North West Charter for Elected Member Development

The Process

NW EMPLOYERS

People. Leadership. Growth.

CHARTER LEVEL 1

Are You Ready?

Before applying for Level 1, reflect on the following questions that link with the criteria, to gauge whether you and the council are ready to begin the process of the Charter assessment.

- Is the council committed to supporting councillor development and can you evidence this?
- Do you have a development strategy that includes impact measures within a continuous improvement framework?
- Do you have a designated group that lead and inform councillor development?
- Do you have a councillor led approach to developing learning and development?
- Do you address the personal development needs of individual councillors with at least half of all councillors being involved in identifying their development needs?
- Do you use this information to help establish your learning and development strategy?
- Do you evaluate all learning together with impact measures and use this to inform improvements in your learning and development strategy?
- Are councillors informed who to contact for information on development opportunities?
- Are you able to show how councillor development is scrutinised?

Level 1 Process

Step 1- Sign the Declaration of Commitment

Authorities need to sign the Declaration of Commitment to the principles included in the Charter; both the Leader of the council and Chief Executive must sign the Declaration. This is an important first step as it is intended to promote a healthy discussion on the council's needs and intention in terms of member development. When you return your signed Declaration, it will be signed by the Chair of North West Employers and returned to you.

To request a Declaration of Commitment, or for a discussion around the principles of the Charter, please contact us here.

Step 2- Register to the online tool

To request access to the online too please email support@nwemployers.org.uk A project for your council will then be set up and you will receive instructions on how to access the tool.

As follows:

- You will receive an email with your password and link
- Go to the link then enter your email address and the password provided
- Once logged on you can change your password by clicking on your name at the top right-hand corner of the screen which will then take you to the user settings screen.

Step 3- Procedure to access the framework and your assessments

- Enter your email address and password
- This will take you to the home page and your Council's projects, Level 1 and Level 1 Review
- Select Go to assessments to access the level you are working towards
- This will take you to the 4 stages of the framework, the criteria for each framework is detailed within each stage. Click on the section heading to see each stage in detail
- To return to the summary of your assessments use the button at the bottom of the page labelled back to home page

Working through the process

There are four key functions of the tool:

A) Self-Assessment – council describe how their organisation meets the standard and upload evidence that link to this, where they can mark themselves against the criteria:

- criteria not met; if they have more evidence to upload
- criteria met; when they deem, the criteria has been met

All evidence is saved automatically, together with any changes or deletions.

B) Action Planning – In the description box, further actions can be recorded as reminders. The home page provides an online planning and reporting function using a pie chart. The status describes your self-assessment rating against all criteria, helping to focus on criteria not met and prioritise activity.

C) Interactive Feedback and Discussion – is provided through a two-way communication function via the discussion box on the assessment site, to facilitate feedback and questions with the assessment team.

D) Peer Assessment – To oversee progress and undertake assessment,

The assessment team from North West Employers will provide support as detailed above, both face to face and remotely via the tool.

Step 4 - Complete Pre-Assessment and Verification Visit

Once you have met the criteria and uploaded your evidence then contact:
E: support@nwemployers.org.uk
T: 016 1214 7104

Your access will be removed on a temporary basis while we explore the evidence you have uploaded. Once feedback has been given, we shall then support your needs and how best to complete the assessment process on an individual basis. An assessment visit will then be arranged with a councillor from the Executive Board and an officer from North West Employers. The visit will be in part to check that the council meets the standards, but also an opportunity to discover different approaches which can be shared as good practice.

Step 5 - Outcomes and Completion of Report

Following on from the assessment, the assessment team will write up their report and make a recommendation on the charter award. This recommendation will be ratified by the Executive Board at North West Employers

Step 6 - The Executive Board Meeting

The Board will either:

- Confirm successful attainment against the standards
- Defer awarding status and suggest a plan of action to meet the Level 1 standard

Once awarded, you will be notified of the outcome and receive a written report and your award.

How the Assessment Visit Will Run

1. Each visit will include one Councillor from North West Employers Executive Board and an officer from North West Employers

2. The visit will be arranged in advance and will last for approximately half a day. An officer from North West Employers will liaise with the relevant officer from the council to make the arrangements

3. A room and refreshments will be required for the assessment team.

4. During the visit the assessment team will want to speak to:
- The Leader (or Deputy)
- The Chief Executive / Chief Officer
- Leader of the Opposition Group
- Chair or Portfolio Holder
- Chair or Councillor of the Training Group
- A Newly Elected Councillor
- Three Randomly Selected Councillors
- Officer/s responsible for Councillor Learning and Development

5. The interviews are timetabled in 30-45-minute slots. The interviews can be conducted individually or in small groups based on your requests

6. Following on from the assessment, the assessment team will write up their report and make a recommendation on the charter award. This recommendation will be ratified by the Executive Board at North West Employers and you will be notified of the outcome and receive a written report and your award

7. If the assessment team or Executive Board feels that some elements of the evidence are incomplete, then the council will be advised and will be given the opportunity to complete the evidence and be assessed again

8. If the council is successful, they will be awarded the Charter

What We Will Look for in the Level 1 Assessment

During the assessment visit, there are some key areas that we shall look for, take examples and draw best practice from:

- Commitment to councillor development demonstrated at all levels across the council
- An appropriate communication process in place to publicise development opportunities
- Councillors actively engage in development available and consider their developing role, its requirements and how to meet them
- Individual's needs are considered and fed into the overall development strategy with at least half of all councillors involved in identifying their development needs
- There are financial resources available to support the development strategy and they are used in a cost-effective way
- Development activities are evaluated and include impact measures with feedback into the overall strategy
- A process in place to scrutinise councillor development opportunities

What next?

Level 1 Charter has a lifespan of three years, after which authorities are able to submit evidence to demonstrate how they have sustained and further developed their commitment to councillor development by undertaking Level 1 Review.

CHARTER LEVEL 1 REVIEW

Note: This links to the criteria from Level 1 and is required to show that there has been a continuous improvement since achieving Level 1

- Is there still clear commitment to continuously improve councillor development, and have continuous improvements been made since Level 1 was awarded?
- Are councillors actively involved in leading and informing on councillor development?
- Have at least three quarters of councillors engaged in identifying their development needs?
- Are councillors clear on the development opportunities available to meet their learning needs and developing role?
- Is there a process in place to measure the impact of learning?
- Have councillors been actively involved in reviewing the strategy?
- Is there a designated group in place that scrutinise councillor development?

Level 1 Review Process

Step 1- Re-Sign the Declaration of Commitment

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Step 5 - Outcomes and Completion of Report

Following on from the assessment, the assessment team will write up their report and make a recommendation on the charter award. This recommendation will be ratified by the Executive Board at North West Employers

Step 6 - The Executive Board Meeting

The Board will either:

- Confirm successful attainment against the standards
- Defer awarding status and suggest a plan of action to meet the Level 1 standard

Once awarded, you will be notified of the outcome and receive a written report and your award.

How the Assessment Visit Will Run

1. Each visit will include one Councillor from North West Employers Executive Board and an officer from North West Employers

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5. The interviews are timetabled in 30-45-minute slots. The interviews can be conducted individually or in small groups based on your requests

6. Following on from the assessment, the assessment team will write up their report and make a recommendation on the charter award. This recommendation will be ratified by the Executive Board at North West Employers and you will be notified of the outcome and receive a written report and your award

7. If the assessment team or Executive Board feels that some elements of the evidence are incomplete, then the council will be advised and will be given the opportunity to complete the evidence and be assessed again

8. If the council is successful, they will be awarded the Charter

What We Will Look for in the Level 1 Review Assessment

During the assessment visit, there are some key areas that we shall look for, take examples and draw best practice from:

- Continued commitment to councillor development demonstrated at all levels across the council
- Councillors actively involved in leading and informing on councillor development
- An established councillor development strategy which reflects corporate aims and objectives, that is annually refreshed to reflect the current climate and reviewed by councillors
- Councillors' development needs continue to be considered and fed into the overall development strategy with at least three quarters of councillors engaged in identifying their development needs.
- A clear communication strategy that supports councillor development and activity encourages councillor engagement
- A method of evaluating the impact of learning and development activities that shows continuous improvement
- Development opportunities meet councillors preferred learning methods and learning styles and have been adapted in response to external, national and local drivers e.g. 21st Century Councillor research
- A designated group that scrutinise councillor development.

What next?

Level 1 Review Charter has a lifespan of three years, after which authorities can renew their application.

CHARTER LEVEL 2

Are You Ready?

Before applying for Level 2, reflect on the following questions to gauge whether you and the council are ready to begin the process of Level 2 Charter assessment.

- Does the council have an embedded culture in the organisation that is supportive of councillor development?
- Has the council looked at the level and quality of available evidence before choosing the topic for the application?
- Has the council considered whether it will have sufficient evidence of outcomes available by the assessment date?
- Are other departments, services and partners involved?
- Is there political buy-in from all parties?

Level 2 Process

Step 1- Evidence for Level 1 Review: Self-Assessment

If, at the time of your Level 2 application it has been more than three years since your Level 1 or Level 1 Review, you will be required to undertake a self-assessment using the online tool.

There will be a pre-assessment visit to verify this evidence. This will be a meeting for three councillors and an officer from the council and will take around 1½ hours (preferably councillors who are not directly involved in councillor development or part of the Executive/Cabinet).

If your council was re-accredited for Level 1 or Level 1 Review within the last three years then this self-assessment stage is not necessary, please jump to Step Two.

Step 2- Evidence for Level 2: Application Form

Complete the Charter Review Application Form

Does your entry show:

- Section 1 The impact of councillor development on the work of the council and the community
- Section 2 That the council is committed to continuous improvement in councillor development?

Section 1: Provide evidence of impact of councillor development on the work of the council

There are three main sections on the application form:

- Issue for the council and community: what was the community issue that you decided to tackle e.g. Corporate Parenting, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), Meeting Citizens' Expectations, Changes to Austerity, Working with Citizens to Develop New Solutions, Neighbourhood Working, communicating with hard to reach groups using technology and the Transformation Agenda.

- Councillor learning and development: what took place and how did this link to the issue? Did the learners' learn what was expected,

- Overall impact on the community, the councillors and the council: what changed in the community because of the councillor learning and development? What did the council learn from the whole process?

Section 2: Show commitment to continuous improvement

The council will also be expected to show their commitment to continuous improvement in councillor learning and development.

- Demonstrate progress on the 'continuous improvement' issues identified at the original assessment - evidence from Level 1 or Level 1 Review Award

- Review processes for member development e.g. Member Development Group to review strategy and agree new priorities

- Can clearly articulate where the council wants to improve their practice in the future.

Step 3- Complete Application Process

For an application form please contact us at support@nwemployers.org.uk

We will work with you build up your case study and help to ensure that the scope of the project has enough depth and can clearly link the councillor development to the community impact.

An assessment visit will be arranged to verify the evidence provided in the application form. An officer and a councillor from North West Employers will act as assessors. The assessors may ask to interview members of the public or people from outside bodies as well as councillors and staff. Each assessment process will be agreed with the council and will be designed around the specific project.

Step 4- Outcomes

The assessors will write a report that will go to North West Employers Executive Board for approval.

Step 5- The Executive Board Meeting

The Board can:

- Confirm successful attainment against the original standards
- Defer awarding status and suggest a plan of action to meet the Level 2 standards.

Support Offered by North West Employers

Throughout your Charter process we are dedicated to providing support and guidance. We offer guidance prior to application to assess 'readiness' for progressing your project to Level 2 Charter Status

If you require any further support or have any ideas that would be useful for the whole region, then please do let Sharon Senior know by emailing sharons@nwemployers.org.uk

What We Will Look for in the Level 2 Assessment

Charter Level 2 does not have set criteria like Charter Level 1. Level 2 looks at whether the council can demonstrate that the community has benefited from councillor development on a specific area. Each application for Level 2 is different, and therefore the assessment will be tailored in each case. However, there are three areas that the assessors are looking for in Level 2.

What we are looking for with the project or example

The application demonstrates that:

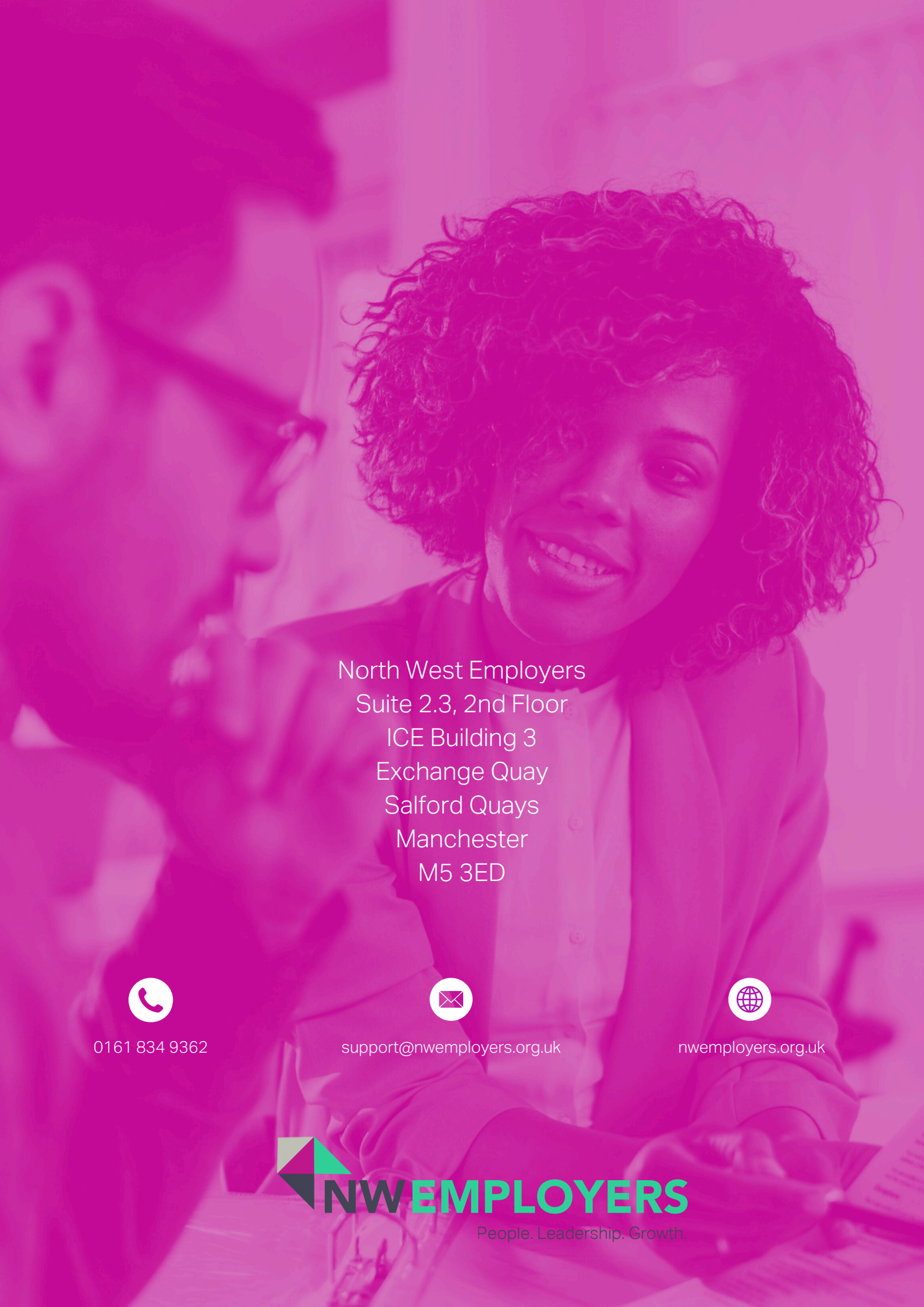
- The work done relates to an issue that directly affects the community, and (ideally) is recognised by the community
- Development of councillors has been explicitly targeted to address the councillor development needs identified around the community issue
- Councillors recognise which elements of learning and development were directly related to the issue
- Councillors can identify changes in their skills, knowledge and expertise on the issue before and after member development took place.
- There has been an improvement on the community issues, and there are clear links between the member development done, and the outcomes, which are recognised by councillors themselves.

What we are looking for with the use of evidence

- Statements and assertions must be backed up by evidence, including references for the sources of evidence
- A range of different types of evidence is provided from a range of different sources e.g. a mix of examples or case studies, statistics, and documentary evidence, including material from councillors, officers, residents, and partners
- Evidence is provided for the situation for the council and the community before the work took place, and afterwards
- All evidence provided stands up to a reasonable challenge from someone not involved in the work.

What we are looking for in the community and council impacts

- Community and council outcomes have been experienced by the community, and (ideally) are recognised by the community
- Any changes to strategy, policy, procedures and structures have led to a practical difference for the community
- The impacts are advanced enough to have resolved the original issues or can be shown to have achieved significant milestones
- Outcomes described in the application are recognised by a range of stakeholders.



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