



Protected Learning Time (Surrey and Sussex) (1193/2026)

Abstract

This policy and associated procedure is to inform everyone connected with Surrey Police and Sussex Police, and with whom it subcontracts or collaborates, of our agreed policy with regard to Protected Learning Time (PLT). The policy complies with the national requirements of apprenticeship programmes, which mandate that learners on apprenticeship programmes must be allowed a minimum 20% of their work time for off-the-job training.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy is designed to support those officers and staff undertaking Learning and Professional Development (L&PD) in Surrey Police and Sussex Police (hereafter referred to as the Forces) and particularly those engaged on the Police Officer Entry Routes.

2. Scope

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide:

- Guidance to police officers and staff who are undertaking a mandatory learning programme which leads to a formal qualification as part of their role;
- Guidance to managers as to how they can best support those undertaking such learning programmes;
- Guidance relating to other L&PD activity which does not lead to a formal qualification but may require specific learning time.

3. Statement

3.1 L&PD is a fundamental activity that provides all officers and staff with the professional knowledge, understanding, skills, competence, and confidence to meet the challenges of working in a modern police service.

3.2 The vision of L&PD is to develop a capable workforce with the right skills, knowledge, and experience so all our people can develop and fulfil their potential. Protected Learning Time (PLT) is an opportunity for officers and staff to address their own L&PD needs in support of this vision.

3.3 The Forces will ensure that a consistent and fair approach is applied to managing PLT across all roles in each organisation.

Procedure

1. Introduction

1.1 This procedure sets out the Forces' approach to the management of PLT.

1.2 The success of the Forces depends on many factors, including the need for all police officers and staff to be knowledgeable and skilled in the performance of their roles and duties.

1.3 The demands on the police service means that a range of methods and techniques will be required to achieve this, whilst minimising abstractions from core roles and without compromising the effectiveness of the Forces in delivering their objectives.

1.4 This will mean an increase in the use of flexible methods such as informal on the job training and social learning through coaching and mentoring, instead of or in combination with traditional learning programmes and training courses. Formal learning, such as training courses have value and will continue to be an important part of the solution.

1.5 The Police Constable Entry Routes (PCER) and Police Community Support Officer Apprenticeship (PCSOA) include apprenticeships as formal entry routes into policing. Those entry routes contain statutory requirements regarding completing off-the-job learning. Furthermore, other entry routes place conditions on forces / learning providers as part of the licensing requirements required by our professional body – the College of Policing (CoP).

Learning programmes will require candidates to undertake formal work-based assessments and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for the duration of the programme.

1.6 In order for Forces to meet these statutory requirements, it is vitally important that all departments support the use of PLT as part of the PCER, PCSOA and other learning programmes. Where a learner's mandatory PLT requirements have not been met, this will result in PLT being taken in blocks.

2. Identification and Prioritisation of Needs

2.1 Officers and staff will require PLT because of one or more of the following drivers:

- Statutory required learning and development.
- Organisational and national priorities (learning essential to role).
- Improving performance.
- Development of potential.

3. Statutory Required Learning

3.1 Learning and development is required as a condition of programme licence or mandated by statute. This currently applies to:

- Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA).

- Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP).
- Detective Degree Holder Entry Programme (DDHEP).
- Police Community Support Officer Apprenticeship (PCSOA).
- National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF).

3.2 All the above programmes are a minimum of 12 months in duration. They consist of periods of formal training, work integrated learning, work-based assessment, assignments, and reflective practice in order to achieve a formal qualification.

3.3 Some of the above may have expectations that student officers complete some learning in their own time. However, this does not apply for apprenticeship programmes. Apprenticeships must conform to the strict rules of that learning programme.

3.4 The Funding Rules for Apprenticeships include the following:

- Off-the-job training is training received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's paid hours, for the purpose of achieving their apprenticeship;
- At least 20% of the apprentice's paid hours must be spent on off-the-job training;
- Off-the-job training does not include training which takes place outside the apprentice's paid hours.

3.5 Programmes in this category are automatically afforded duty / work time as required for the purposes of assessment, self-directed study, portfolio building and other matters essential to meeting the mandatory requirements of the programme. There will be exceptional occasions when operational necessity (for example, court warnings) and optimal staffing levels will need to be taken into account. When this occurs, PLT will be re-rostered so not to disadvantage the learner. It is the responsibility of the learner to make sure this occurs and to escalate to their Professional Development Assessor (further referred to as PDA) and line manager if it does not; however, this is checked and monitored during the progress review meetings.

4. Learning Essential to the Role - Organisational and National Priorities

4.1 Organisational and national priorities, mandatory learning, and development programs and those essential to the role of the individual will be decided centrally. If necessary, guidance on entitlements to study leave and/or PLT will be issued after consultation with the necessary workforce planning board and heads of departments as part of the L&PD Strategy.

4.2 Examples in this area include:

- Investigators Development Programme (IDP).
- Mandatory E-learning packages.

- Personal Safety Training.

4.3 Learners in this category will be afforded duty / work time as required for the performance of their current role but taking into account operational necessity and optimum staffing levels.

4.4 Learners and managers should ensure that they consult the Forces' Study Leave policy (separate to this policy) which makes specific provision for certain programmes of study i.e., the IDP and Cambridge Bursary Programme. Any queries regarding entitlements should be referred to the People Resolution Centre (PRC) in the first instance.

5. Improving Performance and Developing Potential

5.1 Identifying the need to improve performance and for the development of potential will be through existing performance reviews. Authorisation to access PLT would be agreed with local line managers.

5.2 In addition, open access to a variety of components will be available for individuals as an unregulated personal development opportunity to be undertaken in their own time. This could be accessed via existing procedures in relation to Study Leave.

5.3 Where operational requirements allow, learning time to improve performance will be supported where possible and considered duty / work time as above.

5.4 Where it is identified that an individual is looking to develop their potential, outside of the structure of a formal development programme, the presumption is that this will be undertaken in the individual's own time. However, line manager discretion may also be exercised in these circumstances. The exception will be if this is a direct result of a formal process, such as recommendations or advice arising from a formal resolution investigation or review under the Workplace Resolution Policy and Procedure, discipline, or employment tribunal determination. Such time would need to be agreed with the line manager in conjunction with the lead party in that investigation.

5.5 Learning solely to prepare for promotion examinations, assessment centres or specialist post recruitment will not be afforded PLT.

6. Disagreements

6.1 In the event of a disagreement on the provision of PLT any appeal will be through existing management structures who will negotiate an agreement between the learner and immediate line manager. If this fails to reach a satisfactory solution, advice should be sought from the local People Services Business partner. In the event that a situation remains unresolved, the matter can be referred to the Head of Learning and Professional Development. Guidance can also be sought from Staff Networks, UNISON, Federation and Superintendents Association to assist in resolving such matters.

6.2 Existing Surrey Police and Sussex Police workplace resolution procedures may be utilised in the event that agreement is not satisfactorily resolved through the routes advised above.

7. Recording of Protected Learning Time

7.1 Due to the nature of this type of learning, it may not always be appropriate to record all aspects of PLT (for example relatively short periods of time). For defined, longer periods, this will normally be shown on respective force duty systems under the appropriate heading.

7.2 Apprenticeship programmes may have additional requirements to record PLT to ensure compliance with those particular programmes. Candidates will be advised of this as required.

7.3 Learners must record their PLT as instructed by their Higher Education Institution (HEI) on Aptem. Learners must record their PLT on their OneFile Journal. Their entry should record the date of the PLT, hours worked and a summary of learning. This must be completed by the end of the PLT shift.

7.4 All learners must ensure they keep their own record of when they have undertaken PLT. This should be recorded in their Pocket Notebook (PNB / E-PNB) and is to document the date of their PLT, the time they started, the time they finished, the location they have worked from and a brief summary of the content of work they completed. If they have worked from a non-Police building, then the learner should document who authorised for them to work at any other location.

8. Other Management Considerations

8.1 In terms of policy decisions, the following should be considered in support of learners:

- In planning PLT, L&PD and line managers should consider the needs of learners and their preferences for learning style, time, place, and pace, as well as operational requirements. They should strike a balance between what may sometimes be conflicting priorities. Any concerns about the balance between workload and learning time should be addressed by the learner and their line manager and, if necessary, their PDA.
- In planning PLT, managers must also take into account the Forces' obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that any reasonable adjustments recommended for learners have been taken into consideration. This could include for example, the use of Read & Write software, the provision of a Dictaphone, dyslexia screening, access to a Learning Mentor and additional time to complete academic assignments. Specialist advice regarding reasonable adjustments can be sought through L&PD Support and Development Team.
- Learners allocated duty / work time to complete a learning programme but who are physically present in the normal workplace, should be treated as if they were not available for other duties except in an emergency or other exigency of duty.
- In planning PLT, managers must also consider reasonable adjustments relating to learners' religious beliefs and observance. This may include, for example, adjusting the timing or scheduling of PLT during periods of religious fasting—such as Ramadan—where a learner's ability to engage in protected learning activities may be affected by reduced energy levels or changes to daily routines. Learners observing periods of religious significance may request that PLT days or times are amended as a reasonable adjustment where operationally feasible. Managers should work collaboratively with learners to agree practical solutions that uphold both the learner's wellbeing and service

requirements, ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and supporting an inclusive working environment.

- Learners should be given access to a suitable place of study. Such a place will have suitable lighting, heating and furniture and appropriate technology, equipment and internet access.
- If the normal workplace is inconsistent with learning and development, learners will be given access to a suitable location away from that workplace such as a vacant office, hot desk or the Learning and Professional Development IT rooms.
- Learners may request agile working, including home working, through their line manager, taking into account the required learner achievement. The authorisation for this must be in writing from the line manager. The time spent working at home is counted as duty / work time. A learner's request may be declined where there is a need for them to be based at their usual place of work for their PLT, and authorisation will be at the discretion of the learner's line manager.
- Sussex only - during the coaching phase, learners will be notified of the location at which PLT can be taken by the respective Neighbourhood Coaching Unit (NCU) and Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) supervisors.
- Learners engaged in PLT must ensure they are contactable via Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) and operationally fit for duty and deployable at all times. They must be booked on their (redacted text).
- Learners engaged in PLT away from the workplace must remain within their usual travelling distance from their place of work. Their travel time to work should not exceed that of their ordinary commute.
- Learners are required to adhere to their planned shift times during PLT unless otherwise agreed in advance by their line manager. Duties must be updated where a change to on-duty times is required.
- Learners may be required to allocate themselves a call sign when on PLT and will be advised if required by their line manager.
- Where a learner is authorised to learn at home, no expenses can be claimed for the use of personal equipment and facilities such as utility bills. Learners should make use of the IT provided by the Forces such as MDTs and should not use personal equipment (e.g., personal mobile phone) for work purposes. Learners must also make themselves aware of and adhere to existing policies regarding use of non-work IT equipment for work purposes. Further guidance can be sought from the Security and Information Assurance team and Surrey Police and Sussex Police Information Security Policy (722) if required.
- Learners who choose or who are authorised, to learn at home must ensure that they have the appropriate equipment and environment suitable for working with display screen equipment and do so at their own risk. Learners should ensure they discuss this with their line managers prior to commencing learning at home and both parties should be satisfied that the appropriate requirements have been met regarding Health and Safety and Information Security.

- Learners can, with agreement with their manager, work at a suitable location instead of home as part of agile working. This may be beneficial for learners that would benefit from agile working but may not have a suitable learning environment at home. Consideration should be given by the student and manager to the suitability and appropriateness of other agile working locations given the importance of trust and confidence of the public and should be places consistent with learning such as university facilities and libraries.
- Distance learning material will normally be accompanied by guidance in relation to the time that it should take to complete. Managers and Learning and Professional Development may use learning management systems to monitor the actual time it takes staff to complete such packages.
- Managers should be aware that there may be occasions when a period of protected learning time will need to be extended for example if the learner takes a period of parental leave or long-term sickness.

9. Examples of Protected Learning Time Activities

9.1 The following provides examples and is not an exhaustive list:

- **Building of evidence portfolios** (in any format) required to complete a course of study, qualification or authorisation and any associated assessment practice that is required by it;
- **E-Learning** (including multimedia packages and web-based learning). Such material may be hosted and accessed via in-force IT platforms or external 3rd party systems;
- **On-line courses and events** run via the Forces' Intranet including bulletin boards, discussion groups and conferences;
- **Print, video, or audio-based packages;**
- **Online testing**, analysis, assessment and evaluation questionnaires and instruments;
- **Completion of written assignments or reading material;**
- Any combination of methods as part of an agreed learning strategy.

10. Exclusions

10.1 Distinction needs to be made between formalised courses of study and access to information banks, knowledge bases, user guides and a variety of other aids in the course of normal duties. The latter are sources of learning and development but where the access is for a short period of time, less than 30 minutes per occasion and is carried out as part of daily work, it would not normally be considered PLT.

10.2 No time off or time will be credited for any learning undertaken at home or outside working hours unless authorised in advance and agreed with a supervisor.

Team: People Services Department. Learning and Professional Development.