

## CPD and Tendering Explained

**Continuous professional development (CPD) can be defined as “the systematic maintenance and broadening of the knowledge, skills and personal qualities needed in working life.”**

It is a planned and structured approach to the maintenance and upgrading of learning, designed to keep skills up to date and also to increase the ability of staff to acquire new knowledge in response to the challenge of new business or professional requirements. It is this ability to gain new knowledge which is being seen by professionals as the best possible means of gaining a competitive advantage over their peers.

The basic concept is a learning system which seeks to:

- operate throughout the working life of a professional;
- mirror the requirements imposed upon professionals by their professional organisations and, equally importantly, by their clients;
- operate in a systematic and structured manner;
- cover the full range of knowledge and skills, personal, technical and commercial, required by a professional in his or her working life.

CPD is the process which ensures that all staff can, at every stage of their careers, develop their knowledge, improve their skills and enhance their confidence and motivation to improve their work positively. Reflecting on practice and considering how individuals can improve their skills and grow as a professional are all part and parcel of CPD and provide motivation and inspiration in the development and careers of staff.

Embracing CPD and continuous learning can help providers to bring new approaches, concepts, technologies and insight to the quality of contract delivery in the working environment. An individual's enthusiasm for learning is transferred in the workplace improving the experience of those with whom they interact, their peers, managers and clients.

## Tendering and training

Purchasers expect that providers offering to deliver services will already employ a well and appropriately qualified workforce. Tenders require the offeror to confirm that the skills which are necessary to comply with the contract are in place. The purchaser does not expect to pay for staff to acquire the skills necessary to do their jobs. Including this in the offer frequently results in marking down and the comment “too expensive”. One provider who said when tendering for a care contract “we provide the training necessary to enable all support workers to achieve NVQ level 3” The response from the purchaser was twofold;

- Why?
- You expect me to pay for this when it is not a statutory requirement?

The contract was not awarded to the provider in question as they were judged to be too expensive.

However, there are two areas of training for which purchasers generally will pay:

- Environmental policy implementation, and EMAS compliance;
- Training which is a statutory requirement.



## CPD and Learning

The history and background to CPD is explained in the Staying Ahead Supplement 012111. Here we set out the importance of a CPD programme for those providers who tender for public sector contracts. It is the existence of a CPD programme which defines an essential requirement of being a professional. The knowledge and quality of the work of professionals is generally governed by a number of professional bodies. These include the General Medical Council; the Health Professionals Council; the Law Society; the National College of Nursing; various Chartered Institutes for architects, quantity surveyors, accountants; and many more. Indeed all professions who are covered by a regulatory body, including social care professionals. Now, in order to retain recognition, all professional bodies require that their members follow an annual programme of personal development. This is a programme of learning, rather than training, and is designed to meet each individual's own continuous personal development needs. The programme must be one of learning at an intellectual level, but can include some skills acquisition. CPD can be acquired in a number of ways, but crucially, in order to receive certification, CPD courses must be taught by qualified teachers with established experience of teaching adults.

## CPD and Tendering

Whereas purchasers will not generally pay for training and skills acquisition, they will pay for CPD. It is possible for individuals to complete Personal Development programmes which include a variety of methods of learning and do not include formal courses. However, as with all quality standards the value of the CPD is greater if the programme is appropriately certified. Indeed, when tendering for a contract with a PCT or other health authority it is expected that a programme delivered to this standard will be in place. Sometimes there is an explicit question which addresses this requirement; more often it is included in questions regarding training, or the question which is always difficult to answer, that which asks the offeror to explain what they do to retain their staff.

The programme should cover ALL staff employed including professional managers, or in other professional roles at every level. It would therefore include SMT members, finance, HR, H&S as well as those involved in service delivery. **Putting in place and describing a Professional Development Policy and procedure will gain a competitive edge when tendering for any type of health contract and generally with other types of tendering.** Bearing in mind that Local Authorities will be taking over a range of current PCT procurement and GP commissioning is likely to offer a wide range of opportunities in the future, this is an appropriate time to put a policy of this kind in place, together with the ability to apply an appropriate costing model for these activities.

The various professional bodies stipulate the number of hours of CPD in which an individual should be involved annually. These range from 12 to 30 hours p.a. Therefore, unless staff are employed whose professional registration sets a limit on the annual CPD requirement it would seem sensible for organisations to set their own limit which is both appropriate and affordable. Now is also the time for organisations which have training departments to investigate the possibility of retraining staff employed as trainers in order to qualify them to be able to deliver suitable CPD programmes. A further policy might be that the organisation will pay for staff to attend courses when those are CPD certified only.

In general this movement is to be welcomed. Alongside the current work of NICE which is developing standards for a wide range of services we are seeing a change which is leading to the professional status of social care which will give those who work in this area true recognition of their professionalism a status which has been lacking for far too long.

