**Society of Local Council Clerks: Training for CiLCA July 2018**

**1 Introduction**

The Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) is a foundation qualification for local council officers and others working with local councils (parish, town and community councils) in England and Wales. It is a Level 3 qualification worth 20 credits awarded by Ascentis. It is owned by the Improvement and Development Board (IDB) working on behalf of local councils in England[[1]](#footnote-1) and the National Training Advisory Group (NTAG) in Wales. The IDB has delegated operational oversight and developments to the Ops Group made up of representatives of the different sector bodies in England and Wales. The SLCC is the centre working with Ascentis with direct responsibility for the administration, delivery and assessment of CiLCA. A development plan is being prepared by the Ops Group and will be discussed at a meeting of the IDB in the autumn. (See the CiLCA file for a draft plan.)

When it was created in 2001, CiLCA was regarded as an assessment programme leading to a qualification where candidates built a substantial portfolio of evidence submitted for assessment. Having provided detailed written instructions, the bodies responsible for CiLCA were not involved in any training to support the assessment programme apart from delivering an induction course for trainers. In England, most training was managed independently by a county’s Association of Local Councils (CALC). In some instances, the CALC worked in partnership with the SLCC to provide training and in others, the SLCC delivered the training instead of the CALC (as in Wales). As training organisations for the sector, CALCs were expected to carry out their own quality assurance (as they are accustomed to doing for other training offers). The quality of training was also evidenced in results. However, unlike earlier awarding bodies (AQA, the M&VB[[2]](#footnote-2) and AptEd), Ascentis expects the SLCC to take responsibility for training as a key factor in the delivery of the qualification. This paper therefore explains how the SLCC will assure the quality of training delivered by independent training providers for CiLCA.

**2 Types of training**

There are two types of training required for a candidate working towards CiLCA. A candidate needs sufficient subject knowledge for the profession (known as knowledge training) and also needs to know how to build an e-portfolio (portfolio training). This section explains that candidates require an equal opportunity to access training alongside the flexibility to choose the training that is most appropriate for their individual needs.

Candidates range in age from 18 to 80 and come to CiLCA with the full range of educational and professional backgrounds. This means that they benefit from flexibility in their approach to knowledge training depending on earlier and current experiences and a single training model is not appropriate. For example, a candidate may already be very knowledgeable as a result of several years’ experience ‘on the job’ or from other related training courses and if they can follow written instructions, possibly because they already have a degree, they can complete what is required without further training. All the information that a candidate needs to complete the qualification is contained in The Portfolio Guide. However, most candidates benefit from some related training although the type of training required will vary from person to person.

Candidates may acquire knowledge training in any or several of these different ways depending on their individual needs before or during their study for CiLCA:

1. On the job – sometimes with a workplace mentor
2. Via a mentor from another council or from a local advisory body
3. By studying the SLCC’s online course known as ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration) equivalent to Level 2.
4. By attending a local course introducing the work of a local council officer (often attended by other officers who are not taking CiLCA)

The CALCs depend on the fourth kind of training as an important income stream. The CALCs also have a sharp understanding of the market in their area including the distance people will travel, the amount they will pay and the related timing and length of training. They benefit significantly from flexibility in providing training that suits their county. ILCA is available for all candidates and is particularly valuable for those where local knowledge training is not available in the right place at the right time.

Most training specifically designed for CiLCA focuses on the construction of a portfolio of evidence involving a series of explanations and annotated council documents. The thirty assessment tasks have been set centrally following intense consultation across the professional sector. They are explained with learning outcomes, assessment criteria, evidence required and further guidance in *The Portfolio Guide* (2016). For clarity, this means that trainers are not creating or adapting the assessment plan nor do they carry out any assessment; their role is to support the candidates in understanding the assessment tasks. If necessary, the training may include some coverage of relevant knowledge but this is not the central purpose of portfolio training.

The section below explains what is currently being done to support trainers in providing portfolio training and sets out ways in which the SLCC will improve the quality assurance of training to support CiLCA candidates. For more details, see the *Internal Quality Assurance Policy.*

**3 Quality assurance of training**

**Service Level Agreements**: The SLCC (on behalf of the IDB) has established Service Level Agreements with training organisations responsible for delivering portfolio training to support CiLCA (see list of training organisations that have signed the SLA). A second edition of the SLA will be developed in 2019.

**Qualifications of trainers**: The SLA provides evidence that all trainers hold a recognised professional qualification or have many years of experience of offering training and advice in the professional sector (see a list of trainers identified by the SLAs on file). It is rare to find a trainer with both teaching experience and subject knowledge since the subject of local council administration at the parish level is highly unusual. The SLCC therefore provides an induction course for potential trainers to guide them through the portfolio training process.

**Induction and CPD**: Trainers are not permitted to train CiLCA candidates unless they have attended the induction course provided by the SLCC. This gives them ‘recognised trainer’ status and they must train under the banner of either the CALC or the SLCC. Trainers are expected to demonstrate CPD in relation to subject knowledge and to attend an annual forum to share experiences and gain updates on the delivery of CiLCA training. There is a central online resource called The Hub where trainers share documents and discuss questions related to the delivery of CiLCA training.

**Facilities**: The provision of training over a broad range of topics for local councils is a core activity of all of the training organisations who use either their own facilities for training or hire appropriate facilities in hotels or community halls. Classes are small; in some counties just one candidate might require a mentoring relationship while elsewhere the most common class size is six to eight at any one time. These classes do not coincide with cohorts registered with Ascentis as individual candidates are responsible for registering with the SLCC and do so at different times.

**Observation of training**: A scheme whereby experienced trainers observe their peers at a training event will be fully operational by the summer of 2020. Sensitive consultation is required to maintain a sense of partnership between the CALCs and the SLCC. It is likely that the IDB will identify a group of experienced and qualified trainers from CALCs who will visit their peers in other CALCs in the spirit of training development. A checklist of features to look for during an observation visit has been drawn up (see the checklist on file).

**Evaluation survey**: The SLCC has conducted its first online survey by which it can evaluate CiLCA including the quality of training. The survey was sent to all 800 candidates who have been registered on the e-portfolio since 2015. An analysis of the results is in the CiLCA file. The survey identifies strong support for the training offered and examples of good practice but also highlights a few weaknesses among training organisations. 10% of the respondents did CiLCA without training for a variety of reasons. The survey results will be discussed by the group responsible for CiLCA operations (the Ops Group) and actions will be proposed. This survey will now be carried out once or twice a year in future.

**Compulsory training**: The SLCC (on behalf of the IDB) intends to introduce a compulsory one-day training course for all potential candidates. The course will focus on registration, the e-portfolio, training needs, opportunities for support and the assessment plan. This ensures that all candidates are given consistent guidance on the contents of the *Portfolio Guide* and that the most appropriate training is offered to each candidate going forward if, indeed, training is required. This could be more extensive training in professional knowledge or a course that explains how to compile the portfolio and checks candidates’ understanding of the tasks. It could be that one-to-one mentoring is the best option if a candidate’s geographical location makes course attendance difficult (as in Wales).

The Ops Group will design the course and, for the most part, the CALCs will deliver it. The SLCC will develop a webinar version of the course to facilitate access where local training organisations are not active in training for CiLCA. It may be necessary to identify a Welsh-speaking trainer to deliver the compulsory course to Welsh-speaking candidates.

In order to ensure that appropriate follow-up training is available, an additional four-day course focusing on portfolio training with some knowledge training to suit candidates’ needs can be delivered as required by the SLCC with the agreement of the local CALC. This is currently used in some counties by agreement (eg Oxfordshire and Somerset).

All potential candidates must have an equal opportunity to access good quality training. This is addressed in an *Equality, Access and Reasonable Adjustments Policies* document. At present there are some CALCs that are not delivering training (eg Dorset, Isle of Wight) and some areas where training is too limited (Herefordshire, Hampshire, Durham & Cleveland). Candidates are generally looking for training within an hour’s drive of home. The Ops Group and the SLCC will seek to address these issues by creating support using the webinar tool currently being used for ILCA.

**4 In summary**

This paper explains the ownership and origins of CiLCA and the separation between a centralised assessment scheme and independent local training. It describes two different types of training referred to as knowledge training and portfolio training and explains why candidates have a range of very different training needs depending on their previous educational background and recent professional experience. Candidates can access a variety of different options for knowledge training. Portfolio training is provided by ‘recognised’ trainers who have undertaken the induction training course and are normally employed by county-based training organisations (CALCs).

The SLCC has taken steps to assure the quality of portfolio training including signed Service Level Agreements which confirm that all trainers are qualified in subject knowledge and a survey that evaluates training. An Internal Quality Assurance Policy has been drawn up (see CiLCA file) and an observation scheme will be developed over the next two years ensuring that the sensitive relationship between the SLCC and CALCs is maintained.

Finally, although *The Portfolio Guide* contains all the information that candidates require, the SLCC makes proposals for a compulsory introduction to CiLCA to ensure that all candidates experience a training needs analysis. This will enable trainers to guide candidates on the most appropriate knowledge and/or portfolio training required for each candidate.

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1. Members of the IDB represent the National Association of Local Councils, the SLCC, chief officers of county associations of local councils (CALCs), the Local Government Association and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. One Voice Wales, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association monitor CiLCA in Wales. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The M&VB was the Monitoring and Verification Board for the sector set up for the specific purpose of awarding CiLCA certificates. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)