

Draft Housing Competence Policy – August 2026

1. Policy Statement

The London Borough of Hillingdon is committed to ensuring that all Housing staff have and maintain the knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours needed to deliver safe, effective, resident-focused and compliant housing services.

We recognise that a competent workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to tenants, leaseholders and residents. The Council will invest in learning and development, support professional growth and maintain arrangements to ensure competence is regularly assessed, monitored and evidenced.

This policy supports compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, including the Competence and Conduct Standard, and other relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

The need for an Equality Impact Assessment was considered when drafting this policy. As it applies equally to all relevant staff undertaking landlord services and housing management activities within the scope of the Competence and Conduct Standard, a separate assessment was not deemed necessary.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out how the Council will:

- Support learning and development.
- Maintain a competent workforce.
- Meet the Housing Competence & Conduct Standard.
- Support professional qualifications.
- Monitor competence and performance.
- Address competence and performance concerns fairly and consistently.

Definition of Competence

Competence means having and maintaining the appropriate knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours required to perform a role effectively, safely, ethically and in accordance with legislative, regulatory and organisational requirements.

Competence is demonstrated not only through qualifications and training, but also through behaviour, service delivery, professional judgement and practical application of learning.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Permanent employees
- Fixed-term employees
- Apprentices

- Agency staff undertaking housing functions
- Housing managers and senior leaders
- Contractors and others delivering landlord services and housing-related services on behalf of the Council where appropriate

For the purposes of this policy, landlord services are services connected with the management of social housing. Relevant staff are those involved in the provision of landlord services. Within the Residents Services Directorate, this may include housing management, tenancy services, neighbourhood management, income management, leasehold and home ownership services, resident engagement, complaints handling, anti-social behaviour services, homelessness and housing advice services, housing allocations and lettings, independent living services, repairs, voids, caretaking, maintenance, compliance, building safety, asset management, estate management, capital programmes and other services connected with the management of social housing.

Qualification and competence requirements for individual roles are determined through the Role-to-Qualification Mapping Matrix. The Competence & Conduct Standard defines relevant staff as those involved in the provision of landlord services, and landlord services as services in connection with the management of social housing.

3. Principles

The Council will:

- Promote continuous learning and professional development.
- Provide fair and inclusive access to learning opportunities.
- Define competence requirements through the Housing Competence Framework.
- Support employees to achieve and maintain competence.
- Regularly assess competence and development needs.
- Maintain records to demonstrate compliance with competence requirements.
- Consider reasonable adjustments where required.

4. Housing Competence Framework and Qualifications

The Council will maintain a Housing Competence Framework that defines the knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours required for housing roles and demonstrates compliance with the Competence and Conduct Standard.

The framework will support:

- Recruitment and selection.
- Induction and probation.
- Appraisal and performance management.
- Workforce planning and succession planning.
- Learning and development activities.

Recruitment, selection, induction and probation arrangements will be used to assess whether individuals possess, or can reasonably attain, the competence requirements of their role. Where development needs are identified, appropriate learning and support arrangements will be put in place.

Resident feedback and expectations will be considered when developing and reviewing competence requirements.

The Council may require employees in designated housing roles to:

- Hold or achieve a specified qualification.
- Complete mandatory learning.
- Maintain professional accreditation where required.

Qualification requirements and completion timescales will be determined through the Role-to-Qualification Mapping Matrix within the Competence Framework and associated guidance.

Employees must complete mandatory training and refresher learning within required timescales.

5. Learning and Development

The Council will provide learning and development opportunities appropriate to role requirements and business needs.

This may include:

- Professional qualifications.
- Formal training.
- E-learning.
- Workshops and seminars.
- Coaching and mentoring.
- Apprenticeships.
- Secondments.
- Job shadowing.
- Professional memberships.
- Communities of practice.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

All employees are expected to engage with agreed learning activities and demonstrate the application of learning within their role.

Employees undertaking qualifications provided by the Council via apprenticeships or commercial routes must sign and comply with a Learning Agreement.

New employees must complete an induction programme appropriate to their role.

The Council is committed to supporting employees to develop and maintain competence. Subject to operational requirements and relevant Council policies,

support may include training opportunities, study leave, coaching, learning resources, professional qualification support, wellbeing support and reasonable adjustments where required.

6. Performance, Appraisal and Competence Review

The Council will review employee performance, competence and development through:

- Probation reviews.
- Regular one-to-one meetings.
- Annual appraisal discussions.
- Qualification and development reviews.
- Competence assessments.

Formal competence assessments will normally be completed through the annual appraisal process and may take place more frequently where required.

Competence may be assessed using:

- Qualifications and mandatory training records.
- CPD activity.
- Appraisal outcomes.
- Professional discussions.
- Observed practice.
- Quality assurance findings.
- Service performance information.
- Resident feedback.
- Complaint and satisfaction information.

Where competence gaps are identified, managers will agree appropriate development and improvement actions and monitor progress.

7. Managing Performance and Qualification Concerns

The Council is committed to addressing competence and performance concerns promptly, fairly and consistently.

Where concerns arise, managers will:

- Discuss concerns with the employee.
- Identify causes.
- Review learning and support needs.
- Provide appropriate support.
- Agree improvement actions and review arrangements.
- Monitor progress and outcomes.

Where sufficient improvement is not achieved, matters may be managed through the Council's performance, capability or disciplinary procedures.

Capability and Conduct

The Council will distinguish between:

Capability Issues

Where an employee is unable to meet required standards despite genuine effort, engagement and support.

This includes employees who actively engage with mandatory qualifications but experience difficulties such as learning needs, health conditions or repeated assessment failure despite reasonable effort.

Conduct Issues

Where an employee knowingly fails to comply with requirements, including refusal to:

- Undertake mandatory qualifications.
- Attend learning activities.
- Complete assessments.
- Follow agreed improvement plans.

Capability concerns will normally be managed through supportive development and capability processes. Conduct concerns may be managed through disciplinary procedures.

Detailed arrangements are contained within the Qualification Support and Escalation Procedure.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

Employees must:

- Sign a learning agreement prior to enrolment of courses
- Maintain professional competence
- Participate in learning and development
- Engage with required qualifications and training
- Apply learning within their role
- Discuss development needs with their manager

Managers

Managers must:

- Assess competence requirements
- Support employee development
- Monitor learning and qualification progress
- Complete competence reviews

- Address competence concerns promptly
- Maintain appropriate records
- Escalate significant competence risks where necessary
- Maintain their own competence including leadership, people management and relevant housing knowledge.

Housing Senior Management Team

The Housing Senior Management Team is responsible for:

- Strategic oversight
- Monitoring compliance
- Reviewing competence risks
- Ensuring appropriate resources are available
- Receiving assurance regarding workforce competence
- Approving and reviewing the Housing Competence Framework and associated role-to-qualification mapping

Failure to comply with this policy may be managed through performance, capability or disciplinary procedures where appropriate.

Human Resources / Learning and Development

Human Resources / Learning and Development Team is responsible for:

- Supporting policy implementation
- Maintaining learning systems and records
- Providing professional advice on capability and disciplinary processes
- Monitoring and reporting on mandatory e-learning compliance

9. Monitoring and Assurance

Managers will monitor:

- Qualification enrolment and completion
- Mandatory training compliance.
- Competence assessment outcomes.
- CPD activity.
- Capability and conduct cases.
- Workforce competence risks.

Where housing services are delivered by contractors or third-party providers, the Council will seek assurance that individuals delivering services are competent and appropriately qualified.

Contract managers will obtain and review evidence that contractors maintain appropriate competence, qualifications, training and supervision arrangements for individuals delivering housing services.

Reports will be provided through governance arrangements, including HRA Subgroups, HRA Operations Group and Cabinet Member, to provide assurance regarding compliance with the Housing Competence and Conduct Standard.

Competence risks may include qualification non-compliance, mandatory training non-compliance, skills shortages, succession risks, recruitment challenges or other issues that could impact the Council's ability to maintain a competent workforce.

The Council will:

- Monitor legislative, regulatory and professional developments.
- Consider resident feedback when reviewing workforce competence.
- Use competence information to support workforce planning and succession planning.
- Maintain records in accordance with information governance requirements.

10. Policy Review and Related Documents

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where required due to legislative, regulatory or organisational change. Residents Services (Housing) is responsible for maintaining and reviewing the policy.

Supporting Documents

- Housing Competence Framework
- Housing Code of Conduct
- Learning Support Agreement
- Equalities Impact Assessment