

NEWHAM COUNCIL

FINANCE GRADUATE TRAINEE SCHEME

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Finance graduate trainee scheme at Newham Council is to ensure an on-going source of qualified accountants equipped with the professional skills and detailed knowledge to become the authority's financial managers of the future.

The scheme aims to:

- Protect against market shortages of appropriately skilled staff by recruiting the best graduates available to train as financial managers
- Help provide a developing resource which can be targeted at improving financial management within the council
- Contribute to the development of a diverse workforce at senior positions within departments
- Provide a package of support which provides a real incentive for staff to perform.

Trainees are expected to be proactive in seeking exposure to work that will help them meet the gateways and expand their sphere of influence.

The scheme provides fast track career progression with a salary based on a combination of work performance and examination success, an individual structured work programme, a package of support to help scheme members study and makes available a mentor for guidance and advice.

The FGTS is based on the belief that scheme members will be able to make a valuable contribution to the council while they are training, as well as fulfilling the demand that exists for qualified staff once their training is complete. In return, staff will be expected to display standards of conduct and performance befitting members of a professional body, attend courses and examinations and submit all assigned work by the set deadlines.

2. Professional Studies

Members of the FGTS will be required to study toward the CIPFA professional accountancy qualification. It is fully modular and permits students to determine the order and the number of modules at each stage. Attaining the qualification requires the successful completion of a combination of examinations and work based experience. Staff will be given sufficient support to complete the requirements of both aspects.

Study will be undertaken via day release attendance at the CIPFA Education and Training Centre (CETC) in Aldgate. It is anticipated that gradates will complete their professional studies and obtain membership of the Institute over a 3 year time period, with an expectation that all exams will be passed first time. Planning of time off for studies is subject to negotiation with line managers to balance study needs and work needs.

3. The Package of Support

The council will meet the costs of:

- Student membership fees
- College tuition fees for each module
- Course material for each module
- Revision course fees for each module
- Exam entry fees for each module
- Time off to attend college courses
- Time off to attend examination sittings (2 day per exam) and an additional one day's study leave per examination
- Where funded by the apprentice levy, 20% of the trainee's time will be spent on off the job training. Examples of off the job training, include but are not limited to;

1. College attendance (listed as time off above)

2. Revision courses and revision time (listed as time off above)
3. Corporate training
4. Initial training at the start of rotational placements
5. Other relevant external courses, seminars and training
6. Travel expenses to college tuition – where the cost of travelling to tuition exceeds the usual costs of commuting to the normal place of work, the excess difference can be claimed as an expense by the trainee.

The council's expectation is that all examinations will be passed at the first attempt. However, subject to satisfactory performance at work and attendance at college the council may, at its sole discretion, support trainees in one re-sit of one paper at each stage, so totalling 3 re-sits, if the council believes that prompt qualification is still a realistically achievable objective. No financial support will be provided after a failure of a re-sit and following discussions with line manager and head of the scheme, the trainee's contract could be terminated forthwith.

4. Contract of Employment

The scheme spans a four year period comprising a single fixed term contract.

Key points to note are:

- Trainees are subject to all the council's normal employment policies, including in respect of discipline and capability and are required to follow the council's code of conduct.
- Where applicable, reimbursement of all training costs incurred by the council will be required if an officer resigns from the employment of Newham either prior to completion of this scheme or within eighteen months after the end of the scheme, except that in the latter case, the amount which would otherwise be due to the Newham shall be reduced by 1/18th part for each complete calendar month after the end of the scheme.
- Being a member of the FGTS does not preclude officers from applying for other jobs within the council.

5. Career Progression

The FGTS is a career progression scheme which uses a link grade scale SO1 – PO3 during the training period. Movement through the grades is based primarily on success in examinations and final qualification. Ordinarily, success at one stage of the examinations will automatically lead to promotion to the next grade, as set out below. However, where a trainee is subject to capability or disciplinary proceedings then promotion will not follow on from success in the examinations.

Trainees are expected to develop their wider skills throughout their contract, as, measured through work based competency levels.

The level of work based competency and examination progress required for progression to each grade is set out in the table below.

Grade	Examination success	Competency level
SO1	On appointment	1
SO2	After completing the professional certificate level	2
PO1	After passing 4 Diploma exams	3
PO2	After passing the CIPFA Final Test of Professional Competence	4
PO3	After passing obtaining qualified status	4

Progression between grades is not automatic and will be judged on the basis of a written submission by staff to their line manager. The submission should set out progress in terms of examination and how each area under the work competency level has been met. Where there is a gap between performance and that set down in the scheme a further review period will be set. All other aspects of a scheme member's performance as measured through their appraisal will have to be at an acceptable level as well.

6. Structured Work Programmes

The structured work programme will cover the training period of 4 years. This programme of work will be variable and flexible. During the training period, each trainee will have to complete a series of work placements in finance teams throughout the council in order that they receive the breadth of training and experience necessary to fulfil the requirements of CIPFA's Professional Development Scheme and to give trainees well rounded and progressive work experience and duties. Placements will typically last for between six and twelve months, dependent on business need and trainee development needs. At the beginning of each placement a set of tasks or areas to be covered will be agreed. This will correspond with a work based competency level.

Through the programme trainees will gain sufficient experience of different areas within the council for them to make informed career choices. Each trainee will be expected to contribute to the development of their own work programme in conjunction with their line manager and the head of the scheme. The programme will be subject to review on a six monthly basis.

7. Mentoring

Each member of the scheme will be allocated a mentor, outside of their day to day line management structure, for the duration of their training. The mentor will be responsible for providing additional support to the trainee on a personal and professional level, and for offering advice as the member progresses through the scheme.

Mentors will either be qualified accountants or a senior officer within the council. It is envisaged that members and mentors will follow the same rules of conduct as the council's mentoring scheme.

In addition, the support network includes fellow members of the scheme, graduate trainees, line managers and the senior management team.

8. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CIPFA operate a mandatory CPD scheme for its qualified members. This ensures that the accountants keep their skills and knowledge up to date with the latest developments within the profession. All CPD training will be included in the officer's own learning and development plan, assessed and updated during their appraisal.

9. Designated work programme and post qualification

Members of the FGTS are expected to qualify over a period of three years. Trainees may self-study a maximum of 1 module. To illustrate, a typical route to qualification is given in the table below. Given the structure of the CIPFA examinations, this requires self-study of one of the Diploma level examinations.

Trainees should liaise with their line manager/mentor/head of scheme regarding exam strategy.

Typical route to qualification

Year	Month	Progress
1	July	Commence 1 st Placement. To include 4 weeks with a transactional functions team. E.g. Accounts Payable.
1	Dec	Pass FA and MA
1	Jan	Commence 2 nd placement
1	June	Pass AA and CFR. Professional Certificate complete.
2	July	Commence 3 rd placement
2	Dec	Pass PSFR and FM + CGL (self study)
2	Jan	Commence 4 th placement
2	June	Pass BCM and SPD
3	July	Commence 5 th placement
3	Dec	Pass Tax. Professional Diploma complete. Pass SPF

3	Jan	Commence 6 th placement
3	June	Pass Case study and PEP submission
4	July	Qualification
4	4 th year	Final placement. Expectations to apply for vacancies in the Finance service.

This will therefore ordinarily result in qualification approximately one year before the expiry of the four year fixed term contract.

Approved resitting of exams can be taken at the March and September examination windows. The March and September exam sittings can be used by trainees for an approved self-study diploma exam, but must not be used to shorten the expected 3 year qualification period.

At the discretion of management, trainees can apply for exemptions from exams where they hold relevant qualifications. However, trainees are still required to attend the training and pass the CIPFA mock exam to ensure that they are sufficiently prepared for the final stages of the CIPFA qualification.

During the trainee's final year, the council will establish a designated work programme, designed to assist the accountant to gain the further experience required to enable them to apply for and obtain a permanent position with the council. During this period the council will seek to ensure that suitable vacancies can be advertised, but cannot give an absolute guarantee of this. Any such vacancy will be recruited to in line with the council's normal principles of fair, open, transparent and competitive appointment.