



STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Prospectus for 2024 candidates

DCN
DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

2
0
2
4



Penna

JULIE TOWERS

MANAGING DIRECTOR, PENNA

"Penna are proud and delighted this year, our 50th birthday year, to be sponsoring the Staff Development Programme and partnering with the DCN once again."



OUR SPONSORS

As talent attraction and development specialists we know how important supporting aspirant talent is, and how essential programmes like the SDP are in developing the next generation of leaders. We have supported the programme for the last 5 years and look forward to playing an even bigger role in supporting DCN delegates to enhance their career journey.

We will be utilising our significant local government leadership network to enhance the SDP experience and offering career coaching and development support to delegates who join the programme. Together with the DCN we will provide a career enhancing experience, unrivalled learning and access to extensive networks and insight that we have gained from our 50 years of finding, exciting and securing talent for local government

DCN
DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK



AN INTRODUCTION

Run annually since 2014, the DCN's Staff Development Programme (SDP) is a well-regarded and successful programme for rising stars in DCN member councils to support their professional development and leadership potential.

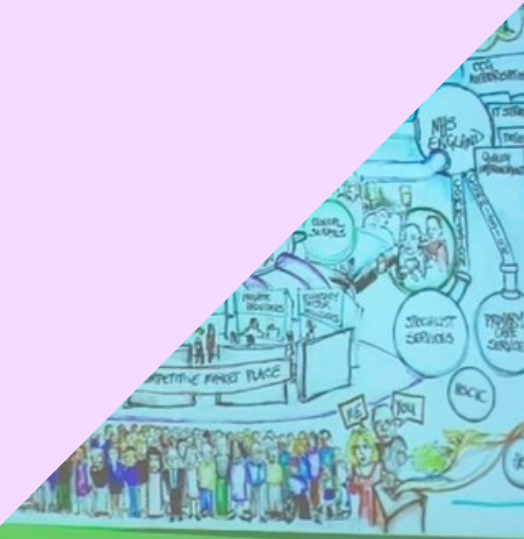
We are looking forward to welcoming a new cohort of participants for 2024 as we mark ten years of the SDP.

Staff Development Programme graduate (2023) *"I really do owe the programme everything, I have tried to gain a senior position for some time and always fallen short but I can't say how much the programme has helped to unlock the last few crucial details that allowed me to demonstrate the "x factor".*

OBJECTIVES

The SDP has four main objectives

- i. Help participants to become more familiar with the key policy and delivery issues facing councils and wider partners and give them the strategic knowledge they need to succeed within local government.
- ii. Help participants develop the skills to deal with the changing landscape of local government and become a leader.
- iii. Provide them with a Chief Executive or senior officer mentor for support, guidance and advice.
- iv. Develop their experience of working with central government and understanding of national policy and priorities.





APPLICATION PROCESS

We ask that all applicants are sponsored by a chief executive or senior member of staff.

As the programme is very popular and is usually oversubscribed, we'll prioritise applications to ensure as many member councils as possible have the chance to participate.

Depending on the number of applications, we may need to conduct an informal selection process based on the content of applications received.

We also ask that your council commits to releasing successful applicants for each of the events and supports them in meeting with their mentor so that participants can gain the most value from the programme.

The deadline for applying to the 2023 SDP is 6pm on Monday 18th December 2023. Applications can be submitted online: [DCN 2024 SDP Application Form](#)

BENEFITS

From participating in District Councils' Network SDP Programme

The programme has consistently received positive feedback from participants. It's a unique opportunity for staff from member councils across the country to come together and learn from each other, and to develop their understanding of the wider policy and political context for local government, as well as their own leadership skills.

"My experience on the programme was one I would recommend to anyone wishing to challenge themselves whilst learning new skills" – 2022 Participant

WHAT ARE THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF SDP?

- FACE-TO-FACE
DEVELOPMENT EVENTS
- ONLINE WEBINARS
- PERSONAL PROJECT
- MENTORING
- WHITEHALL
WORKSHADOWING



THE EVENTS:

Series of face-to-face professional development sessions (hosted in London and Districts)

There will be at least three themed professional development sessions. All sessions will have an emphasis on being highly interactive, with plenty of opportunities for group work and collaboration. There will be inspiring speakers and engaging facilitators.

01

Your development within local government

A one-day event focusing on participants' career path through local government, with a mixture of leadership skills'-based work and knowledge content. This includes sessions of driving collaboration, navigating local politics, developing leadership skills, and affecting change.

02

Working in a political and policy orientated environment

A one-day event to build strategic policy awareness as well as to support participants with the skills they need to work within a political environment. This could include an introduction to key national policy priorities, topical areas of concern for districts, and consideration of how to translate national policy priorities to the local level and vice versa.

03

Preparing for leadership - Becoming a leader for the day

Externally run leadership role play event, where candidates work in teams to tackle challenges, engage, influence and negotiate with partners and politicians, and take difficult decisions.

04

Reflection and Growth

A closing event to reflect on progress and support participants to identify their next steps, and consider how their roles fit within the strategic aim of their council.



We also run online events to support participants' professional development and policy knowledge.



YOUR PROJECT:

A project to introduce an improvement in the participant's own council

Participants are expected to identify, plan and implement real-life change in their own council for their project. The projects will have a strong emphasis on collaboration – and instead of individual projects, participants from neighbouring councils may choose to work together on a single project to deliver wider change across boundaries.

The face-to-face events will then support them with implementing their projects by including opportunities to reflect, discuss and share their learning and challenges with their peers through action learning sets.

MENTORING:

We've previously used an extensive network of mentors who provide valuable advice and encouragement to participants.

Mentors are senior officers (including Chief Executives, Directors and Heads of Service) from DCN member councils who volunteer to mentor one or two participants from the programme. We assign mentors to participants on the programme and encourage them to build these relationships and take responsibility for meeting during the programme. As well as meeting regularly, participants and mentors may like to arrange exchanges, visits or placements.

Our team is always looking for more mentors to support of programme participants. If anyone at your councils is interested in volunteering to be a mentor, please get in touch.

WHITEHALL WORKSHADOWING:

We work in collaboration with DLUHC to give Staff Development Programme participants the opportunity to shadow a senior civil servant for two days across the 12 months of the programme.

We're also have a reciprocal arrangement, whereby civil servants will be visiting districts to learn more about our work

SELECTION CRITERIA:

In the event that the programme is oversubscribed, the DCN central team will need to undertake a short selection process to allocate places. Anyone who is not offered a place can be prioritised for the following year's programme.

Selection would be based on ensuring we achieve:

- Representation from across all regions
- Participation from as many councils as possible

We may prioritise candidates who:

- Are newer in their local government career, regardless of their age.
- Can clearly demonstrate what they hope to learn from participating, and what they will contribute to the programme.

COSTS:

To help cover the costs of running the programme, we do charge a small fee to each participant's council.

The fee covers attendance and hospitality at all in-person events and includes an overnight stay for the 2-day learning event, but it excludes any cost of travel to the face-to-face events. We believe that this represents fantastic value for money.

The fee will be £430 + VAT per participant.

We don't want any member councils to miss out though, so if the cost is prohibitive, please get in touch.

GET IN TOUCH:

For any questions about SDP you can reach us any time on dcn@local.gov.uk

Keep up to date with the SDP on our website: <https://www.districtcouncils.info/staff-development-programme/>

