

**Decision maker:** Employment Committee 2 December 2010

**Subject:** Qualifications and Skills

**Report by:** Head of Human Resources

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision (over £250k):** N/A

**1. Purpose of report**

To review the outcomes of the Qualifications audit and to note the degree of activity in terms of developing staff toward level 2 Skills for Life in Maths and English. The purpose of the audit was to understand from the outcomes the level of qualification across PCC.

**2. Recommendations**

- 1) That the results of the qualifications audit be noted and the current practice of offering all new employees the opportunity to undergo assessment be continued
- 2) That PCC continue to offer staff below Level 2 the opportunity to attend Skills for Life courses in both Maths and English
- 3) That Head of Human Resources continue to support two staff in their work toward becoming tutors for Skills for Life.
- 4) That the current practice of organising Skills for Life courses at the end of the work day be continued so that individuals can give an hour of their personal time and PCC can pay for an hour (at the end of normal work time) to allow attendance at the 2 hour tutorials.
- 5) That all Services identify the skills needed by their workforce as they undertake reviews and work with HR to identify skills gaps and work to close those gaps.

### 3. Background

3.1 Both the previous and the current Government have supported the work undertaken by Employers to develop the basic skills level of their staff.

Government and economic analysis has indicated that within the next ten years employees will need to increase their level of skill in order to deliver work at the required level.

3.2 PCC responded by introducing the initiative to offer all employees Skills for Life assessment on appointment. Staff can also attend one of the frequent drop in sessions and undergo assessment. Publicity surrounding this initiative is undertaken jointly with the three unions, Unite, Unison and GMB. A number of staff have undertaken training to enable them to encourage staff and operate the assessment, they are Learning Representatives. Some are sponsored by unions some by PCC. However they are sponsored they operate as a team to allow the regular testing and drop in sessions to be offered.

3.3 This work culminated in PCC signing the Skills pledge in May 2009 after successfully working to achieve the Go Award in 2008. We are currently working toward the Go Excellence Award. The work undertaken identified that there were pockets of staff working in sections with low skills level and there were hidden needs in higher qualified staff and managers only identified when they attended training or began study for further qualification. Learning Reps have undertaken outreach work at such workplaces to talk about learning and often individuals fear of learning.

405 people have attended assessment and 131 of these have gone onto learning and achieved a qualification. Currently 28 staff are enrolled on a course looking to achieve and improve their level in literacy or numeracy before Christmas.

3.4 At present HR staff negotiate with learning providers such as the local colleges and Pride in Pompey to provide the required courses. In order to increase flexibility and to increase the level of advice and guidance the Learning Reps can provide, 8 members are studying for Level 3. Two members of HR will be maintaining their studies and work to become Tutors and so increase the number of staff who can attend courses at any time.

#### 3.5 Results of Audit

It became evident that the number of staff working within PCC without the Level 2 in Maths and English could be higher than anticipated and this could cause problems over time. In 2009 PCC secured funding to undertake a qualifications audit with the audit and the report being undertaken and completed by mid 2010.

Whenever an audit is undertaken concern is expressed as to the validity of the outcomes due to insufficient participants. This audit covered non schools staff only and 1911 responses were received. This response represented 44% of staff and means we can trust the data sample to a rate of +/- 1.71%.

3.6 At skills level 2 15.5% staff do not have English and 29.24% do not have Maths. This does not mean PCC is not well qualified, 25.72% staff have a level 6 qualification and 13% of respondents said they are studying for a qualification. 85% staff believe Learning is important and this supports the city council's position as a Learning Organisation.

#### 3.7 Barriers to Learning

There is much evidence to suggest that people who did not achieve at school develop a fear of learning. Recognition of this fact led to the creation of the Learning Reps who themselves work in a wide range of services and at many different levels. This has the impact of people feeling comfortable discussing their fears as they can choose whether to deal with a friend or an unknown colleague

3.8 A further initiative is PCC involvement in Learn at Work week since 2007. 2010 was the most successful year to date with 167 staff participating in taster sessions, 25 staff job shadowing colleagues, 11 entering a poem competition and 54 staff participating in a lunchtime team competition. Even such informal learning is seen as positive by staff.

### 3.9 Next Steps

The approved apprenticeship scheme will help publicise PCC's positive attitude to learning and help increase take up. We are also considering asking current or recent learners to share their experiences widely through case studies.

### 3.10 Focus on Skills

The current Service Reviews will begin to refocus staff and managers on learning as it is likely individuals will need to develop new skills and development opportunities will be given to identify skills gaps of individuals and teams and to offer training events and experiences to close those gaps. Indeed the combination of reviews and skills gap analysis and training are likely to be the focus of most services workforce plans over the next few years.

## 4. **Reasons for recommendations**

4.1 National Guidance on the need to assist individuals develop their learning to Level 2 in Maths and English has not changed. This has been proven essential in the Independent Living Service where it has become common place for staff to need to record daily actions in the clients care plan and to be able to read and administer medication. New staff are assessed on appointment to ensure they have this skill level and it is important PCC develop existing staff to this level.

4.2 Every effort is now made to incorporate learning to Level 2 in all learning and development events but the continued operation of Learning Representatives and the development of two to operate as tutors in both Maths and English will be essential if PCC is to continue offering a range of alternatives to individual members of staff when they declare themselves ready to learn.

4.3 The Service Reviews are likely to lead to changes in the skill sets required of staff and where services are amalgamated these changes will be particularly demanding. HR will support Managers in identifying the new skills required and with staff to identify any skills gap. Development opportunities offered will then ensure the new services can work in the way proposed and deliver the best possible services to the relevant clients. Such changes as these will need to be reflected in the services workforce plan.

**5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

Preliminary Impact Assessment undertaken

**6. Head of legal services' comments**

When considering courses and assessments the Council will need to take note of the legal implications arising from the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 where for instance under section 40 employees will be able to request study and training and in general under the Equality Act 2010 in the manner the which they are offered to staff. Specific guidance should be sought from the appropriate officers.

**7. Head of Finance's comments**

It is assumed that any development opportunities and support for staff will be carried out using existing resources.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Staff Qualification Audit	HR Floor 1 Civic Offices Jan Paterson

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

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Signed by: