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## Audit Services Report

Training 2021/22  
Report ref: H8/2021

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Report

Draft: 06/06/22  
Final: 16/08/22

Officers = Partial  
Level of Assurance

Members =  
Significant Level of  
Assurance

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## Distribution

Director of Corporate Affairs
Head of Legal & Governance
Democratic Services Manager
Head of People & Organisational Development
Organisational & People Development Manager
Organisational & People Development Team Leader

# 1 Background

- 1.1 This audit has been undertaken as part of the annual audit plan for 2021/22 and has sought to determine compliance with the following key control objectives regarding the mandatory training of both officers and Members  
KCO1 : A satisfactory process is in place to ensure the identification of mandatory training and its consistent provision  
KCO2 : An adequate system exists for recording mandatory training undertaken  
KCO3 : Completion of mandatory training is appropriately monitored
- 1.2 It is management's responsibility to develop and maintain sound systems of risk management, internal control and governance and for the prevention and detection of irregularities and fraud. Internal audit work should not be seen as a substitute for management's responsibilities for the design and operation of these systems.
- We endeavour to plan our work so that we have a reasonable expectation of detecting significant control weaknesses and, if detected, we shall carry out additional work directed towards identification of consequent fraud or other irregularities. However, internal audit procedures alone, even when carried out with due professional care, do not guarantee that fraud will be detected.
- Accordingly, our examinations as internal auditors should not be relied upon solely to disclose fraud, misappropriation or other irregularities which may exist.
- 1.3 Internal Auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.
- 1.4 The central matrix for mandatory officer training sits at corporate, as opposed to service, level. This audit has therefore focused on the corporate mandatory training aspect that sets out whether courses are applicable to new starters, all staff, or computer users, and which includes such areas as data protection and cyber security amongst others.
- 1.5 MyLO (My Learning Online) is that which is used to deliver non face to face training to officers. The Council's current MyLO licence is for 1000 users. As part of local government re-organisation (LGR), corporate mandatory training and e-learning in terms of the new Council's needs and system appropriateness is currently being considered.
- 1.6 With regards to system limitations, there is no link between the Trent HR system and MyLO, therefore leavers require manual removal from MyLO to enable accurate reporting by Organisational & People Development regarding training completion. Additionally, the package chosen by the Council means that the system does not automatically generate an email reminder to an employee where training is outstanding, although this functionality is available, therefore again, manual intervention is necessary.
- 1.7 Monitoring of officer training is carried out by Organisational & People Development although ultimately it is a Manager who has responsibility for ensuring that their staff have completed the necessary training.
- 1.8 The Member Learning & Development Strategy was approved in May 2018. As part of this Strategy, an annual report is issued to General Purposes Committee setting out training carried out in the year and also seeks approval for training in the coming year. MyLO is not used for Member training; training currently being delivered instead via TEAMS

## 2 Audit Scope

- 2.1 The scope of the audit involved a review of the key controls by undertaking compliance testing as well as documentation review and discussion with staff.

## 3 Audit Opinion

- 3.1 A summary of Audit Services' opinion levels and their definitions is provided below:

Level	Definition
<b>Significant Level of Assurance</b>	The system of internal control is designed to support the Council's corporate and service objectives and controls are consistently applied in all the areas reviewed.
<b>Good Level of Assurance</b>	There is generally a sound system of control designed to support the Council's corporate and service objectives. However, some improvements to the design or application of controls is required.
<b>Partial Level of Assurance</b>	Weaknesses are identified in the design or inconsistent application of controls which put the achievement of some of the Council's corporate and service objectives at risk in the areas reviewed.
<b>No Level of Assurance</b>	There are weaknesses in control, or consistent non-compliance which places corporate and service objectives at risk in the areas reviewed.

- 3.2 Based on this report's findings, and in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, Audit Services have given a Partial Level of Assurance on the Internal Control Framework within the function relating to Officers and a Significant Level of Assurance relating to Members.
- 3.3 Examples of good practice were found in that 1-2-1 and appraisal forms have both now been updated so as to include a managerial prompt enabling the extent of mandatory training completion to be established directly with officers.
- 3.4 One issue to note is that ultimately there are no consequences for non-completion of mandatory officer training. This has resulted in previous enforcement difficulties.
- 3.5 The MyLO system records all officer training undertaken via e-learning. However, as operational staff do not have access to this learning format, separate recording is necessary. It is understood that investigation into an appropriate means of capturing all corporate mandatory training is being considered separately as part of LGR. No recommendation is therefore being made at KCO2 below, however this will have an effect on the overall Audit opinion.
- 3.6 At the time of the initial audit client meeting, there had been one new Member since the 2018 elections and relevant Committee training delivered. However, other areas of training remained outstanding and a formal process for ensuring training delivery in such circumstances had not yet been established. Since then, both areas have been addressed and recommendations are therefore no longer necessary.

3.7 With reference to the key controls being reviewed, these are considered to be partly met; the key risks for which are set out in the main body of the report. There are 6 recommendations that have been made in total, relating to Officer training, all graded at priority 2.

## 4 Detailed Findings & Action Plan

The audit findings are detailed in this section on an exception basis only for the attention of Management, therefore KCO's with adequate controls are not included.

Recommendations are prioritised as follows:

Priority 1 - These relate to significant gaps in the Internal Control Framework

Priority 2 - These relate to minor gaps in the Internal Control Framework or significant issues of non-compliance with key controls

Priority 3 - These relate to minor issues of non-compliance with controls.

Ref	Findings	Recommendations	Risk	Management Response	Officer Responsible and Implementation Date
<b>KCO1 : A satisfactory process is in place to ensure the identification of mandatory training and its consistent provision</b>					
1	Data Protection is the one corporate mandatory training course that requires completion by all types of staff Council wide. However, although this has been completed by the vast majority, it remains outstanding for operational staff as they do not have access to e-learning. Instead, their learning format is to be via a simple leaflet; roll out options for which are currently being considered. The intention is to also update the new starters induction checklist to reflect the need to issue this leaflet.	<b>R1: Priority 2 (MKRef1504)</b> Roll out to operational staff of their Data Protection learning should continue to be progressed	Due to the nature of the work of operational staff, the likelihood of data breaches occurring is considered low. However, any breach could, nevertheless, potentially incur a financial penalty and reputational damage	<b>Agreed:</b> The roll out is already under way lead by the Legal Assistant – Information & Project Services	Head of People & Organisational Development / Head of Legal & Governance 16/02/23
		<b>R2: Priority 2 (MKRef1505)</b> Update of the new starter induction checklist to reflect data protection leaflet issue to operational staff should be progressed once the learning roll out has been agreed		<b>Agreed:</b> The reference to the leaflet will be added	Head of People & Organisational Development 16/02/23

Ref	Findings	Recommendations	Risk	Management Response	Officer Responsible and Implementation Date
<b>KCO3 : Completion of mandatory training is appropriately monitored</b>					
2	<p>The welcome email issued to new starters explains that they have 6 weeks from the start of their employment to complete their training courses; exceptions being the ICT User Policy and Data Protection Essentials courses which require completion in the first week.</p> <p>However, limited resources prevent these timescales being monitored by Organisational &amp; People Development; their monitoring being carried out quarterly to assess completion within the quarter</p>	<p><b>R3: Priority 2 (MKRef1508)</b> Use of the MYLO system's automatic reminder facility should be re-considered</p>	<p>Staff commencing employment at the start of a quarter, who fail to complete training, potentially put the Council at risk for some 3 months prior to their being sent a reminder</p>	<p><b>Not agreed:</b> The current LMS package purchased by HBC does not have the capability of sending automatic reminders and would require investment to do so. Due to LGR and the approval to move to the new e-learning system (Learning Zone) prior to vesting day as well as our contract expiry in October '22, it is not proposed that we further invest in our LMS. Our understanding is that the system for the new council is capable of sending automatic reminders.</p> <p><b>Audit Comment:</b> Whilst Audit accept this situation, we have to point out that, nevertheless, until the new system is operational, the risk still remains</p>	N/A

3	<p>There are no consequences for non-completion of mandatory training at present. This was noted as causing difficulty in achieving timely completion of the data protection training which remained outstanding for 22% of staff some 6 weeks after the initial deadline had passed, in spite of managers and senior managers being informed</p>	<p><b>R4: Priority 2 (MKRef1509)</b>  Network access for staff who fail to undertake training within the expected timeframe should be suspended until training has been completed</p>	<p>Untrained staff may put the Council at risk of financial loss and/or reputational damage, particularly in the areas of Cyber Security and Data Protection, where various cyber threats and data loss may be involved</p>	<p><b>Not agreed:</b>  We fully understand why, as an organisation, we need a system in place to ensure employees complete mandatory training and that those who persistently fail to do so face consequences. However we feel that we must be mindful that HBC are moving to a new learning system as part of LGR, which will have new processes and policies in place for tackling non-completion of mandatory training as part of the new council. Conversations have already started to plan when we will transfer to the new learning system. Our understanding is that, from 01/01/23, we will no longer recruit staff under HBC terms and conditions. New employees will therefore use the new learning system and be governed by the new policy. It is very likely that we will be moving to the new system by this date, if not before. There may be an expectation for our employees to complete additional mandatory training as part of this transfer as well as learning a new system, so a further commitment on employees capacity will be required. We do not believe the timing for this action is right, not only from the perspective of the new system being introduced and what that entails, but also from an employee engagement perspective. Morale is low in parts of the organisation due to staff shortages, retention, high workloads and LGR anxiety. We need to be doing all we can to retain staff so we must be mindful what and how we communicate to staff in the present climate not to disengage employees further.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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Ref	Findings	Recommendations	Risk	Management Response	Officer Responsible and Implementation Date
				<p>As an alternative recommendation we have agreed with the Head of People and OD, that the Employee Relations Advisers with HR will take a more proactive approach in chasing completions by working with managers to ensure courses are completed within the required time frame wherever possible. We will provide information to them of where we need employees to be chased for non-completion.</p> <p><b>Audit Comment:</b> Whilst Audit accept this situation, we have to point out that, nevertheless, until the new arrangements are in place, the risk still remains</p>	



4	<p>Audit testing on a sample of 10 non-operational new starters from a population of 40 between April and September 2021 found that, by October, 30% had completed all expected corporate mandatory training courses; a further 30% having partly completed all courses and 40% having completed none.</p> <p>Where new starter training in one quarter remains outstanding, a reminder email is issued by Organisational &amp; People Development in the following quarter to the employee and their manager insisting on completion.</p> <p>However, due to resource limitations, further policing checks are not carried out by Organisational &amp; People Development to determine whether emailed reminders and prompts have effectively resulted in training completion.</p> <p>Audit testing determined that by January 2022 full completion had risen to 80% for the sample selected; 20% having partly completed all courses. Non completed training included Data Protection and the ICT User Policy and had been outstanding for 7½ and 4 months for each employee.</p> <p>A further control was introduced in quarter 4 of 2021/22 whereby managers are also prompted via 1-2-1s and appraisal forms to raise outstanding training with their staff although the effectiveness of such has not been able to be assessed due to timing.</p>	<p><b>R5: Priority 2 (MKRef1510)</b> Resource allocation should be re-assessed to allow for regular monitoring of non-completion of mandatory training, including historic non completions, and reporting to Management Board.</p>	<p>The Council is unaware of the scale of overall outstanding corporate mandatory training</p> <p>Potential financial penalty in the case of data breaches by untrained staff</p> <p>Staff unfamiliar with the ICT User Policy may inadvertently place the Council's network security at risk</p>	<p><b>Not agreed:</b> Due to LGR and additional work, we are unable to allocate additional resources to increase reporting on completions. As part of the LGR mandatory training review for the new council, HBC will be auditing the gaps in training completions as all employees will be required to have completed all mandatory training by the vesting date.</p> <p>We are proposing however to amend the email reminder to managers, to strengthen their responsibility to ensure employees are completing the training and that they will need to have completed mandatory training before the vesting day.</p> <p><b>Audit Comment:</b> Whilst Audit accept this situation, we have to point out that, nevertheless, until the new arrangements are in place, the risk still remains</p>	N/A
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Ref	Findings	Recommendations	Risk	Management Response	Officer Responsible and Implementation Date
5	It is possible to include agency and casual staff in the new starters quarterly monitoring report. However, Organisational & People Development are not notified about which of these staff have network access, and in turn access to MyLO. As a result, course completions for these staff are not currently monitored; the onus being on the manager to ensure completion of relevant training.	<b>R6: Priority 2 (MKRef1511)</b> Agency and casual new starters should be included in training completion monitoring.	Reminder emails are not issued where training is outstanding for agency and casual staff; the position regarding training of such staff being unclear for managers	<b>Agreed:</b> These employees will be added to quarterly checks.	Head of People & Organisational Development 16/02/23

Any queries or requests for further information regarding this report should be directed to Audit Services on 01423 500600 extension 58586. Audit Services would like to thank the officers involved for their assistance during this audit.