



**RTPI**  
Royal Town  
Planning Institute

# Continuing professional development

Advice and support on the RTPI's CPD scheme

**RTPI Practice Advice note**

**Updated August 2025**

# Help and support regarding the RTPI's CPD requirements

## Introduction

This RTPI practice advice is designed to help you to plan, carry out and record your Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

It explains how to meet the CPD requirements and create a solid Professional Development Plan (PDP) with clear goals and objectives.

We have also answered the most frequently asked CPD questions.

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## 1. What is CPD?

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is defined by the RTPI as:

*‘The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner’s working life.’*

It is a structured and planned process, which helps you maintain and improve your excellence, skills, knowledge, and capabilities.

It is a commitment that sets you apart from non-chartered planners.

**CPD** is:

- Formal courses
- Research
- Work-based learning
- Qualifications
- Online learning
- Reading

Our CPD scheme has been running since 1992, and is embedded in our Code of Professional Conduct and Supplementary Regulations

Because planners work in so many different roles, the RTPI has a broad definition of CPD, giving you the freedom to choose the CPD that best suits your needs.

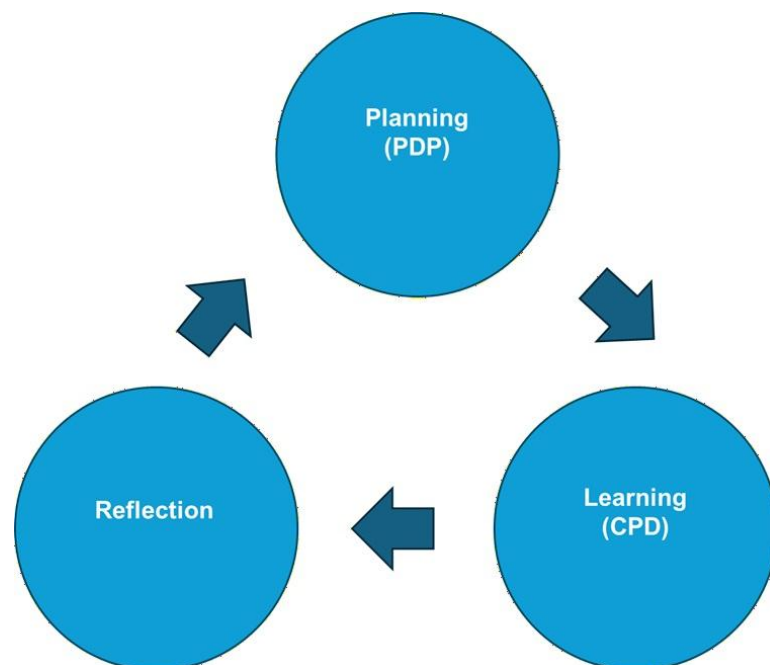
You’re expected to do at least 30 minutes a week on average, which is both

manageable for busy professionals and adds up to real impact over time.

The CPD scheme runs on a yearly cycle of reflective learning. Each year, you should:

- Update your Professional Development Plan (PDP) and plan your CPD
- Undertake learning and log your CPD activities, and
- Check in at the end of the year to see how well you met your goals.

### CPD cycle



## Employers and managers

Although the responsibility for meeting the CPD obligation rests with the individual Member, the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct requires Members who are employers or managers to encourage and support their employees in the maintenance of their professional excellence through CPD.

Employers and managers should support staff to review their personal development on an annual basis. This could be through an organisational performance development review scheme which may identify the same objectives as the staff member's PDP, or it could be by giving staff time to prepare their PDP.

Staff can also be supported by providing a training budget and time for learning. As a rough guide, it is suggested that employers should spend at least one percent of their total salary costs on staff development. Some EU countries have even adopted this by statute.

Organisations are also likely to benefit from conducting a learning needs analysis for the whole department or organisation to identify learning needs. Using the results together with individual development plans can help you to balance the learning needs of individuals with the priorities of the organisation.

## 2. Why do we do CPD?

Planning is a varied and challenging profession with a fast pace of change.

Our CPD scheme showcases the profession's commitment to continuous growth and excellence, reinforcing public trust in our expertise, as well as celebrating individual Members' dedication to maintaining and enhancing their professional excellence.

The benefits of undertaking CPD include:

- Helping to direct your own professional development and career progression.

- Assisting employers in justifying resources for staff development.
- Identification of gaps in your planning knowledge.
- Identification of the skills you need to develop.
- Reminding you of your achievements and how far you've progressed, which can be valuable when updating your CV or preparing for interviews.

*“CPD is not a problem as nearly every job sends you scurrying to find out something new.”*

Independent Consultant

### **Do I have to do CPD?**

Yes.

Our members uphold the highest professional and ethical standards, earning the trust of employers, clients and communities.

All RTPI Members - except students, affiliates, and retired members - must plan, complete, and record their CPD.

As outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct, Members, are expected to maintain professional excellence throughout their working life and to comply with the RTPI's evolving requirements.

*“As a planner, you learn something new almost every day.”*

Chartered Member, RTPI

### **How much CPD do I need to do?**

To meet the RTPI's CPD requirements you need to:

1. Once a year prepare a new (or review your existing) Professional Development Plan (PDP) for the next two years, identifying your personal professional goals, objectives, and action plan.
2. In a two-year period undertake a minimum of 50 hours' CPD activity to develop your skills and knowledge as a planner. **It is expected that members will undertake 25 hours of CPD per calendar year, from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>.**
3. Maintain a record of your CPD activity using the online form on the RTPI website.
4. Submit on request:
  - a. A copy of your PDP(s) covering the previous two years.
  - b. A completed online record of your CPD activity over the same two-year period (showing 25 hours of CPD per calendar year), with reflections on the benefit of each learning opportunity.
  - c. Where appropriate, an explanation of your reasons for not having complied with any part of this regulation (Only in very exceptional cases may a member be permitted to defer their CPD submission).

### **Making time for CPD**

It is expected that the 50 hours of CPD will be undertaken as 25 hours per calendar year, from January 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup>.

The benefits of this are:

- Easier for members to track the total number of hours of CPD

undertaken over a shorter time, within a year.

- Learning can be spread more evenly across each calendar year and ensures that the Goals and Objectives from the PDP can be met.
- The CPD requirement for the RTPI averages only half an hour of activity per week.

It is helpful to break your CPD into manageable chunks by writing a clear action plan.

Set aside short, but regular, slots in your diary to undertake CPD is also helpful. This could include reading at a particular time each week, completing an hour or two of online learning or attending a lunchtime talk or webinar.

### 3. Preparing a Professional Development Plan (PDP)

Creating a well-thought-out Professional Development Plan (PDP) is a valuable CPD activity.

It forms the **planning stage** of the CPD cycle and at least an hour should be dedicated to updating it annually.

*“It is worthwhile to evaluate your career and identify where you would like to make improvements. I think that this can assist in providing a greater sense of purpose.”*

Planner, Local Government

Your PDP can be flexible and should allow you to take advantage of (and record) valuable but unexpected CPD opportunities. It also allows you to evaluate all your CPD activities against your professional development goals.

Here is a link to the RTPI's [PDP Template](#), however, you can also use your work appraisal or PDP/CPD Plan for another professional body, as long as it meets the

following criteria:

- Is unique to you.
- Covers a two-year period.
- Is reviewed at least once a year and amended where necessary.
- Analyses your current skill or knowledge gaps (this may be through consideration of your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), thinking about your current situation, any anticipated changes and your longer-term career aspirations.
- Relate your development objectives to your actual CPD activities and to respond to changing circumstances.
- Identify at least one (and up to three) goals. Each goal should have two-four objectives and two-three SMART actions per objective.

**SMART** actions are:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time bound

## Writing goals

Your goals should be a high-level strategic vision of what you want to accomplish. Each goal should be framed to enhance your planning expertise and deepen your knowledge. It should clearly specify the outcome. Consider these questions:

- As a professional planner, what direction do you want your career to take over the next two years?
- Where you would like to be working (perhaps in terms of organisation, sector or even location)?
- What is the nature of the work you would like to be doing (e.g. type of role/specialism) and/or the level you would like to be working at?
- What challenges will you face at work?
- Are there any gaps in your knowledge or skills or any emerging trends that you need to be aware of? You may want to look at the Core CPD Framework where the RTPI has identified learning needs for the profession.

Keep in mind that a goal such as 'to obtain a promotion' is, by itself, too broad. Instead, specify the type and level of work you would like to pursue.

**Example goal: I will be working as a senior planner within a local authority dealing with large scale planning applications with minimum support.**

## Writing objectives

Objectives are sub-goals with focused and measurable outcomes that you expect to help you achieve your goals.

Objectives:

- Break down your longer-term goals
- Must relate to your goals.
- Do not have to be exclusively focussed on planning skills and can include, for example, improvements in professional skills such as negotiation, presentation or management.

You should aim to meet your objectives in the next 6-18 months.

Some of your goals and objectives may be the same as those identified in your work-based staff development scheme. However, your overall ambitions are likely to be wider than meeting the requirements of your current role.

**Example objective: Develop my presentation skills.**

### **Writing an action plan**

Your action plan should be SMART:

**S** – Specific (be precise in the 'Action' column below)

**M** – Measurable (see examples under 'How will I know if I have achieved it' below)

**A** – Achievable (can you achieve this or is it an unrealistic goal, given time and other pressures?)

**R** – Relevant (to you in your work setting)

**T** – Time-based (specific dates)

The PDP template has columns to help you to ensure your action plan is SMART.

A good action plan should be detailed enough for someone else to implement.

### Example action plan

<b>Action</b>	<b>How will I know I have achieved it</b>	<b>When will it commence and finish?</b>
Attend the internal presentation skills course on 12 December. This has been booked and agreed with my line manager.	My increased confidence in speaking with be noted by my manager at our weekly team meetings.	12 December
Agreed with my manager to give a presentation on changes to planning law at our staff CPD event on 24 January.	Feedback forms will show that my colleagues understood and learnt from the session.	24 January

### Core Competency Framework

The RTPI has undertaken a survey of the learning needs of the planning profession and identified Core CPD Framework priorities for the profession.

You can find these priorities and resources to help you to learn more about them at the following link [RTPI | Core CPD Framework](#).

## 4. Choosing a source of CPD

CPD is more than training courses and seminars and can come from a wide variety of activities. When you are recording your CPD you should ensure you have a mixture of different activities:

- CPD events or workshops with clear learning objectives, e.g. RTPI Nations and Regions events, RTPI Training, in-house training. Use the RTPI events calendar to find CPD events: [RTPI | Events](#).
- Conferences, e.g. RTPI Planning Convention, Young Planners' Conference, NAPE conference.
- Online learning, including podcasts and webinars
- Structured reading around a specific topic e.g. newspaper articles, The Planner magazine or RTPI publications [RTPI | New from the RTPI](#).
- Work-based learning to develop your professional skills and knowledge, e.g. work shadowing, project work or undertaking a new area of work.
- Preparing and delivering training or teaching to colleagues, students, and other planners.
- Mentoring, to support and guide other planners where this helps you to develop as well as your mentee e.g. as part of the RTPI APC scheme, RTPI [career development mentoring](#), or [Chief Planners of Tomorrow](#)
- Research e.g. academic research.
- Qualifications that have a strong link to your goals e.g. a specialist Master's degree.
- [Volunteers](#) help to shape our work and to promote the profession.

There are opportunities with [Planning Aid England](#), involvement in [RTPI Nations and English Regions](#) or as an [RTPI Ambassador](#) or working to support your local community e.g. as a school governor.

- Developing your professional skills and knowledge through a non-executive director role.
- Coaching sessions.
- Updates from colleagues or discussions with technical experts.

The main test of what counts as CPD is by reflecting on the goals and objectives identified in your PDP.

Ask yourself, *'has this helped me to meet my goals'*? If it was unplanned, has it enhanced or strengthened existing knowledge and skills which improve your effectiveness as a planner.

Remember, your goals and objectives are not fixed, they can and should evolve as your circumstances and aspirations change.

*"Think broadly and be creative with how you have expanded your horizons in the last two years. It's not just about the courses and seminars you have completed".*

Planning Policy Manager, Local Government

## 5. How do I keep a CPD record

CPD should be logged online, within the Member login area on the RTPI website - [RTPI | Your CPD](#). This allows recording of and reflection about the progress of your CPD.

Your CPD record should include:

- A record of those activities that have helped improve your excellence and expertise as a planning professional.
- Reflective/reflexive practice on what you have learnt from each CPD activity and how it will affect your work. To understand the difference between the two practices, you can read this blog: [RTPI | Gillian Dick: To reflect or reflex?](#)
- The date(s) on which each activity was undertaken.
- The number of hours attributable to each activity.

### **How do I decide how many hours of CPD to record for each activity?**

The RTPI assigns hours to RTPI events. However, self-directed or non-RTPI events will not be assigned hours, because we think you are the best person to recognise how much you have learnt from an individual activity.

You should ask yourself: how many hours of learning did I get from this? For example, you may have attended a six-hour conference but already knew the material that was covered during half of the conference. In which case, you would only record three hours.

Another example would be where you have taken on a new area of work and need to develop the skills and knowledge to do it. You may count the hours of research and on-the-job learning until you have developed the skills and knowledge needed, and the work becomes part of your day-to-day job.

## Reflective/reflexive practice

It is important to reflect and reflex ([RTPI | Gillian Dick: To reflect or reflex?](#)) on what you have learned from each CPD activity.

This helps you to understand what insights or skills you have gained and how you can implement them.

The online CPD record includes a dedicated section for capturing these reflections.

## 6. Will the RTPI monitor my CPD?

Every year, the RTPI confidentially monitors compliance with the Code of Professional Conduct through a randomly selected sample of our membership.

If you are selected for monitoring, you will be asked to:

- Complete a form
- Submit your PDPs covering the previous two calendar years and your current PDP
- Confirm completion of your online CPD record over the previous two calendar years as CPD has been undertaken (showing 25 CPD hours per year) and including your reflections on your learning.

If your plans and records meet the requirements of the Code, you will be excluded from random selection for the next two years.

If your PDPs or CPD records do not meet the requirements we will contact you to explain why. This could be due to incomplete information, a misunderstanding of the requirements, or genuine difficulties in meeting it. In such cases we will offer additional advice or help.

However, failure to supply a plan or a record, without an acceptable reason for doing so, is likely to constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and to may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Under Byelaw 20, if any Member is found to be in breach of the Code, the RTPI has the power to:

- Warn the Member as to their future conduct.
- To reprimand the Member.
- To suspend the Member from membership of the RTPI or
- To terminate their membership.

It is extremely unlikely that disciplinary action would be taken against a member whose record, whilst failing to meet in full the requirements of the Code, showed evidence of a real attempt to do so.

*“The easiest way of being prepared for the RTPI’s CPD monitoring programme is to keep all of your information up-to-date. This makes the monitoring a straightforward exercise and ensures that you don’t have to gather all of the information over a single, short period of time.”*

Planner, Local Government

## **7. Advice for particular groups**

Based on our experience of supporting members in a wide range of circumstances we have the following advice for members who have concerns about their ability to meet the requirements.

## **Maternity/paternity leave and Members under temporary domestic pressures**

Parents are exempt from CPD Regulations for six months following childbirth or adoption if they are taking maternity leave, shared parental leave or adoption leave during that period.

You should review and amend your PDP to reflect your circumstances and focus your objectives on subjects or themes that will help you maintain your excellence as a planner.

We recognise that whilst you are taking a break to look after your children or to care for a relative you may have limited time and resources for CPD.

Useful sources of CPD may include:

- Reading and research to keep up to date
- Keeping in touch days with your workplace
- Formal and informal discussions with other planners either face-to-face or through online networks.

You may find it useful to use the resources on [RTPI | Core CPD Framework](#) and [RTPI | Events](#).

*“So much had changed in planning during my maternity leave. I knew I had to get up to speed as quickly as possible to feel comfortable being back at work. Luckily my employer was supportive in helping me do this.”*

Planner, Professional Institute

## **Members taking a career break for travelling/study etc.**

If you are taking a career break, you are still required to meet the CPD obligation.

If you are going to be away from home, you need to plan how you will be able to maintain your excellence and expertise as a planner whilst you are away, for example undertaking site visits in the countries you are visiting.

You could also consider online learning or joining an RTPI Network. The resources at [RTPI | Core CPD Framework](#) and may also be useful.

If you are studying for a planning related qualification this is likely to make up the majority of your CPD requirements. If you are studying a course that is not related to planning, you will need to find additional sources of CPD.

### **Members approaching retirement**

Unless you have transferred to retired membership you are required to meet the CPD requirements of the Code of Professional Conduct.

On approaching retirement, you should draft your PDP to reflect your plans. If you intend to use your planning skills and knowledge once you have retired, perhaps through giving talks or working on a voluntary basis, address how you will make this transition.

Ask yourself if there are any additional skills you need to develop. You can also use your PDP to set yourself a timescale for retirement.

### **Members no longer employed in planning or unemployed**

If you are not working in planning your CPD will need to be clearly related to planning, so that you continue to maintain your excellence as a professional planner. You will need to identify this in your PDP and plan your CPD accordingly.

Sources of CPD that you might find useful include:

- The general planning press
- RTPI Networks
- Online research,
- Online learning and
- Attending our CPD events where unemployed Members are often offered a discount.

The RTPI website and particularly the [RTPI | Core CPD Framework](#) pages and [RTPI | New from the RTPI](#) can help you to identify the key areas that you need to keep up to date on.

### **Members living in remote areas**

Members who live in remote areas may have difficulty in getting to face-to-face CPD events, but there are many other ways of undertaking CPD. Sources of CPD that you may find useful include:

- The RTPI Networks
- Online learning
- RTPI [events for example, webinars](#)
- Reading technical planning publications and the RTPI website, and particularly the [RTPI | Core CPD Framework](#) pages
- In-person nearby CPD events.

### **Members of other professional bodies**

If you are a member of more than one professional body (e.g. RICS, the Law Society etc.) you will have to meet the CPD requirements of each professional body. Some of the CPD undertaken may be equally appropriate for more than one professional area, and if so, it can be included on your RTPI CPD record as well as on the CPD record for your other professional body.

The test of relevance should be whether it meets your PDP objectives or provides an unforeseen opportunity to improve your excellence as a planning professional.

### **Members working part-time**

If you are working part-time or job-sharing, you will still need to be equally competent to those in full-time work and will be expected to undertake the full 50 hours CPD over a two-year calendar period (25 CPD hours per calendar year).

### **Members working outside of the UK and Ireland**

Sources of CPD which you may find useful include free online learning or webinars relating to World Town Planning Day.

You can also:

- Attend local conferences and events near where you live, including those organised by other built environment professions.
- Read planning publications, including RTPI research and policy publications and in Planning Theory and Practice, [RTPI | New from the RTPI](#).
- Participate in the RTPI Networks, especially the International Development Network. See [RTPI | International](#) for more information.

## **Academic members**

If you are working as an academic, valuable sources of CPD can include the preparation of teaching materials and undertaking research if it has helped you to develop your planning skills or knowledge. Learning new skills, in-depth study of areas of expertise, and developing new areas of knowledge, are also all relevant CPD.

Academics may also want to undertake CPD through job exchanges, voluntary work (such as involvement in the RTPI's Partnership and Accreditation Panel or as a degree apprenticeship Professional Discussion Assessor), through the RTPI Nations and English Regions or involvement in RTPI Networks.

## **Former members who want to reinstate their membership**

Former Chartered, Legal Associate and Associate Members whose membership lapsed more than 12 months ago must provide evidence of CPD when applying to reinstate their membership.

This is demonstrated by submitting a CPD record showing 25 hours of relevant CPD in the last 18 months and a forward-looking PDP.

**For more information about CPD:** [Continuing Professional Development | Championing the power of planning](#)

**For more about the Code of Professional Conduct:** [Professional standards | Championing the power of planning](#)

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