

Induction for New Members in 2017

Local Authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association have traditionally worked together to plan and support induction activities for new members in Wales following local elections. The 2017 elections will bring fresh challenges for members and authorities and a new approach may be required. Following discussions with Heads and Chairs of Democratic Services at recent network meetings, this discussion document is offered for wider consideration, to inform joint working and the sharing of resources. It will also inform discussions with the Welsh Government.

Induction in 2017 will require a different approach to that taken previously because:

1. The changing face of local government is likely to mean that the expectations placed on members has grown and will continue to increase. New and returning members will require information on changes in legislation such as the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, the Planning Act and the Social Services and Well-Being Act. The Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill (if it becomes law) will require fundamental changes to the role of members and committee structures over and above the reorganisation of local government. The nature of council service delivery and councillor casework is also changing rapidly to meet the needs of communities as a result of welfare reform, immigration, population growth and an aging population.
2. Reduced staff and budgets mean that there are fewer resources both locally and nationally to support the induction of new and returning members. There will also inevitably be fewer opportunities for authorities to use outside providers for councillor development and authority officers may have less time to provide sessions themselves.
3. There is greater potential to deliver learning to members digitally. Members are more IT literate and digitally engaged than previously and the new intake are likely to be used to learning and communicating online. There is now free access to the Local Government All Wales Academy for e-learning for members.
4. The Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill may require that each authority should decide which aspects of councillor development is mandatory. Some authorities already make provision for this in their constitutions. A general agreement on what should be considered mandatory development would help councils work together to provide it.
5. Other partners may be available to help in councillor development for example, Academi Wales (WG) who sponsor the Leadership Academy and the Fairer Futures division in the WG (who have delivered the recent regional equalities training).

The Network believes that the induction process can be streamlined, shared and supported by the WLGA and other partners.

Members have told us the following about induction in previous years:

- Delivering too much information too soon (or even over the first 6 months) is not always helpful for members.
- Members appreciate receiving some learning activities face to face. This usually includes committee briefings, scrutiny questioning, charring, media skills.
- Members appreciate opportunities to see council and community offices, venues, locations and meet both senior and frontline officers.
- Members sometimes find general presentations from service directors too detailed and not delivered at the right time.
- Members value information on how to contact relevant officers and what they do.
- Induction works best when it is coordinated and the content decided by one team in discussion with all service areas, rather than different services being given space in a programme which leads to an imbalance in information.
- Members enjoy regional induction activities as opportunities to hear about approaches in different authorities.
- Induction workshop materials developed by the WLGA and authorities in previous years were used in some cases by some authorities but not universally.
- New Cabinets may also need support in understanding their roles.
- Buddying of new councillors with officers/ members can be helpful for the first few days.
- Mentoring of new members is useful but often takes place informally. Mentors require training in mentoring skills.
- Dates for induction need to be provided to candidates as soon as notice of their candidature is received.

Some possible ways forward:

- A 'curriculum' for induction might be useful to share and agree among authorities as a first stage. This should dovetail with role descriptions and the *Wales Councillor Development Framework* and most importantly be agreed by current members as useful. Some initial ideas are contained in the example induction programme below.
- An agreement on which aspects of councillor development should be mandatory. Although the Local Government Wales Bill suggests that each local authority would decide which training for councillors should be mandatory, a shared agreement across Wales would strengthen arrangements and facilitate resource sharing. The Welsh Government have agreed that they would welcome suggestions from the Network about what training should be recommended as mandatory if this becomes law. Initial suggestions are:

For all councillors

- Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Constitutional matters including meeting participation Standing Orders etc.
- Introduction to Equalities
- Safeguarding
- Data Management and Freedom of Information
- Corporate Parenting
- Finance including budgeting and treasury management

For specific committee members

- Planning for Planning Committee members
- Standards for Standards Committee members
- Licencing for Licencing committee members
- Audit for Audit committee members
- Appointments for appointment committees
- Scrutiny for Scrutiny Members

For Chairs

- Meeting management skills for all chairs and vice chairs
 - Effective scrutiny chairing for scrutiny chairs and vice chairs
- Market place style induction days as used in some authorities in 2012 might be a good alternative to the traditional programmed first induction day.
 - Efforts should be put into making members more able to learn independently, having access to information and skills as and when needed rather than as part of a formal suite of induction workshops. Mandatory sessions and those best delivered face to face would be programmed but everything else could be available as e learning (with monitoring of courses undertaken). Induction to ICT, access to member's portals, and help with accessing e learning therefore becomes more of a priority in the programme.
 - Regional shared sessions. Working with partners such as WLGA and Welsh Government.
 - Scheduling of personal development reviews for new councillors following induction so that ongoing training can be decided and prioritised.

An example local authority induction programme

Day One (Compulsory)

- Signing the Declaration of Office and Code of conduct
- Tour of council offices/ facilities
- Given new councillor pack which includes all contacts, councillor's guide (either in print or via link to the members portal)
- Welcome from the Chief Executive
- Presentation. How the council works just an overview of corporate governance not each service.
- Explanation of the induction process

Week One

Market place and induction essentials 10.00 – 8.00. Open all day but councillors can 'dip in and out' within the expectation that they will attend a mandatory ethics and standards session. Food provided 12.30 – 13.30 for everyone to encourage more discussions.

Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
Market Place Each of the major service areas/initiatives has a stand with senior and operational staff ready to explain what they do and issues of the day. Members circulate throughout the day and evening.	Mandatory Ethics and Standards/Code of Conduct training by Monitoring Officer. Members attend one session. 10.00 – 12.00 2.00 4.00 6.00 – 8.00	ICT equipment and induction. By officers from the ICT team. Members are booked onto one to one sessions 40 mins each. Given equipment, access to networks and member portal, and e learning packages. Instructions given as required.

Mandatory Committee training (see list above) will take place prior to first meeting of relevant Committee.

E-Learning will be available from Day One accessed when required. (See modules for members and other on All Wales Academy previously distributed)

First 6 months - remaining mandatory training in face to face workshops (see above)

Second 6 months - Remaining induction requirements (not mandatory) such as:

- Community Leadership and Casework
- New Cabinet development if required
- Further policy, service and legislative requirements for each committee

April 2018 Personal Development Review to identify further development needs.

Additional materials provided by the WLGA include a Candidates guide which will be ready April 2016 on the WLGA Website. Candidates can be referred to this stand alone resource and authorities can also customise for their own websites and for hard copy distribution.

A New Councillors Guide, produced in the same way will be available in December 2016.

Views from each authority on the possible ways forward are invited from Democratic Services Committees and other officers and members responsible for councillor support and development.

When all authorities have had an opportunity to consider the suitability of the approach, the Network and the WLGA will ensure that priority resources are made available where they do not already exist.