



RESEARCH REPORT

Scottish Planning Authorities Skills Assessment

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Aim and survey methods

The Improvement Service commissioned Heriot-Watt University, in association with Oxford Brookes University, to undertake a skills assessment of Scottish planning authorities. A total of 661 individuals across the 34 Scottish planning authorities and two structure plan teams completed a detailed web-based questionnaire, a 45% completion rate from a representative cross-section of staff. This was supplemented by interviews with 33 senior planning managers and representatives of 15 external stakeholders.

Skills requirements

A wide variety of skills and competences are required of individuals delivering planning services. Central to the majority of jobs are generic skills such as team working, written communication, time management, problem solving and customer focus. Those questioned during this research felt their skills in these areas are generally well developed, although ongoing development is required. Development management skills are considered to be the most important technical skills required in planning services, and are also considered to be generally well developed. Smaller numbers of those involved in delivering planning services believe they require specialist technical planning and management skills. This in part reflects the inclusion of administrative and other support staff in the survey.

Development priorities

There are a wide range of topics that planning staff and managers identified as priorities for training and development including:

Core planning skills: design, planning law/legislation, the 2006 Planning Act/changes to the system, development finance, sustainability, development management including planning agreements and appeals, strategic planning, policy making and rural planning.

Procedural skills: IT, verbal and graphic presentation, e-planning, GIS, and public inquiries. These skills are required across professional and support staff.

Generic professional and management skills: project management, negotiation/conflict resolution, staff/team management, community engagement, time management, customer service, leadership, stress management, financial/business management, data analysis and monitoring/appraisal. Most of these are applicable across professional and support staff and are not just for those in management positions.

Specialist planning skills: Strategic Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA/EIA), built environment conservation, water management (flooding, SUDS), retail planning, enforcement, construction/building, energy/renewable energy, regeneration, housing including affordability, biodiversity/nature conservation, economic development and minerals planning.

Senior and middle managers highlighted project management in particular as a priority development need, administrative and technical staff highlighted IT, planning law/policy and customer service, and most planning grades identified design skills as a priority development need. External stakeholders and some managers emphasised the importance of the attitudes and personal qualities that are needed to underpin the above skills and competences. The overall view of external stakeholders is that the modernisation of planning depends on positive attitudes, creative thinking, confidence, sensitivity to different perspectives, critical reflection, collaborative working and a focus on outcomes. The external stakeholders that were interviewed were generally critical of skills levels within authorities and the effect on the delivery of efficient, responsive, high quality and inclusive services.

Barriers

The key barrier to training and development identified by individuals completing the questionnaire is the lack of time due to heavy workloads, followed by limited budgets, the location/availability of opportunities and family or outside commitments. External stakeholders identified similar barriers to those in authorities, but consistently remarked on the consequences of low morale. It was generally recognised by stakeholders that attitudes and ethos are the hardest things to change and require more than just training courses.

Impacts of planning reform

Uncertainty exists about how current planning reforms will impact on people's daily jobs and there is a perception that the changes are only 'procedural'. However there is an acknowledged need to develop skills in e-planning and other IT requirements, community engagement, development finance, negotiation/mediation, project management, SEA, workload/time management, design, development management, planning policy and implementation.

Modernisation gives planning authorities an opportunity to think strategically about training and development priorities and the variety of different methods available to help individual staff and teams.

Development opportunities

The majority of authorities operate staff appraisal systems, most of which are considered to be effective at identifying training and development needs. However, not all systems are working as well as they could, with staff commenting on the differing impact of supportive and unsupportive managers in identifying and addressing their training and development needs. Middle and senior managers are most positive about their training opportunities. A relatively high number of enforcement officers, technicians and senior planners report their training opportunities as poor. Some managers have clearly been creative with their departmental and corporate training budgets.

Creative thinking is required about a range of learning methods. Techniques encouraging longer-term capacity building and continuous reflection are particularly valued including structured on-the-job training and sharing experience across authorities. Tailored, externally delivered, interactive training is preferred to conferences and distance learning. Communication and reflection should be processes built in to ongoing work to help people continually develop. Both individuals themselves and their managers have responsibilities in terms of training and development.

1. Introduction

Aim

In August 2006, Heriot-Watt University in association with Oxford Brookes University was commissioned by the Improvement Service to “explore the existence of a gap in skills and knowledge within Scottish planning authorities in relation to the delivery of the modernised planning system”. The information gathered for this research provides important baseline information for the Planning Development Programme, an initiative aiming to improve opportunities for skills and knowledge development within the planning services of Scottish local authorities and national park authorities. The results contained in this report set out an overall national picture and do not go into detail about individual authorities. Confidentiality in terms of individuals and authorities has been respected throughout.

Survey Methods

Research into skills and knowledge development is complex and difficult for a variety of reasons. Scottish planning authorities cover a very wide range of activities and staff over varied geographical areas. Levels of skills, knowledge or competence are not usually judged in absolute yes/no terms; most people would place themselves somewhere along a continuum. At the core of the methodology for this research was a survey questionnaire sent to all professional and support staff within planning authorities via their managers. Assessment by individuals of their own competence and development opportunities in light of their daily experience is a crucial part of the picture. The results of this self-assessment may not be absolute in accurately representing actual competence levels, as some people might be naturally optimistic about their abilities and others more self-effacing. However, the research team was encouraged that, overall, the results suggest that respondents were neither overwhelmingly positive nor negative about themselves. To supplement individuals’ self-perceptions, and to gain an overview, interviews were carried out with senior planning managers and relevant external stakeholders.

To ensure that the methodology was robust, three principal survey methods were used during the research to gather information about skills and skills development in Scottish planning authorities.

Questionnaires of individuals

After an initial pilot, a web-based questionnaire was distributed to all staff working within the core planning services of the 34 Scottish planning authorities and the two structure plan teams (see Appendix 1). Heads of planning services were contacted through the Scottish Society for Directors of Planning (SSDP) and asked to forward the survey to all relevant staff, including planning managers, officers, technicians and administrative support. 661 individuals completed the questionnaire, an overall response rate estimated at 45%, varying between 12% and 90% per authority. Heads of planning were asked to notify the research team of the numbers of staff to whom the questionnaire was sent. Response rates were based on these figures. The overall numbers are lower than the SSDP establishment survey, which might at least partially be explained by vacancy rates. Low response rates from some authorities were explained by the survey coinciding with heavy demands on time, including job evaluation, Local Plan Inquiries and the priority being given to internal procedures. Analysis of the demographic information about survey respondents (Appendix 2) confirms that responses were received from a representative cross-section of staff.

The questionnaire captured a significant amount of information about the need for particular skills and the current level of competence in those skills as perceived by the individual staff members. 45 relevant skills/competences were identified, covering subject specific skills, e.g. development management, e-planning and design, and more generic skills such as team working, time management and customer care. A full list of the skills is set out in Table 1 in the next section. The questionnaire also asked about training opportunities, barriers, preferred delivery modes and the impact of planning reform on skills and knowledge requirements.

Interviews with planning managers

Senior planning managers were interviewed in 31 authorities and the two structure plan teams, to supplement the individual surveys with a more strategic view of the skills base and training priorities. Three managers were unfortunately too busy to respond due to work pressures. Appendix 3 sets out the interview questions. The research team also met with the Management Practice Sub-Committee of the SSDP.

Interviews with external stakeholders:

Fifteen interviews were undertaken with external stakeholders who regularly interact with planning authorities. These included representatives from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Scottish Executive Planning Division and Inquiry Reporters' Unit, developers, planning consultants, national and local amenity societies, Scottish Centre for Regeneration, Scottish Natural Heritage, Planning Aid for Scotland, Built Environment Forum Scotland and elected members. The interview questions are listed in Appendix 3.

2. Skills Required to do the Job

The questionnaire survey of staff in planning authorities included a list of 45 individual skills that were synthesised from previous planning skills reports (see Appendix 4). Respondents were asked to rate the skills required to do their jobs. The data results for the skills listed in the questionnaire provide evidence of the wide range of skills staff consider they need (see Table 1).

For each skill, respondents were asked to indicate whether, for their current job:

- (i) it is a core competence
- (ii) an awareness is required or
- (iii) it is not needed.

Respondents were then asked to self-evaluate their level of competence in that skill, using a four-point scale (very good; good but could be developed; adequate but needs development; or very limited/non-existent).

In relation to skills that are seen as core to their jobs, the results reveal that the top 5 most frequently mentioned are all generic skills:

team working	83%
written communication	80%
time management	73%
customer care / focus	61%
problem solving	61%

Development management/control/processing planning applications is the most frequently identified core technical skill - 43% of respondents said that this is a core skill in their current job (although only one-third of respondents work in development management teams).

The top 5 skills identified as requiring awareness are mainly technical planning skills:

equalities/accessibility	61%
transport planning	60%
nature conservation	58%
GIS	57%
economic development	54%

Information about the skills that respondents felt are not relevant in their jobs reveal more specialist areas of expertise, as might be expected. A number of these skills relate to managerial roles and responsibilities, others relate to specialist technical skills. Overall, there do not appear to be many specialists employed within planning services, a point worth noting because, as seen later, there is some demand for training in specialisms. The top 5 skills identified by respondents as not relevant to their current roles are:

minerals planning	54%
financial management and business planning	51%
development finance	50%
risk management	47%
staff management and supervision	46%

Table 1: Skills Requirements (ranked by core skill)

SKILL	Core (%)	Awareness (%)	No need (%)
Team working and/or interpersonal skills	83	12	1
Written communication skills (including report writing)	80	12	4
Time management	73	19	3
Customer care/focus	61	30	5
Problem solving/analysis of complex issues	61	29	6
Adaptability and/or the ability to embrace change	59	34	2
Verbal presentation skills	59	28	9
Negotiation, mediation and/or conflict resolution	59	26	11
Strategic thinking, making connections and/or seeing the big picture	57	33	6
Partnership working including inter professional work	55	30	11
Creative thinking, visioning, reframing and/or challenging assumptions	44	39	11
Development management/control/processing planning applications	43	37	16
Leadership and/or the ability to influence others both internally and externally	42	39	16
Community engagement	40	41	15
Planning law	36	43	18
Monitoring, performance review and/or critical reflection	35	41	21
Project management and delivery	34	37	25
Urban/rural design	31	41	25
Stress management	30	49	15
Promoting sustainability (excluding SEA)	30	45	23
Staff management and supervision	30	20	46
Data collection, handling and analysis	30	44	22
Plan making and policy writing	29	42	26
Performance appraisal - delivering a quality service	28	42	26
Conservation – buildings and built heritage	27	49	21
Rural/countryside planning	25	43	30
GIS/digital mapping	23	57	16
Strategic planning (urban rural relationships)	23	45	29
E-planning	23	49	24
Graphical communication skills	22	50	24
Awareness of equalities and accessibility issues	20	61	15
Strategic environmental assessment (SEA)	17	44	37
Enforcement	16	42	39
Regeneration	16	50	31
Housing, affordable housing/housing needs assessment	15	47	36
Water resource management/flooding/drainage	14	52	31
Retail planning including retail impact assessment	14	46	37
Financial management/business planning	13	33	51
Risk management	12	38	47
Nature conservation	11	58	28
Economic development	9	54	34
Minerals planning	9	35	54
Transport planning	8	60	30
Principles of building construction	7	46	45
Development finance	6	40	50

3. Existing Competence

Survey responses

The questionnaire survey captured information about how individuals perceive their current skills. For each of the 45 skills identified, respondents were asked to rate their own level of competence using a four-point scale:

- very good/solid
- good but could be developed further
- adequate but needs developing
- very limited or non-existent

The text below concentrates on the top ranked skills for each competence level. Full results are set out in Appendix 5.

Overall, planners and support staff identified generic skills as their main strengths. The top 5 ‘very good/solid’ skills are:

team working and/or interpersonal skills	45%
written communication skills	45%
customer focus/care	34%
time management	30%
adaptability/embracing change	30%

Development management and/or processing planning applications is the most solid planning skill, with 28% of respondents rating their competence as very good/solid.

For skills where respondents rated themselves as having a good level of competence, which might be developed further, the top 5 results are:

adaptability/embracing change	47%
time management	47%
negotiation, mediation and/or conflict resolution	46%
strategic thinking, making connections	45%
problem solving/analysis of complex issues	44%

In contrast to the skills where planners and planning support staff feel confident, the questionnaire survey reveals the areas in which respondents feel less confident about their levels of competence. The results show that the top ranked skills where people feel their competence is adequate but needs developing are:

stress management	36%
transport	36%
economic development	33%
nature conservation	33%
water resource management/flooding/SUDS	33%
accessibility/equalities issues	33%

For skills that respondents rated as very limited or non-existent the results show a stronger leaning towards specialist skills (e.g. minerals and retail) and new issues (e.g. SEA). The results are:

minerals planning	52%
development finance	48%
retail planning	38%
risk management	38%
SEA	38%
principles of building construction	38%

Interviews with managers

Managers noted a range of strengths within their staff, highlighting their considerable experience, local knowledge and commitment. Several managers mentioned good relationships with local people and depth of development control experience. Others commented positively on skills to do with e-planning, IT, public consultation, customer service, change management, negotiation, partnership working and implementation.

Interviews with external stakeholders

There was recognition from some stakeholders that there are good examples of authorities that are strong at policy-making, procedures, communication, professional judgment, inclusive engagement, taking balanced decisions, negotiation, mediation and management training. However, on the whole, they were relatively critical of skills levels within authorities (see next section).



4. Skills Needs and Training Priorities

Skills needs

Data from the questionnaire survey was analysed to establish areas of match and mismatch between the skills that people identified as necessary to do their jobs and their perceived level of competence in those skills. This was achieved by cross-comparison to establish how many respondents who needed a particular skill then said that their competence was well developed (very good or good) or under developed (adequate or very limited). Six categories of match/mismatch were calculated for each individual skill, as follows::

- Respondents who said it was a core skill for their job, and who rated their competence level as well developed (match)
- Respondents who said it was a core skill for their job, and who rated their competence level as under-developed (mismatch)
- Respondents who said they needed an awareness of the subject for their job, and who rated their competence level as well-developed (match)
- Respondents who said they needed an awareness of the subject for their job, and who rated their competence level as under-developed (mismatch)
- Respondents who said they didn't need it for their job, and who rated their competence level as well developed (mismatch)
- Respondents who said they didn't need it for their job, and who rated their competence level as under-developed (match)

As might be expected, some areas of match and mismatch are more significant than others. For example, very few people have well-developed skills which are not required in their jobs. This contrasts with the high number of people who say that they have well-developed competences in things which are required in their current positions. Numerically, the evidence for skills match is much stronger than the evidence of mismatch, as the figures outlined below demonstrate, which is a positive finding from this research.

Beginning with evidence of skills match, the results show that generic skills feature strongly. Team working and written communication came out best, with around 70% of respondents identifying these skills as central to their jobs (core) and rating their competences as well developed (very good or good). The table below sets out the top 10 matched skills that are required in a job.

Table 2: Percentage of respondents requiring a skill in their job (core) and having well-developed competence in that skill

SKILL	%
Team working and/or interpersonal skills	74
Written communication skills	72
Time management	60
Customer care/focus	52
Problem solving/analysis of complex issues	51
Adaptability/embracing change	50
Negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution	47
Partnership working, inter professional work	47
Verbal presentation skills	47
Strategic thinking, making connections/seeing the big picture	47

Respondents who require an awareness of something had a much lower level of match than those shown above. The highest level of match here was for awareness of accessibility and equalities - 25% of respondents, and stress management - 21% of respondents.

Since the match between under-developed skills and skills which are not required in a particular job is of no practical interest for the Planning Development Programme, these results are not reported.

In terms of skills mismatch, the results show that this is less significant numerically than the matches described above. However, given the relevance of any skills mismatch to the Planning Development Programme, these results are examined in some detail.

The first area of mismatch identifies those respondents for whom a skill is a core requirement in their job, but who report that their level of competence is under-developed (adequate or very limited).

Table 3: Percentage of respondents requiring a skill in their job (core) and having an under-developed competence in that skill

SKILL	%
Stress management	11
Negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution	9
Time management	9
Verbal presentation skills	9
E-planning	9
Promoting sustainable development	9
SEA	8

A much larger group of respondents reported that their competences were underdeveloped for skills for which they require an awareness. These results reveal a group of staff for whom some development will be necessary to help them carry out their current jobs/roles. Table 4 sets out the top 25 skills in this category.

Table 4 Percentage of respondents requiring an awareness of something in their job and having an under-developed competence in that skill

SKILL	%
Transport	40
Economic development	39
GIS/digital mapping	37
Nature conservation	37
Water resource management/flooding/SUDS	37
SEA	35
Principles of building construction	35
Retail planning including impact assessment	34
Awareness of accessibility and equalities	32
Regeneration	31
E-planning	30
Housing including affordability/housing needs assessment	30
Development finance	30
Planning law	29
Minerals planning	28
Conservation - buildings and heritage	28
Promoting sustainable development	26
Graphical presentation skills	25
Stress management	25
Monitoring, performance review and/or critical reflection	25
Urban design	24
Planning enforcement	24
Strategic planning	24
Rural development	24
Performance appraisal	23
Data handling and analysis	23

Training Priorities

Respondents were asked to identify their top three training priorities as an open question. Responses were grouped into 43 categories (set out in table 5 below). The grouping necessarily reduced the complexity and detail of the answers. For example, the 'other' category includes suggestions from health and planning to wildlife first aid and health and safety, none of which was mentioned by more than one or two respondents. Similarly the IT category includes responses that were very specific (e.g. training in Uniform, CAD) as well as more general answers such as 'improve computing/word processing skills'. It should also be noted that where respondents gave two or more answers in the same category (e.g. two training needs related to IT), this was recorded as such. As a result of this, absolute numbers rather than percentages are shown in the table below.

Table 5: Training needs identified by respondents (rank order).

SKILL	Absolute Number
IT skills	118
Urban/rural design	110
Planning law/legislation	92
Project management	74
Management skills	72
Presentation skills	53
Planning Act/changes to the system	50
Development finance/appraisal	49
E-planning	46
SEA/EIA	43
Conflict resolution/negotiation	43
GIS	42
Staff/team management	37
Sustainability	37
Community engagement	32
Conservation (built)	27
Time management	28
Development control/management	22
Flooding/water/SUDS	20
Retail	20
Enforcement	17
Customer care/service	15
Construction/building	15
Leadership	15
Stress management	13
Financial/business management	13
Energy/renewable energy	12
Strategic planning	12
Regeneration	11
Data analysis/handling	10
Housing/affordability	10
Planning gain/agreements	10
Biodiversity/nature conservation	9
Team working/partnership	9
Policy making	7
Monitoring/appraisal	7
Economic development	6
Rural/countryside planning	6
Local plan inquiries	5
Minerals planning	5
Appeals	4
Transport	1
Other (includes small nos. of other skills)	95

The data was also examined to identify the top training priorities of different groups of staff (e.g. managers, planning officers, administrative and technical staff). This analysis reveals that design is a key training need for all groups except technical, administrative and enforcement staff. Senior and middle managers include staff management, project management and development finance amongst their top training needs. The only notable difference between these two groups is that middle managers include e-planning in their top 5 training needs. Management issues are of less concern for other staff groups/grades. Planning officers and senior planners both identify IT skills amongst their top training needs, with planning officers also requesting development of their presentation skills (including verbal, graphical and written communication).

Administrative and support staff tend to concentrate on upgrading and improving their IT skills alongside customer service and customer care. Planning law/legislation also features for both administrative and technical staff, including improving knowledge and understanding of the planning system. Technical staff include GIS and IT skills amongst their top training needs.

Table 6: Top training needs by grade

Staff Grade	Training need 1	Training need 2	Training need 3
Senior manager	Project management	Management	Design
Middle manager/ team leader	Project management	e-planning; management; development finance (equal ranking)	
Senior planner	Management	Design	IT skills
Planning officer	Design	Planning law/legislation	IT skills
Administrative/ support staff	IT skills	Customer service/care	Planning law/policy
Technical staff	IT skills	GIS	Planning law/policy
Enforcement	Enforcement	Planning law/policy	--

Interviews with managers

The priorities for skills development identified by managers for their staff largely fall into four categories.

First, there are *core planning skills* that are seen as under-developed at all levels. The most important aspect in this respect is design, identified by 16 managers. One saw sustainable design as the priority, but generally all aspects of design skills are seen as under-developed. Six managers identified development finance and one highlighted planning gain.

Second, there are *procedural skills* underpinning planning, such as public inquiries, implementing new development management regulations and implementing e-planning processes. These procedural aspects are strongly linked to the modernisation agenda and changes set out in the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006. These skills are seen as being of particular importance across all staff groups, including admin and technical staff, as well as planners.

Third, there are *generic professional and management skills* such as community engagement, project management, partnership working, negotiation, time management, change management and performance appraisal. Most of these apply to a large number of staff and not just those with management responsibilities.

Fourth, there are *specialist planning skills* that are not sufficiently available. These include a range of environmental and sustainability-related aspects such as planning for renewable energy, marine planning, waste, minerals, ecology, and SEA. Other specialist skills such as conservation, transport, landscape appraisal and retail impact assessment were also identified.

In addition to the above skills, the Management Practice Sub-committee of the SSDP emphasised the importance of underpinning personal qualities such as positive attitudes, creative thinking, confidence, reflection and the courage of one's professional convictions.

Interviews with external stakeholders

While recognising some strengths and acknowledging differences between authorities, external stakeholders were generally critical of skills levels observed during their interactions with planning authorities. The need to develop core planning skills was strongly expressed by some, including design, development finance and commercial awareness, pro-active and efficient development planning, strategic planning, conservation (both natural and built environment), sustainability, enforcement, construction and engineering techniques, effective community engagement, implementation, knowledge about the new planning system and enforcement.

The crucial importance of transferable skills was also emphasised, including an improved customer focus, early communication, interpersonal skills, evaluation, problem-solving, IT, the ability to influence and management (including workload management, efficient processes and project management). External stakeholders saw a need for better partnership working (with the private sector, communities, outside agencies, other Council services and politicians) and consistency both between and within authorities. Attitudes and personal qualities were also mentioned, including a desire for a clearer focus on outcomes not just processes and more flexibility.

5. Impact of Modernisation on Training and Development Needs

Survey responses

Individual respondents to the survey were asked a closed question about what impact the reform of the planning system would have on the skills/knowledge needed for their jobs. Answers were:

- I will need to develop my skills/knowledge 55%
- I'm unsure what skills/knowledge will be required 27%
- My existing skills/knowledge will be sufficient 18%

Analysing these results further reveals that 7% of senior managers and about half of administrative and support staff were unsure about what skills and knowledge would be required. Around 70% of senior planners and enforcement officers said that they would need to update their skills, while around 60% of middle managers and planning officers/assistants said they would need to develop their skills in response to the modernisation agenda. There is some variation amongst technical, admin and support staff in the proportion of individuals who feel that their existing skills will be sufficient. For both GIS/technical support and customer service/admin teams, the level of uncertainty about the changes is broadly similar (about 45%). However, only 10% of staff in customer service teams consider their skills will be sufficient, whilst one-third of GIS/technical staff think this is the case.

Just over half the respondents answered an open question about how the reform of the planning system will impact on the skills and knowledge needed for their job. Many raised more than one issue. The table below shows both the number of times that responses were given as well as what percentage of respondents to this question were giving those responses.

Table 7: Impact of planning reform on skills and knowledge requirements

	Total no. of responses	% of respondents to this question
Don't know / unsure / unspecific	123	33%
Familiarity with new law / regs. / procedures	76	20%
Community engagement / public consultation skills	71	19%
E-planning / IT skills	46	12%
None / very little	35	9%
Influencing / enabling / negotiation / mediation skills	28	7%
Project management	25	7%
SEA / sustainability / strategic / visioning skills	23	6%
Plan-making	13	3%
Development management	12	3%
Time management / multi-tasking	12	3%
Presentation / communication skills	11	3%
Performance / workload monitoring	7	2%
Financial appraisal / development economics	5	1%
Enforcement	4	1%
Design / urban design	4	1%
Other	5	1%

One third of those who answered this open question did not know what impact the planning reforms would have on skills and knowledge required to do their job. 9% considered it would have no or very little impact, while 20% thought it would involve becoming familiar with new procedures.

Example responses include:

“I am unaware of planning changes and would need more information”

“I do not believe that the reform will have a significant impact on our skills and knowledge.

However we may witness an increase in workload and reallocation of existing skills”

“Difficult to gauge at present. A lot will depend on what finally comes forward in the Bill and associated secondary legislation”

“The reforms will be mainly procedural and will not fundamentally alter the skills/knowledge required”.

“I doubt it will have a significant impact upon my own working practices at this stage in my career (mainly householder applications)”.

Some felt the issue was not about new skills and knowledge, but simply about additional resources, for example:

“Greater pressure to produce more but without any further resources; central government must back up its aspirations for planning authorities with adequate funding to enable them to achieve these aims.”

“I predict that the already struggling planning system will struggle further. Will need to develop more excuses as to why the job has not been done in time.”

Of the remaining one-third who were able to identify specific knowledge and skills needed in the future, the largest single topic identified by 19% of respondents was community engagement and public consultation skills, followed by e-planning and IT skills (12%). Typical perspectives included:

“More inclusive/informed system will increase the number of people involved in the system and therefore our approach in how we can be more inclusive and communicate with various groups”

“E-planning will completely change the culture of planning and the way we interact with our customers”

There was a cluster (22%) around various personal management skills including: influencing/enabling/negotiation/mediation skills; project management; time management/multi-tasking, presentation/communication, performance/workload monitoring. Very few respondents identified particular aspects of professional knowledge and skills such as plan making (3%), development management (3%), and design (1%).

Interviews with managers

Overall, there was recognition from managers of the impact on skills and knowledge stemming from the changing priorities and procedures in the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, although some consider it to be early to tell exactly what new skills might be required. New procedures and expectations in respect to community engagement and development management were frequently highlighted. The most significant impact, however, is seen as e-planning, identified by 13 managers. Others identified partnership working and the key skills of design and development finance. Many identified specialist skills, including marine planning, housing markets, community planning, retail planning and SEA.

Three managers identified the need for training for councillors in line with their heightened role as set out in the 2006 Act, and two focused on training for administrative support staff. In terms of immediate priorities, design and development finance dominated, with procedural aspects also highlighted, particularly IT skills in relation to e-planning, but including development management. Two managers also saw project management as critical, since this is linked to delivery of implementation outcomes as well as new development management procedures.

Interviews with external stakeholders

Planning modernisation was linked to making the service more positive, efficient, effective, accountable, accessible, transparent and consistent. More inclusive engagement with local communities and multi-disciplinary partnership working also featured. A stronger focus on the quality of outcomes and not just processes was highlighted, including better engagement with design and mainstreaming sustainability. Creativity and flexibility were also mentioned.

6. Training & Development Opportunities, Barriers & Preferences

Preferred delivery modes

Questionnaire respondents were asked a series of questions about the types of training and learning that work best for them. They were asked to identify up to five of the given options. The results are shown in Table 8 below.

The question asked about what type of training and learning work best for respondents. The results of this question are likely to reflect learning opportunities that individuals have direct experience of and do not therefore relate to the effectiveness of the various types of learning opportunities. It is worth noting that a range of learning methods are appropriate for significant numbers of staff.

Table 8: Learning options that work best for respondents

TRAINING/LEARNING OPPORTUNITY	RESPONDENTS (%)
External training courses	66
Formal in-house training courses	56
Informal but structured in-house seminars/discussions	51
'On the job' (structured experiential learning)	46
Formal or short courses/modules	36
Conferences	33
Reading (books, journals and/or web-searching)	32
Networking (with experienced colleagues/external contacts)	31
Working with a mentor	20
Collaborative working groups/action learning sets	20
Degree or university/college course	16
Distance learning materials (including on-line sources)	16
Secondments or work-shadowing	15

Training opportunities

Respondents to the questionnaire survey rated their current training and development opportunities as:

- excellent 8%
- quite good 38%
- okay 37%
- poor 17%

Noticeable differences can be seen in the way that different grades of staff rate their training opportunities. Senior managers were the most positive, with 21% rating them as excellent and 59% quite good. This compares to an overall average of 8% saying opportunities are excellent and 38% saying opportunities are quite good. Middle managers were also more positive than other grades, although not as positive as senior managers. Planning officers and administrative/support staff on the other hand are rather less positive, with around 45% of these groups saying that opportunities are 'okay'.

Around 17% of respondents said that training opportunities were poor. A disproportionate number of these respondents are enforcement officers, technicians and senior planners. In the case of enforcement officers more than half of this group said their training opportunities were poor. For the other groups mentioned (senior planners, technicians) just under one-third fall into this category.

When asked about recent trends in their training opportunities, respondents considered they were:

- getting better 32%
- getting worse 17%
- staying the same 47%

Senior and middle managers are more positive than other groups, and around 45% of managers said things have been getting better. In contrast, 29% of senior planners and 30% of enforcement officers said things have been getting worse. Administrative and support staff are notable for the large proportion (68%) who say that opportunities have stayed the same.

Barriers

The final question asked whether there were any barriers to further training and professional development:

Table 9: Barriers to training/professional development

BARRIER	RESPONDENTS (%)
Lack of time/heavy workload	62
Budget	44
Location/geography	31
Lack of choice/availability	27
Family/outside commitments	26

It is notable that time pressures were identified as the most significant barrier, considerably more than budgets.

Other comments

A final open question asking for any further comments on current or future development needs and opportunities was asked. It confirmed the willingness of many respondents to develop themselves further, for example:

“Happy to explore as many training and development opportunities as I can.”

“Currently working part-time but would be happy to undertake training on non-working days.”

It also revealed the importance of management support. On the one hand, there were some very positive comments, for example:

“I am regularly made aware of courses and asked if I would like to express interest. Generally employer is supportive.”

However, there was also evidence of a lack of support for training:

“I am concerned that there is no structured approach to training and staff development within this part of the Council and that this is having an impact on the service.”

“My immediate boss is willing to fight my cause and is often able to argue my case but my previous line manager was terrible and never made clear my training opportunities and I lost out on a lot of possibilities.”

Problems of resources and time and work pressures were also re-iterated:

“Having time and money are the key.”

“The planning system is overloaded and under-resourced.”

The need for courses outside the Central Belt was recognised

“Geographical remoteness is a significant barrier.”

Needs were also expressed for courses for technical and support staff.

“To deliver the new planning bill training requirements it is necessary to ensure that it is aimed at professional, technical and administrative levels. There is an increasing reliance on admin/clerical staff whose roles and responsibilities are becoming increasingly technical in nature.”

A range of development opportunities were mentioned, including the need for formal courses as well as structured on-the-job training and putting learning into practice:

“It is really important to provide opportunities that enable people to readily put what they have learnt into practice in their work places.”

There was a recognition of the value of more in-depth training, wider thinking about different types of personal development, collaboration with outside agencies and other Councils, and secondments/work shadowing, for example:

“Collaborative working between planning authorities or with the private sector offers significant opportunity to raise awareness of current issues and different delivery opportunities - however there is often insufficient resource/time available to establish such working arrangements.”



Interviews with managers

The majority of managers confirmed they operate a structured appraisal process with staff Members. However, seven explained that this was either not happening or was operating only partially or informally. In many cases where appraisals are undertaken, managers were of the view that it effectively identified training needs, both at an individual and organisational level.

The overwhelming constraint to delivering the development opportunities identified through appraisals is time, particularly in terms of the opportunity cost arising from staff participating in training. Lack of resources was also mentioned by a significant number of managers, although there is evidence of some managers using departmental and corporate budgets creatively to good advantage. Several managers identified geographical location as a problem, in terms of distance to training opportunities. Nevertheless, what might be seen as a potentially cost-effective delivery mode, distance learning, was not generally seen as attractive, because of difficulty in motivating staff and lack of face-to-face contact. External one-off conferences and seminars were also generally seen as less effective, largely because of high cost and minimal impact in tackling development needs. A small number reported that it was difficult to find suitable training opportunities to fit their requirements.

The preferred mode for delivery of training opportunities was in-house training delivered by external providers, since this was seen as cost-effective and could be tailored to an authority's specific needs. It was acknowledged that this would not be cost effective for more specialised training for one or two staff. Several managers, particularly those in the smaller authorities felt that workshop-based events could be usefully shared between local authorities, and one suggested that simple 'knowledge-sharing' events, rather than formal training, could be beneficial. Many managers indicated the need for a mix of delivery modes, depending on individual needs. Several noted the need for training technical and support staff. The motivation of individuals was mentioned as important by a couple of managers, in that staff need to be motivated to develop and, in practice, there are variations between people.

The Management Practice Sub-Committee of the SSDP highlighted the need to think creatively about the many ways that staff and managers at all levels can take responsibility to positively develop themselves, both within and outside the workplace.

Interviews with external stakeholders

Similar to the officers themselves, external stakeholders identified barriers to staff development such as time, resources and distance from the Central Belt. They also mentioned factors including entrenched attitudes and mindsets, low morale and enthusiasm, career blockages, lack of effective staff appraisal systems, poor management, narrow understanding of continuous professional development, stress, information overload and narrow political priorities. It was striking how often a wide range of external stakeholders identified low morale within planning authorities as being a barrier to effective staff development.

7. Skills Framework Linked to Modernisation

The following table summarises the findings of the research and sets out a skills framework related to the key themes of the modernisation agenda. Key themes were drawn from various reports setting out the aims of the Scottish Executive's modernisation of planning agenda. These themes were expanded to include various components relevant to local authority planning services, as understood by the research team. The required skills and knowledge column includes the key competences required by staff within Scottish planning authorities identified by this research. Both individuals and organisations can use this framework to reflect on their existing competence and plan for their future development.



Table 10: Skills framework

MODERNISATION THEME	COMPONENTS	REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE
Facilitating appropriate development	Effective development management, focus on outcomes Encouraging high quality design Understanding property markets	Negotiation/mediation/communication Inquiries/appeals Enforcement Planning law/legislative changes to the system, including key aims of development management Design Building construction Conservation Development finance/appraisal Planning agreements
Inclusive participation/ Partnership working	Policy/ Development Plans Development Management Equalities legislation Corporate policy External stakeholders	Understanding equality and diversity Customer service Community engagement Negotiation/mediation/communication Partnership working/teamwork Implementation
Efficient management	Resource management Streamlining processes Speed of decisions Leadership Information management	Time management Stress management E-planning IT GIS Project management Risk management Staff/team management Leadership Financial and business management Monitoring and appraisal
Plan-led system	Strategic planning Development plans	Project management Visioning/creative thinking/design of places Policy development and writing SEA Strategic planning/thinking Data analysis Monitoring/appraisal Development finance
Sustainable development	Impact on the natural environment Transport Social and economic issues	EIA Biodiversity/nature conservation Energy conservation/renewable energy Water management/flooding/SUDS Built environment conservation Transport planning Regeneration Affordable housing Economic development Rural planning Retail planning Marine planning Minerals and waste
Pro-active approach	Ability to identify opportunities Taking responsibility/leadership Interpersonal skills	Developing positive attitudes Creative thinking/flexibility Confidence Sensitivity to different perspectives/values Critical reflection Communication and presentation Focus on outcomes

The following table re-organises the above information according to relevant groups of staff:

Table 11: Staff groups related to the skills framework

STAFF GROUP	REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE
All staff	Creative thinking/flexibility Sensitivity to different perspectives/values Communication and presentation Focus on outcomes Time management Stress management E-planning IT Project management GIS Understanding equality and diversity Customer service Community engagement Planning law/legislative changes to the system Negotiation/mediation/communication Partnership working/teamwork Implementation Data analysis
Managers including senior support staff	Staff/team management Leadership Financial and business management Monitoring and appraisal Risk management
Development management, enforcement, development planning and implementation staff	Inquiries/appeals Enforcement Design Building construction Conservation Development finance/appraisal Planning agreements Visioning/creative thinking/design of places Policy development and writing SEA Strategic planning/thinking Monitoring/appraisal Development finance
Awareness from all professional staff as appropriate, with some specialists as required	EIA Biodiversity/nature conservation Energy conservation/renewable energy Water management/flooding/SUDS Built environment conservation Transport planning Regeneration Affordable housing Economic development Rural planning Retail planning Marine planning Minerals and waste

8. Conclusions

Aims and methods

On the basis of the responses to the individual questionnaires across a representative cross-section of staff, and interviews with 33 managers and 15 external stakeholders, this research provides information on relevant aspects of skills and knowledge development within Scottish planning services. The results broadly accord with other recent planning skills surveys, but give a more complete picture of the situation in Scotland, including a more detailed understanding of the needs of support staff as well as planners and managers.

Skills requirements

The questionnaire survey confirms that staff delivering planning services require a wide variety of skills. Central to the majority of jobs are generic skills such as team working, written communication, time management, problem solving and customer focus, and individuals generally consider themselves to be adequately skilled in these. Development management skills are the technical skills most required and again, people consider them as well developed. The views of individuals were generally backed up by the results of the interviews with managers. Specialist technical skills, such as minerals planning and retail planning, are required by smaller numbers of staff, as are certain management skills such as financial management and risk management.

Training and development priorities

There are a wide range of topics that staff and managers have identified as priorities for training and development, falling into the following categories:

Core planning skills: design, planning law/legislation, 2006 Planning Act/changes to the system, development finance, sustainability, development management including planning agreements and appeals, strategic planning, policy making and rural planning.

Procedural skills: IT, presentation, E-planning, GIS and public inquiries. These skills are required across professional and support staff.

Generic professional and management skills: project management, negotiation/conflict resolution, staff/team management, community engagement, time management, customer service, leadership, stress management, financial/business management, data analysis and monitoring/appraisal. Most of these are applicable across professional and support staff and are not just for those in management positions.

Specialist planning skills: SEA/EIA, water management (flooding, SUDS), retail planning, enforcement, construction/building, energy/renewable energy, regeneration, housing including affordability, biodiversity/nature conservation, economic development and minerals planning, and built environment conservation.

Senior and middle managers highlight project management in particular as requiring development, administrative and technical staff highlight IT, planning law/policy and customer service, and most planning grades say they need design skills.

External stakeholders and some managers emphasised the importance of attitudes and personal qualities that were needed to underpin the above skills and competences. External stakeholders were generally critical of the skills levels within authorities observed during their interactions with the authorities and the ability to deliver efficient, responsive, high quality and inclusive services.

Barriers

The key barrier to training and development identified by staff themselves is the lack of time due to heavy workloads, followed by limited budgets, the location/availability of opportunities and family or outside commitments. Some managers had clearly been creative with their departmental and corporate training budgets. External stakeholders identified similar barriers to those in authorities, but it was striking how often they observed consequences of low morale, with a few commenting on poor management practices. It was generally recognised that entrenched attitudes and a poor ethos are the hardest things to change and require more than just training courses.

Development opportunities

The majority of authorities operate a staff appraisal system, most of which are considered to be effective at identifying training needs. However, not all systems are working as well as they could and staff highlighted the contrast between supportive and unsupportive managers in identifying and addressing development needs.

While just under half of all respondents classify their current training and development opportunities as excellent or quite good, it is of concern that 17% report that they are poor. This is the same percentage who report that their training opportunities are getting worse over time, in contrast to the 32% who report them getting better. Middle and senior managers are most positive about their training opportunities. A disproportionately high number of enforcement officers, technicians and senior planners report their training opportunities as poor.

A range of provision could help fill identified skills gaps. For some topics in considerable demand within one authority, the preferred method is for external providers to deliver tailored, interactive in-house training. Although appropriate for certain situations, external one-off conferences and distance learning were not as popular. In addition to courses, the value of structured on-the-job training was highlighted, including a concerted effort to put learning from courses into practice. The role of in-house seminars and discussion was seen as having significant potential, requiring minimal budget. Collaborative working groups or action learning sets also require minimal financial resources and could work both within authorities (perhaps with other parts of the Council) and between groups of neighbouring authorities. The sharing of good practice with others in similar positions can be as valuable as formal training courses for some topics. There is still a requirement for formal qualifications, both planning degrees for those without them and specialist training such as urban design. For specialist training involving smaller numbers, there was generally a willingness to share training provision across authorities.

Creative thinking is required about the range of learning opportunities possible, including mentoring, reading and secondments. Techniques that specifically encourage longer-term capacity building are to be encouraged, getting away from seeing training as an isolated event. Communication and reflection should be processes built in to ongoing work to help people continually develop. Both individuals themselves and their managers have responsibilities in terms of training and development.

Impacts of planning modernisation

The results of the questionnaire survey show uncertainty about how planning reforms will impact on people's daily jobs, particularly for technical and support staff, who will be essential in delivering services like e-planning, community engagement and revamped development management processes. In addition to better understanding of new legislation and the effects on office procedures and systems, there is a need to help people think about e-planning and other IT requirements, innovative methods of community engagement, negotiation/mediation skills, project management, SEA and workload/time management. New agendas related to design, development management, planning policy, development finance and implementation also need to be integrated into learning opportunities.

Clearly, there are strengths within planning authorities on which to build and good practice to share. Many staff are very experienced, possessing a range of both transferable and technical skills. The survey revealed a commitment to a willingness to learn. However, it also reveals services and individuals under stress and considerable time and work pressures. These existing pressures could be aggravated by the significant changes arising from the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 and could inhibit effective change. The time is opportune for planning authorities to think widely about training and development priorities and the variety of different methods available to help individual staff and teams within the organisation think creatively about how they deliver the modernised planning system in Scotland.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Planning Skills Survey 2006 for the Improvement Service carried out by Heriot Watt University

This survey is all about you as an individual. We want to know about the type of job you do, the skills you need for that job and the sorts of training and development that you need now and in the future. The results of the survey will be used to shape the Improvement Service's programme of training and development for planners and planning support staff. This is your opportunity to influence that programme.

1. Please indicate which authority you work for
2. Please indicate the main section/ team you work in:
 - Development management/ control
 - Development plans/ policy
 - Conservation/ design
 - Projects/ implementation
 - Enforcement
 - GIS/ technical support
 - Administrative support/ customer service
 - Management
 - Other
3. Please indicate your level of responsibility or grade within your organisation
 - Senior managements
 - Middle management (e.g. team leader)
 - Senior planners
 - Planning Officer/ Assistant
 - Administrative or Support
 - Technical
 - Other
4. Please indicate how long you have worked in planning or planning support
 - Up to 2 years
 - 2-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - 21-30 years
 - 31 years or more
5. Please indicate your age
 - 24 or younger
 - 25-34 years
 - 35-44 years
 - 45-54 years
 - 55-64 years
 - 65 or more years

6. Please tell us about your qualifications. Indicate your highest qualification, and for those with one or more university degrees please let us know which subjects you studied.
- School (Higher, A level etc.)
 - Further education (HND/HNC, SVQ/NVQ)
 - Planning degree
 - Urban design degree
 - Architecture degree
 - Surveying degree
 - Management/ business degree
 - Geography/ geology degree
 - Other
7. If you are currently studying for a work-related qualification, please give details, e.g. course/ subject and mode (distance learning, part time day release, evening classes etc.)
8. Are you a member of a professional institution?
- RTPI – corporate/ technical member
 - RTPI – student member
 - None
 - Other
9. Are you male/ female?
10. Which group do you belong to?
- White
 - Black – Caribbean
 - Black – African
 - Black – other
 - Indian
 - Pakistani
 - Bangladeshi
 - Chinese
 - Other

In the following section we would like you to tell us about your current competencies. Each question refers to a particular competency that may be relevant to your job. Competency include skills, knowledge and/ or awareness, as appropriate. Each question has two parts, and we would like you to answer them both. So for each question, please tell us if this competence is relevant to your current job (boxes 1-3) and how you rate yourself (boxes 4-7).

Please try and answer as many of the questions as you can. We are interested in finding out about competencies that people have that are underused, as well as competencies that people need, but which are underdeveloped. So, even if you answer No in the first part of the question, we would still like you to value your competence.

The more questions you can answer, the more reliable the results. Please don't get demoralised if you find that some of the items mentioned are not relevant to you and your job. We are trying to capture the skill base of everyone that works within the planning system regardless of their role or status. As a result, we are asking about all the competencies needed to do your job, and not just those related to a specialism.

Please note: even if you are answering 'very good/ solid', updating may of course be necessary.

Question Structure

- This is a core competence for my current job
- I need an awareness of this to do my job
- I do not need this competence in my current job
- My competence is very good/ solid
- My competence is good but could be developed further
- My competence is adequate but needs to be developed
- My competence is very limited or non-existent

Skills

11. Development management/ control/ processing planning applications
12. Plan making and policy writing
13. Strategic planning (including urban-rural relationships)
14. Enforcement
15. Planning Law
16. Urban or rural design
17. Transport
18. Promoting sustainable development (includes all aspects of sustainability except SEA)
19. Strategic Environmental Assessment
20. Regeneration
21. Economic Development
22. Nature Conservation
23. Conservation – buildings and built heritage
24. Principles of building construction
25. Housing – including affordable housing and housing needs assessment
26. Development finance
27. Minerals planning
28. Retail planning (including retail impact assessments)
29. Rural/ countryside planning
30. Water resource management/ flooding/ sustainable drainage
31. GIS/ digital mapping
32. E-planning
33. Data collection, handling and analysis
34. Monitoring, performance review and/ or critical reflection
35. Team working and/ or interpersonal skills
36. Engaging the community in a way that is inclusive and effective
37. Partnership working including inter-professional work
38. Verbal presentation skills
39. Written communication skills (including report writing)
40. Graphical presentation skills
41. Time management
42. Negotiation, mediation and/ or conflict resolution
43. Customer focus and customer care
44. Financial management and business planning

45. Risk management
 46. Problem solving and/ or the analysis of complex issues
 47. Adaptability and/ or the ability to embrace change
 48. Strategic thinking, making connections and/ or seeing the big picture
 49. Project management and delivery
 50. Creative thinking, visioning, reframing and/ or challenging assumptions
 51. Leadership and/ or the ability to influence others both internally and externally
 52. Stress management skills
 53. Staff management and supervision skills
 54. Performance appraisal in relation to delivering a quality service
 55. Awareness of accessibility and equality issues
56. Are there any other skills and/ or knowledge needed for your job which have not been mentioned in the survey? If so, please write in both the skill/ knowledge and your level of competence.

This last part of the survey looks at your training needs. The answers you give here will help to shape the Improvement Service's programme of training and development for planning and planning support staff.

57. What impact do you think the reform of the planning system will have on the skills/ knowledge needed for your job?
- I'm unsure what skills/ knowledge will be required
 - My existing skills/ knowledge will be sufficient
 - I will need to develop my skills and/ or knowledge
58. In what way do you think the reform of the planning system will have an impact on the skills and knowledge needed for your job?
59. List your current top three training priorities
60. What type of training and learning work best for you? (Please tick up to 5 options)
- Formal in-house training courses
 - Informal but structured in-house seminars/ discussions
 - External training courses
 - Formal or short course/ modules
 - Degree or university/ college course
 - Conferences
 - Distance learning materials (including on-line sources)
 - Reading – books, journals and/ or web searching
 - Collaborative working groups/ action learning sets
 - Working with a mentor
 - Secondments or work-shadowing
 - 'on the job' (structured experiential learning)
 - networking (with experienced colleagues/ external contacts)
 - other

61. How would you rate your current training and development opportunities?
- Excellent
 - Quite good
 - Okay
 - Poor
62. In the recent past, would you say that the training opportunities available to you have ...
- Been getting better
 - Been getting worse
 - Stayed the same
63. Are there any barriers to further training and professional development?
- Lack of time/ heavy workload
 - Family/ outside commitments
 - Budget
 - Lack of choice/ availability
 - Location/ geography
 - Other
64. Do you have any further comments on your current or future training and development needs or opportunities?

Appendix 2: Demographic Information about Questionnaire Respondents

Gender:	Men	53%
	Women	47%
Race:	White	99%
	Black and other ethnic minorities <1% (figure rounded) (2001 Census showed 2% of Scotland's population was black and other ethnic minorities)	
Age:	Under 25	7%
	25-34	27%
	35-44	30%
	45-54	24%
	55-64	12%
Length of service:	Under 2 years	17%
	2-5 years	18%
	6-10 years	15%
	11-20 years	25%
	21-30 years	16%
	Over 31 years	9%
Highest educational qualification:		
University	80% (of which planning 65%, geography/geology 5%, 15% other) (30% have two or more degrees, most commonly in planning and geography/geology)	
Further education	13%	
School	10% (staff without degrees are mainly in administrative or technical support grades)	
Currently studying	8% (4% already have a planning degree)	
Membership of professional institute:		
RTPI	60%	
Other	9% (includes: Landscape Institute, RICS, NAPE, etc.)	
Level /grade:		
Senior manager	7%	
Middle manager	14%	
Senior planner	15%	
Planning officer/ass't.	37%	
Administrative support	10%	
Technician	8%	
Other	9%	
Role:		
Development management	36%	
Policy/plan-making	24%	
Projects/implementation	9%	
Admin/customer service	8%	
Conservation/design	7%	
GIS/technician	6%	
Management	6%	
Enforcement	4%	

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING MANAGERS

1. Looking at the planning and support staff within your authority in relation to the skills and knowledge needed to implement the 'modernising planning agenda', what are their key strengths? What are the key gaps?
2. Do you identify training needs through an appraisal process? If so, how effective is this?
3. Do you have adequate resources for staff training and development?
4. What barriers can you identify to staff training and development?
5. In relation to modernising planning, what are the key training priorities for your planning and support staff, including planners, managers, technical and administrative officers?
6. What methods of staff development training would best help further these priorities? What do you have in place and what are your priorities for the Improvement Service resources, in terms of topic, delivery method and target staff?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

1. What kind of planning service would you like to see under the modernised system? What might be some of the key attributes?
2. What competencies, qualities, behaviours and attitudes do you think are important for staff in planning departments (including support staff)? Why? How might they link with modernisation aims?
3. (a) Which of these things are already well-developed (for both planners and support staff?)

(b) Which of these need more development? Which groups of staff need to be developed?
4. From your perspective, do you perceive that there might be barriers to developing such skills? If so, what are they and how might they be overcome?

Appendix 4: Other Sources of information

Academy for Sustainable Communities (2006) *European Skills Symposium: Skills for the Future*, Sheffield: Academy for Sustainable Communities.

Kitchen, Ted (2007) *Skills for Planning Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Policy Research Institute and Centre for Urban Development and Environmental Management Leeds Metropolitan University (2007) *Skills for the Future 2006: Report of Symposium*, Sheffield: Academy for Sustainable Communities.

RTPI (1995) *Planners as Managers: Shifting the Gaze*, London: RTPI.

RTPI (2004) *Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education*, London: RTPI.

RTPI (2005) *A Survey of Discipline Knowledge and Generic Skills of RTPI Corporate Members*, London: RTPI.

Scottish Centre for Regeneration (2004) *Creating a Learning Landscape: A Skills Framework for Community Regeneration*, Glasgow, Scottish Centre for Regeneration. (This is part of a much larger Learning in Regeneration Skills Pack produced by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration.)

Scottish Executive (2005) *Planning Development Budget Seminar Report*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Appendix 5: Results showing ranked results for skills by competence level

'VERY GOOD/SOLID' (%)			
Teamworking	45%	Enforcement	10%
Written Communication	45%	Planning Law	10%
Customer Care	34%	Awareness Equality Issues	9%
Time Management	30%	GIS/Digital Mapping	8%
Adaptability	30%	Performance Appraisal	7%
Development Management	28%	Sustainable Development	7%
Verbal Presentation Skills	25%	Regeneration	7%
Problem Solving	24%	Urban/Rural Design	6%
Strategic Thinking	23%	E-Planning	6%
Negotiation	18%	Building Construction	5%
Plan Making/Policy Writing	17%	Nature Conservation	5%
Creative Thinking	16%	Financial Management	5%
Data Collection	16%	Housing	5%
Leadership	16%	Economic Development	4%
Participation	15%	Retail Planning	4%
Graphical Presentation Skills	14%	Risk Management	3%
Project Management	13%	SEA	3%
Conservation Buildings/Built Heritage	12%	Water Resource Management	3%
Monitoring	12%	Partnership	3%
Staff Management	12%	Transport	3%
Stress Management	10%	Development Finance	2%
Rural/Countryside Planning	10%	Minerals Planning	2%
Strategic Planning	10%		

'GOOD BUT COULD BE DEVELOPED FURTHER' (%)			
Adaptability	47%	Plan Making/Policy Writing	30%
Time Management	47%	Graphical Presentation Skills	30%
Negotiation	46%	Sustainable Development	29%
Strategic Thinking	45%	Conservation Buildings/Built Heritage	29%
Problem Solving	44%	GIS/Digital Mapping	28%
Customer Care	43%	Rural/Countryside Planning	28%
Partnership	43%	Strategic Planning	28%
Verbal Presentation Skills	43%	E-Planning	25%
Teamworking	41%	Regeneration	22%
Leadership	41%	Nature Conservation	22%
Creative Thinking	40%	Housing	22%
Written Communication	38%	Transport	20%
Participation	37%	Enforcement	20%
Awareness Equality Issues	35%	Risk Management	19%
Stress Management	34%	Water Resource Management	18%
Urban/Rural Design	33%	Financial Management	17%
Performance Appraisal	33%	Economic Development	15%
Staff Management	32%	Retail Planning	14%
Project Management	32%	SEA	12%
Development Management	32%	Development Finance	10%
Data Collection	32%	Building Construction	10%
Planning Law	31%	Minerals Planning	10%
Monitoring	31%		

'ADEQUATE BUT NEEDS DEVELOPING' (%)			
Stress Management	36%	Data Collection	26%
Transport	36%	Project Management	26%
Economic Development	33%	Financial Management	25%
Nature Conservation	33%	Rural/Countryside Planning	25%
Water Resource Management	33%	Strategic Planning	24%
Awareness Equality Issues	33%	Enforcement	23%
Sustainable Development	31%	Risk Management	23%
GIS/Digital Mapping	31%	Staff Management	21%
Monitoring	31%	Development Finance	21%
Planning Law	30%	Plan Making/Policy Writing	20%
SEA	30%	Problem Solving	20%
E-Planning	29%	Verbal Presentation Skills	20%
Graphical Presentation Skills	29%	Strategic Thinking	20%
Regeneration	29%	Development Management	19%
Building Construction	29%	Negotiation	18%
Conservation Buildings/Built Heritage	28%	Minerals Planning	18%
Housing	28%	Partnership	16%
Performance Appraisal	27%	Adaptability	15%
Retail Planning	27%	Time Management	15%
Urban/Rural Design	27%	Customer Care	13%
Participation	27%	Written Communication	7%
Leadership	27%	Teamworking	6%
Creative Thinking	26%		

'VERY LIMITED OR NON-EXISTENT' (%)			
Minerals Planning	52%	Staff Management	17%
Development Finance	48%	Data Collection	15%
Retail Planning	38%	Planning Law	15%
Risk Management	38%	Project Management	15%
SEA	38%	Monitoring	14%
Building Construction	38%	Graphical Presentation Skills	14%
Financial Management	35%	Stress Management	11%
Economic Development	32%	Awareness Equality Issues	11%
Water Resource Management	30%	Development Management	10%
Housing	29%	Participation	9%
Enforcement	27%	Leadership	8%
E-Planning	27%	Partnership	7%
Regeneration	26%	Creative Thinking	6%
Transport	25%	Negotiation	6%
Nature Conservation	24%	Verbal Presentation Skills	4%
GIS/Digital Mapping	24%	Problem Solving	4%
Rural/Countryside Planning	21%	Strategic Thinking	3%
Strategic Planning	21%	Customer Care	3%
Urban/Rural Design	18%	Written Communication	2%
Sustainable Development	18%	Time Management	2%
Performance Appraisal	17%	Adaptability	2%
Conservation Buildings/Built Heritage	17%	Teamworking	1%
Plan Making/Policy Writing	17%		







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Improvement Service is devoted to improving the efficiency, quality and accountability of public services in Scotland through learning and sharing information and experiences.

