

Development plan

Name: Debbie Childs

Covering the period from: November to March

What do I want/need to learn?	What will I do to achieve this?	What resources or support will I need?	What will my success criteria be?	Target dates for review and completion
Devise and implement a childcare voucher scheme for the Council.	Meet with childcare voucher providers/local day nurseries to find out how the schemes operate, costs etc., contact other local authorities who have implemented a scheme, liaise with Payroll to determine how the administrative requirements will be covered, hold staff fora to ascertain potential levels of interest, put together a report detailing the proposals and gain. Executive approval to proceed.	Dedicated time for meetings, research etc. Support and advice from my line manager. Commitment from payroll to the ongoing provision of administrative resource. Information from childcare providers. Executive approval to proceed.	Successful implementation and take up of the scheme across Council.	September
Improve my presentation skills and become confident in the delivery of training.	I have requested the opportunity to support corporate recruitment and selection courses. Design and deliver presentations to the HR team relating to employment law/policy issues.	Approval of my line manager. Support from the Learning and Development team both in providing training techniques to me as a delegate and allowing me to be involved in presenting corporate courses.	The ability and confidence to stand up and deliver effective presentations. I will measure this by analysing the feedback given on training evaluation forms. A comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the subject being presented.	April
Develop my consultancy skills to enable me to work proactively with the business.	Participate in a Consultancy Skills course. Keep up to date with Divisional Business Plans and look for ways in which HR interventions would be useful, taking these suggestions to Heads of Service. Conduct research into how other HR departments have adopted this approach.	Financial support to attend the training course. Access to articles and case studies in publications such as People Management. Support from Heads of Service in welcoming these interventions.	Raised profile of the HR service I am providing. Heads of Service actively involving HR in projects, etc. from their outset.	Consultancy skills course - May Using and developing Consultancy skills – ongoing.
Gain a more in-depth knowledge of Capability hearings. Achieve a greater understanding	Attend a hearing as an observer to ensure I am clear on the process. Participate in a Capability case from start to finish, including sitting on a hearing panel and advising the manager involved.	Support from more senior HR staff in reviewing previous cases and their outcomes and interpreting corporate policy. Possible support from my HR colleagues in allowing	To have provided advice and guidance to manager and employee throughout a capability case and to be satisfied with the outcome of the final hearing.	Review September – if not achieved through my own workload



of the policy and its practical application.		me to lead on a case outside my own area. Access up to date policies and procedures.		actively seek to take on a case from another area.
Have more involvement in policy writing in order to fully understand how the process works at the Council.	Express my interest in policy writing. Maintain a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of corporate policies and procedures. Keep up to date with the HR business plan and forthcoming legislation to identify policies requiring review.	Support from the Head of HR and HR Managers to guide me through the process and to allocate project work to me. Allocation of time to carry out project work. Constructive feedback from HR colleagues. Managers and Trade Union representatives.	Writing/revising a policy and seeing it through to its successful implementation.	April (ongoing)
Upgrade my Graduate CIPD membership to achieve chartered MCIPD status.	Self-study. Completion of CPD record and development plan.	Support from my senior HR colleagues to provide advice/act as a sponsor.	Having my application for upgrading accepted by the CIPD and gaining chartered MCIPD status.	April
In conjunction with managers devise and deliver help guides/workshops on HR issues.	Instigate discussions with Heads of Services to ascertain requirements. Ensure I have a comprehensive understanding of the policy/procedure to be presented. Design and deliver workshops to managers and employees, adjusting style and content to suit different audiences.	Management buy-in to allow me to proceed. Time directed away from my normal duties to enable me to research and write the workshops. Dedicated time at HR team meetings to "trial" the workshops before going live.	Reduction in the number of queries received on a day-to-day basis due to better understanding of policies and procedures.	April (ongoing)
Further my knowledge of the corporate restructuring process.	Take a lead HR role in the restructure of the Customer Services Division.	Guidance and support from my line manager.	Successful implementation of a new and Divisional structure. All staff issues dealt with. All job descriptions, structure charts, electronic records etc., updated correctly.	Customer Services Division restructure – completion date 1st October
Develop my knowledge of reporting from the HR system to enable me to provide accurate management information.	Coaching sessions from my line manager in writing and running reports to prepare information for Managers.	Dedicated time to allow me to practice reporting. Delegation of reporting tasks to me to ensure I receive sufficient practice to become competent in this area.	The ability to produce management information on request.	June 2007.
Ensure I keep up to date with Employment Law developments and	Self-study utilising CIPD updates and publications, employment law websites, etc. Attend courses, seminars and briefings as appropriate.	Continued CIPD membership. Internet access. Links with local solicitors/South East Employers/other providers.	Ongoing commitment to personal development. Increased credibility – both myself and Managers confident in the accuracy of the	Ongoing



am aware of their implications for the Council.			advice I am giving them. Requesting further feedback on my performance from Heads of Service and acting on the results.	
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CPD record

Key dates	What did you do?	Why?	What did you learn from this?	How have/will you use this?
November	Instigated regular 1-1 meetings with the Heads of Service within my areas of responsibility.	To ensure the ongoing flow of information between HR and other departments and to achieve an in-depth knowledge of issues within those areas.	The value of keeping informed of developments within my service areas and of raising my profile and gaining credibility with Heads of Service. It is beneficial to document discussions, actions and agreements for future reference.	I will use the information gained to incorporate departmental requirements into mine and the teams work scheduling, where possible, and to adopt a proactive approach in suggesting timely HR interventions and support.
November (ongoing)	Identified several members of staff whose sickness absence had triggered the need for action, set up and participated in my first formal absence review meetings, providing advice and guidance to the Managers involved.	Statistics indicated a higher level of sickness absence in the Contact Centre than in other areas of the Council. The cost, both in monetary terms and in staff morale, of days being lost due to sickness absence was unacceptable and impacted significantly on service delivery and customer satisfaction.	I learned a great deal about methods of managing long and short term absences, the impact of the Disability Discrimination Act, the role of the occupational Health Service. It also provides an opportunity for HR to make a difference to the business and use of resources whilst ensuring support for staff welfare.	Sickness absence is an ongoing concern within the team and across the Council. I have continued to utilise the information available to highlight problem cases to Managers and to take these forward where formal intervention is necessary.
December	Attended a training course on Managing People Performance. This is essential training for managers and provides an overview on the 'tools' for managers in dealing with performance issues.	This was one of my developmental areas as I had not been involved in many Disciplinary, Grievance, Capability or Absence cases in my career.	The importance of preventative measures such as setting targets and review periods and being strict in keeping to them. I gained a greater understanding of methods of planning and conducting performance meetings and hearings. The key skills were preparation, investigation, checking, decision making and reviewing.	This causes an increased level of stress to those involved. I have requested more practical experience when issues arise to allow me to put into practice the things I learned on the course.



January	I chaired my first job evaluation panel.	The HR Officer role was upgraded following a restructure of the HR Division. Fewer resources at senior level meant that I took on some of the duties which had previously been the responsibility of the HR Managers. The Council's JE scheme covers 13 factors which are individually assessed by a panel. It is important to ensure the factors are also reflected in the relevant job descriptions and candidate specification.	This was a new challenge for me as I was in a position to influence the grading and salary level of the post. I learned the importance of asking very specific questions and looking at similar posts across the organisation to ensure fairness and consistency. It also gave me the chance to practice my listening and negotiation skills as, although I was chairing the panel and the final decision rested with me, I had to achieve an outcome which was agreeable to the Line Manager and Union representative.	I have used this as a stepping stone to broaden my knowledge of the job evaluation process. Familiarity with grading structures across the organisation means that I am now in a position to recognise when a role does not sit comfortably within the structure and will recommend reassessment. I have also used this experience recently to undertake the re-evaluation of an entire Division (28 posts) as part of the restructuring process.
January	I attended an external seminar on Sexual Orientation Regulations and Civil Partnerships.	I wanted to gain a more detailed knowledge of the new regulations.	I learned about the new legislation in detail and was surprised at how widespread the effects will be in areas such as pensions, death in service payments, etc.	My understanding of the subject allowed me to update the team and give some constructive feedback during a review of corporate policies.
January	I acted as HR representative on a disciplinary panel for the first time.	This is part of the revised HR Officer role and a case had arisen in which I had had no previous involvement.	I learned a great deal about the Council's policy through applying it for the first time. I was able to recognise how easy it can be to pre-empt the outcome of a hearing and to remain unbiased. The importance of considering all the evidence presented, circumstances, work records and precedents in making a decision. It is also useful to appoint an independent witness to document the meeting.	In subsequent hearings I have tried to keep an open mind and to remain neutral throughout. I also realise the importance of reporting the outcome and learning points of each case to my HR colleagues so that we are mindful of setting precedents and ensuring that decisions are consistent across Divisions. I feel that I am better able to support and advise managers when further Disciplinary cases arise.
February	Conducted an investigation into an incident at one of the Council's Community Centres which had resulted in a Grievance. I produced a report to the Manager concerned and gave advice on how to resolve the issue.	The employee involved was unknown to me and the case was outside my work area.	I learned the importance of remaining completely impartial and to assimilate information from all parties involved before making recommendations. I also improved my ability to facilitate difficult meetings.	The skills and knowledge I developed through dealing with this incident can be applied to other Grievance cases. It is important to find out from the employee what the desired outcome would be and to research how practicable and reasonable that request is.



February	I co-presented a training course on Absence Management to Housing Divisional managers.	Levels of sickness absence within the Housing Division were running at a very high level. In addition, I was receiving numerous requests for advice on how to deal with individual cases. This highlighted a Management training issue.	Co-presenting the course allowed me to further develop my presentation skills and gave me more confidence in this area. It also gave me a better understanding of the issues Managers were facing in relation to Sickness Absence cases within the Housing Division.	The course allowed me to develop and implement a Divisional plan for managing sickness absence, together with line managers and to set timescales to review cases to ensure that planned meetings take place. I was able to achieve management buy-in to the process, as a result of the training, by demonstrating the benefits of following the corporate procedure for individuals, service delivery and their management time.
March	I acted as HR representative at a mediation session with a member of staff, Union and departmental managers to informally resolve an allegation of bullying and harassment made by a member of staff.	A member of staff had some serious concerns relating to certain incidents which would have escalated into a formal grievance had they remained unresolved.	I learned to have more confidence in my own knowledge and experience as I was able to find constructive solutions to the issues and negotiate with Senior Managers/Union representatives to persuade them to adopt a specific course of action.	My confidence in dealing with similar issues has increased and, provided that I have a full understanding of the issues, I will be able to become involved in similar cases for the Council.
March	I attended an external seminar on Managing Sickness Absence.	I am responsible for advising Managers regarding managing long and short term absence cases within my areas and required to participate in formal absence management meetings.	I learned the importance of adhering to the statutory "3 stage" dismissal procedure. The seminar also reiterated the importance of understanding the true medical condition and the consequences of non-compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.	I have used this information to keep track of cases by asking my Heads of Service for updates at every monthly 1-1 meeting to ensure that return to work discussions and trigger interviews are taking place and by regular liaison with Occupational Health.
May	I attended a forum on Appraisal Skills following the implementation of a revised staff appraisal system.	Although I do not have responsibility for conducting staff appraisals, Managers frequently ask for advice/clarification on the process. In addition, appraisal documentation is often used in support of performance management issues and I felt that a comprehensive understanding of the system would assist me in dealing with these.	I learned the importance of consistency and that there should be no surprises - any problem areas and concerns should be addressed outside of the appraisal discussion. There were a number of softer skills for managers around questioning techniques, listening and ways to provide effective feedback.	I will be better equipped to relate the support I give to Managers' specific needs as I have a more comprehensive understanding of the process.
June	Played a lead role in the restructure of the Finance	I had not previously been involved in a Divisional restructure from start to finish and	I achieved a more in-depth understanding of the corporate policy on the Management of HR Related	



	Services Division, including consultation, redeployment, redundancies and the recruitment of vacant posts.	wanted to learn more about the planning and implementation processes.	Change, the importance of timetabling and also legislation relating to redundancy issues. The failure to follow our procedures would leave the Council at risk to claims of unfair dismissal.	I have subsequently been involved in two further Divisional restructures and have been able to apply the skills and knowledge I have developed to these.
June	Agreed to participate in requesting feedback from two of my departmental managers as part of my annual appraisal.	I work very closely with managers in these areas and it was helpful to ask their opinion of the way I provide an HR service and how I can continue to improve.	The way I perceive myself and the service I provide does not always correspond with other people's opinions.	Step back and take a broader look at the way my actions and explanations are being received. How negative messages can be received positively if the reasons behind them are fully explained.
June onwards	Carried out research on legislation and best practice to identify, update and challenge references which failed to comply with Age Legislation.	The new rules around Age Discrimination came into effect in October 2006. I needed to ensure that Managers were aware of the implications and that job descriptions, candidate specifications, recruitment advertising, etc. did not contravene the regulations.	I increased my knowledge of the regulations and their impact. I now feel confident in recognising terminology which is compliant and when to challenge those that aren't.	I wrote and circulated a brief factsheet to Managers explaining the impact of the Age Discrimination regulations and giving examples especially in recruitment of how phrases can be re-worded correctly.
July	Provided 1-1 interviewing techniques training to an inexperienced Line Manager, sat on an interview panel with her and gave constructive feedback and advice on the way the interviews were handled.	The Manager concerned was relatively new to the interviewing process and had requested support and feedback having had decisions challenged at a previous set of interviews.	I learned the importance of delivering feedback in a positive yet honest manner.	I will use this experience to boost my confidence when dealing with managers who have not requested feedback but for whom it would be beneficial.
July	Spent a day work shadowing the management team and frontline staff in the Contact Centre.	This is the area which presents me with the most challenges and I wanted to see things from staff and managers' perspectives to enable me to provide a better service.	I saw first-hand some of the difficulties presented by operating a Contact Centre within a local authority environment. I also began to understand how the advice I give can sometimes be seen as obstructive.	Appreciate the reactive nature of frontline customer services and work with the Contact Centre to design a mutually acceptable service level agreement.
September				



	I attended an external seminar on Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.	I had been involved in a wide range of Disciplinary and Grievance hearings over the past few months and felt confident in the practical application of the corporate policy. However, I wanted to ensure that my knowledge was thoroughly up to date.	As well as updating my knowledge of Disciplinary and Grievance legislation and its practical application through case studies, I gained a fuller understanding of the process through participating in role play and practical exercises. I was able to critically appraise my own performance at Disciplinary and Grievance investigations and hearings and consider what I could do better.	I presented the information that I had learned from the seminar to HR colleagues at a team meeting. I also provided feedback in the review of the corporate Disciplinary and Grievance policy and was able to recognise areas where we were not following best practice. These have been revised and are currently in negotiations with the Trade Unions.
October	I attended a training course on Facilitation Skills.	Many meetings are convened which have no clear plan on what needs to be achieved.	A well facilitated meeting with an effective agenda and specific objectives can greatly improve communication within the organisation environment.	Techniques learned on the course have assisted me in the preparation and planning of meetings and given me some useful pointers around building rapport, managing group dynamics and handling conflict. On receiving meeting requests I am now challenging the requirement for me to attend, which has improved my time management skills.
November	I attended a training course on Coaching Skills.	The course was a pilot for which I was asked to assess and feedback on the content and its value for staff. I was also interested in attending as many of these skills are very relevant to my HR role in areas such as interviewing, performance management issues and job evaluation.	I gained a greater understanding of my own personal coaching style, how I react to a range of workplace situations involving staff and how I come across to others. I also learned some useful techniques around assessing situations and balancing the need for support with the need to challenge and putting the onus on the job holder to identify and agree the need for change/improvement.	I provided feedback to the Learning and Development team on the effectiveness of the course and who would benefit. I also shared information and handouts across the HR team. The course was highly practical and focused on issues that Managers face when dealing with managing performance in the workplace. A situation arose shortly after the course where I was required to advise a Manager on how to deal with poor performance and conduct. The skills and exercises that I had gained on the course gave me enough confidence to give advice whilst encouraging them to come to their own decision.
January to February	Provided clear direction on HR service by devising a contract/service level agreement with the Contact Centre management team on appropriate levels of HR intervention.	Frequency and urgency of demands made on HR in relation to staffing issues within the Contact Centre could not be accommodated within my day to day workload.	A better understanding of how departments can work together to achieve an outcome which is mutually understood and accepted when the roles and timescales are clearly defined.	This has given me a much wider view and perspective of how other departments operate and of how valuable their input can be. I will adopt this approach across the other departments for which I have responsibility.



<p>March</p>	<p>I attended a Capability workshop designed to explain and invite feedback on revising the Council's Capability policy.</p>	<p>I had previously had minimal exposure to Capability issues and wanted to gain a better understanding of the corporate policy and its practical application.</p>	<p>I learned how Capability links into the performance management framework, how to identify cases, the type of documentary evidence required to support this and the options available for managing cases.</p>	<p>This training has given me more confidence in recognising situations where Capability issues arise and advising Managers how to instigate and follow through Capability proceedings.</p>
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