. Delegation never relieves 'the delegator' of responsibility - it is not abdication. Accept that delegation must allow for failure. Learn from this rather than resort to blame. A useful tool for developing employees to take on responsibilities at a higher level.

### COACHING

A highly effective on the job activity due to its immediacy, flexibility and it is usually 'on the spot'. Coaching is always one-to-one (as for golfers, tennis players). Can be used peer to peer as well as manager/employee. Good coaches state objectives, demonstrate by example, take a step-by-step approach, give clear guidance, allow for practice, allow for errors, seek to learn from errors and improve rather than blame, give positive reinforcement, enhance others' self-esteem, ask for feedback, point out strengths and improvement areas, establish follow-up.

## **WORK SHADOWING**

Individual does not take on the duties of the other person, but 'shadows' or watches, listens, questions, as the other performs the job. A useful and cost-effective development tool, but 'shadowers' job needs to be covered. Clear objectives needs to be set for the process, and reviews to track progress need to be built in. Shadowing can be at peer or any level of the organisation.

## **MENTORING**

Where an individual agrees to form a working relationship with another more experienced individual who acts as a guide to listen, help identify and solve problems. Mentoring skills such as questioning, listening, are crucial for the process to work effectively. Mentor does not solve issues for the individual, rather, encourages individual to think through, see around issues often in a broader context, and develop own solutions.

## **ACTION LEARNING**

A group of peers who meet to share work related issues and gain input from the others on solutions. A powerful problem identification and problems solution method which has the added benefit of building a team. The group learns to trust and communicate effectively. Group members rotate or take turn in the role of problem owner, and facilitator, and so develop meeting leadership, presentation and facilitation skills.

## **TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL COURSES**

Used to build knowledge, skills and understanding. Courses can vary in length from short half day awareness sessions, to three or four academic courses of study. Courses can be 'in-house' using an organisation's own or external trainers, with groups of participants from the same organisation. Benefits are cost-savings and team building as external courses attended by individuals. External courses are a mixture of participants from a variety of organisations, where there is benefit from mixing with and sharing differing experience.

## SBHA'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

In considering Staff Development needs reference will be made to SBHAs overall priorities as well as departmental and individual needs. All activities should be viewed and prioritised in the context of the following framework;

<b>SBHA's Cultural Change</b>	Management Development Programme Leadership Programme Governance Training Customer Services Training Board Development activities Change Management People Management skills Leadership/ Management Behaviours Framework
<b>Health and Safety</b>	Human focus training-Hazardous substances, Asbestos etc H+S Accredited programmes Changes in practice
<b>Formal Qualifications</b>	CIH and other Housing qualifications Accredited H+S Qualifications Organisational Accredited programmes Finance Technical Management
<b>Changes in Legislation</b>	Health and safety Employment law Changes in Welfare Reform and the Social Charter Understanding the role of the Regulator
<b>Technical aspects of the role</b>	All developments in IT systems IT Technical training Rent Arrears Training Building regulations Project management Understanding court procedures Developing administrative skills Finance training
<b>Customer Services</b>	Dealing with complaints Handling aggressive customers Telephone skills Debt advice Tenant support-domestic abuse etc Conflict management
<b>Broadening Perspectives</b>	Conferences Job Shadowing Professional Qualifications and Accreditations Working in Partnership with other organisations e.g. SBC
<b>Workforce Development</b>	Apprenticeship Scheme Multi skilling Youth employment Schemes

**PROCEDURE TO REQUEST TRAINING**

In order to further continuing professional development or personal development, each staff member has a responsibility to research and request training following the steps outlined in the procedure flow chart below; SBHA has a responsibility to consider the request.

