

Career Grade Policy

Purpose

1. To present a new career grade policy and procedure to enable managers to implement career grade structures within their team.

Background

2. A career grade structure is a series of roles within the same professional area with increasing levels of job demands, responsibilities, knowledge and skills, linked together by a structured programme of development that will provide an opportunity for progression within a team.
3. A career grade structure will provide clear distinction between the levels of work. It would therefore usually be expected to see at least one grade difference between a role and the next role within the structure. Each role will also require increasing levels of knowledge, skills and experience. Career grade structures may consist of apprenticeship level roles increasing to senior roles depending upon the skills needed within the team.
4. There are currently informal career grade arrangements in some service areas (e.g. legal, planning) with progression based on the attainment of a professional qualification. This policy aims to bring together these arrangements into one approach to be applied consistently and fairly across the Council. In doing so, this policy also aims to support recruitment and retention of staff, effective service delivery, succession planning and career development of employees, by providing a defined career pathway within applicable service areas.

Main considerations

5. Suitable teams and roles for career grade structures are those that clearly follow a structured progression arrangement which is likely to be linked to the attainment of a professional qualification (or level within this), completion of a portfolio of evidence demonstrating required level of experience and skills and accredited by a professional association/body.
6. A career grade structure will typically consist of:
 - qualification routes progressing from entry level up to master's level (or above) in the professional/occupational field

- a range of skill requirements that increase in complexity with the increase in grade
 - a range of linked tasks that increase in difficulty with the increase in grade
7. A career grade structure progression framework setting out the criteria for progression, must be established either within or alongside the role descriptions. This must set out all competencies and criteria required to progress to each level within the career grade.
 8. At the outset, the optimal number of posts at each level of work within the career grade must be agreed. This should reflect the numbers of posts needed for the team to function effectively and within budget. Finance and strategic HR business partner approval would be required before any career grade structure can be confirmed.
 9. The council's job evaluation framework would be applied to all posts within the career grade structure.
 10. Progression in a career grade structure is not automatic based solely on the achievement of a qualification and/or new skills or time served in role. There must also be the need for the higher level of work within the team and a funded vacancy must be available. This ensures that the structure and progression within it, reflects service delivery requirements and is fully funded from within existing establishment.
 11. Progression opportunities within a career grade structure would be ringfenced to employees who are part of the career grade structure and must be via a successful competitive selection exercise. It would be expected that the principles of the council's recruitment and selection policy in respect of fairness and equity within the selection process, would be applied.

Environmental impact of the proposal

12. None

Equalities impact of the proposal

13. This policy has been Equality Impact Assessed and all comments from this panel have been considered. The council is satisfied that the policy appropriately meets the council's responsibilities in relation to equality.

Risk Assessment

14. There is a need for a standardised approach to career grade structures to ensure consistency across service areas and to support greater clarity on

career pathways for employees.

15. All roles within a defined career graded structure will be evaluated in line the council's pay and grading framework.
16. Career graded structures will need to be fully funded from the outset to ensure affordability.

Financial Implications of the proposal

17. At the outset, the funding for the whole of the career grade must be agreed based on the optimal number of roles required for each level of work required within the team.
18. The structure must be within budget and approved by Finance.
19. Managers will have discretion in how they appoint to posts at different levels of work (and grades) within the career grade structure, depending on the skills, experience and qualifications of successful applicants. However, this must be within the budget agreed at the outset for the structure.
20. Funding will sit at the highest grade level for the career grade structure regardless of which level within the career grade the position is filled.

Recommendations

21. That Staffing Policy Committee approve the introduction of a career grade policy and procedure.

Tamsin Kielb
Director HR&OD

Report Author: Sarah Russam, HR Strategy and Policy Officer