

APPENDIX B

Guidance for Effective Performance Management

Recognising how the working environment can affect individual employees, it is important to regularly hold effective conversations and consider the wider health and well-being of our employees. This is just as important as their overall capability and capacity to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

This guidance document is intended to provide a set of tips for holding effective conversations along with supplementary questions that managers may wish to consider asking. These can be used to identify any issues to be addressed or any additional support that needs to be given.

Managers should refer to the Council's overall Performance Review process and guidance.

Employees need:-

- To know and understand what is expected of them
- To understand how they are performing against those expectations
- Understand where they need to improve and develop

In addition to holding an annual formal performance review, all line managers are responsible for:-

1. Setting and regularly reviewing meaningful objectives
2. Holding regular 1 to 1 meetings (4-6 weeks as a minimum) and keeping a record
3. Discussing career aspirations and development requirements
4. Agreeing an annual personal development plan to enable employees to deliver their objectives
5. Providing regular feedback on achievements and expectations
6. Discussing and agreeing future targets
7. Discussing and managing health and well being

Why do you need them?

Effective 1 to 1's can really make a difference to individual performance and ultimately team performance, providing the opportunity to find out where work is not being delivered and they can allow you to:-

- Confirm objectives are understood and aligned with organisational priorities
- Establish clarity around the work, the role and performance expectations.
- Provide and receive feedback
- Increase employee engagement and motivation
- Promote health and well-being
- Provide an opportunity to identify any support or development required
- And, may also prevent some undesired failures or surprises.

Ultimately, it is important that both the employee and the manager come prepared for these meetings. What you do and how you set the tone directly impacts upon the quality of what your direct reports will share in these meetings. Here are some tips to consider:-

Focus on coaching in the individual's performance (as that person develops their capabilities, they can realise the rewards in terms of recognition and potential career opportunities and in return can do great things for your team and the organisation)

Ask Open Questions

In these meetings ask open questions which show that you are about the individual and their needs – questions as simple as asking what the person likes and dislikes about their current role or work, or asking what you as a manager can do to help them. It is useful to have a set of favourite questions, these you can use for 1 to 1's, information meetings and any setting which helps start the conversations. A few examples:-

- That is interesting – tell me more
- Why did you feel that way?

- Why do you suppose he/she said that to you?
- Would you give me an example to illustrate what you mean?
- How do you feel about that approach?
- What would you do?

Be a Good Listener

It can be difficult to stop talking, especially with quieter team members. Use active listening to check for understanding, watch for body language and tone of voice. Seek to see or find out if there is something that might not be being said. If you ask tough questions, don't be afraid of some silence – allow your employee to think things through before pressing them for an answer.

Listening

Listening is a skill that is often referenced as a valuable attribute in life and work and comes into play in 121 meetings.

There are 3 levels of listening which many people will work through over time.

1. **Autobiographical listening** – this is when you hear from the perspective of listener (internal dialogue: what does this mean to and for me?)
2. **Collaborative listening** – this is where you demonstrate curiosity (focus on other); empathy, clarification and collaboration
3. **Global Listening** – this is when you have focused attention (as in layers 1 & 2) plus awareness of the environment, body language and emotion.

You know when you achieve the global listening level when you are:

1. totally present, absorb and convey a genuine interest in what the other person is saying
2. aware of not just verbal language but dynamics, so read gestures, take in thoughts, ideas and emotions in a non-judgemental way
3. able to lead the conversation and pace to keep it on target

Another good model for thinking about listening is the listening ladder by Bob Thompson. A good listener will aim for the top of the ladder.

Ladder step 5 - Listening to help the coachee to understand

Ladder step 4 - Listening to understand

Ladder step 3 - Listening to disagree

Ladder step 2 - Listening, waiting to speak

Ladder step 1 - Not listening or pretend listening

Avoid

Don't just use this time for simple progress updates. Individuals may want to talk about their work objectives and related topics, but are hopefully getting sufficient interaction with you already during the work week to allow this meeting to focus more on the individual versus their work.

Ensure that the meetings are held in a neutral place, and where possible in a meeting room. Ensure that other employees cannot overhear. Avoid disruptions and distractions, do not get drawn into other conversations or telephone calls, and generally give your full, complete and undivided attention to the employee. This demonstrates respect for the individual and will avoid you becoming distracted from the focus of the discussion.

Keep a Record

Records of performance and matters of concern at work are important for managing performance of individuals and the team. If performance becomes a serious concern, the Managing Performance Policy and Procedure needs to be invoked.

A sample template for the 1 to 1 is enclosed at Appendix C.

Questions

1 to 1's are all about your people and building a strong, trusting relationship with them. Asking questions like the ones below and following through on what you talk about will build a strong, lasting relationship for each member of the team.

Asking 2 or 3 of these questions at each 1 to 1 will keep things fresh, while ensuring you are covering important subjects regularly. It also gives you ample time to dive into each question as the employee will often open up into greater detail as long as you ask open and probing questions. (Why, tell me more...)

The questions are organised in categories which you should regularly cover in 1 to 1's so that you can quickly skim through for a question on a topic that you want to cover. The list of questions is a tool to support you, feel free to develop and devise your own suite of questions.

To start the meeting

Many managers like to use the same, unassuming opener at 1 to 1 meetings. It may seem boring, but doing so encourages direct reports to drive the conversation by starting with a topic that they want to talk about (remember, it is their meeting). The answer will also help you to gauge how they are feeling at work that week.

- How is it going this week?
- What is on your mind?
- What would you like to start with?
- What is important for us to discuss at this meeting?

To gauge job satisfaction

Proactive questions about job satisfaction can help you to unearth issues before they become full-blown problems and to lead to unwanted turnover. Some direct reports are more forthcoming than others, so even if the answers to these questions sound positive, listen for clues to deeper issues and ask plenty of follow-up questions.

- How are you feeling about your role?
- Are you happy here? What makes you say that?
- Do you feel like you are growing in your role? What makes you say that?
- What interests you about your work, and why?
- What is your favourite/least favourite things about your work right now?
- What is working well for you in your current job?
- What would you like to see change? (if anything)
- In what ways does your current role allow you to use your skills and talents
- Which areas make you feel like your hands are tied or you are unable to develop your full potential?
- What do you think we/you should consider doing differently?
- If you could work on anything else over the next month, what would it be? Why?
- Which areas would you like more feedback on?

To address career development

Some direct reports may have a career path fully mapped out, including ambitions on when they should get promoted. Others may have no idea how they came to be in the job they are in, nor have a clue on what they would like to do next. No matter where your direct reports are, it is important to have career development discussions to make sure you get the best from your team and keep people happy in the long run. Even if promotion within your team is not possible, highly talented people should be encouraged to stay with the organisation. If you have poor performers, then this also needs to be effectively managed.

- What are you most proud of, and what do you think you might want to do next?
- What are the two or three new skills you would like to develop in this role? What about those skills is of particular interest?
- What other roles could you see your self in further in your career?
- What areas would you like to explore next?
- If you were to create your ideal job, how would it differ from what you are doing at the moment?

- How is your current work helping or hurting your professional development?
- Which career or development goals are you focussing on right now?
- What else can I do to help you grow or advance your career?

Imagine it is two years from now and things have gone well: What has been your role in that?

- Have you given any more thought to your long term goals since our last meeting? What are your latest thoughts?
- Where do you see yourself in 3 or 5 years time?
- What professional goals would you like to accomplish in the next 6 to 12 months?
- To help identify and clarify the goal: what do you want to achieve? Who else will be involved? When is the deadline? Does this fit with your other priorities and workload?
- What is important to you about your goal?

To gauge how they are feeling about the organisation

These type of questions may yield good ideas you want to pass upward, or at least give you an opportunity to explain why decisions have been made the way they have. They will also give you insight into another face of the person's job satisfaction.

- What is the biggest opportunity you or we are missing out on?
- If we could improve in any way as an organisation, how would we do it?
- What would you like to see change here? Why do you say that?
- What is the number 1 problem with our organisation, and what do you think is causing it.
- What are we not doing that we should be doing? What makes you say that?
- How are you feeling about the organisation overall? What makes you say that?

To gauge how they are feeling about the team

You want to be sure that your team is functioning at a high level and here is a chance to uncover problems and opportunities that will benefit everyone.

- How would you describe the personality of the team? What sort of person would be a good fit here? What sort of person would add something that we are currently missing?
- How would you say we are doing at work together as a team? What makes you say that?
- What are some ways that we could improve team work? What makes you say that?
- Who would you like to work more or less often with? Why?
- How would you describe the work division between the team members?
- Do you feel adequately supported by other team members? What makes you say that?
- Is there anything you would like to see change about the team, and if so why?

To check how they are coping with changes

Change is inevitable. And no matter what type it is – change is a process and chain of events over a period of time. Managers should check regularly with their direct reports during times of change.

- How are you feeling about the news? What? Why? How? Etc
- What concerns do you have about the changes that haven't been addressed?
- What is going well and not so well with the new situation/development? Why do you think this might be happening?
- Do you have a clear understanding of the new goals and expectations? What makes you say that?
- How is the new situation or development affecting your work? What could be getting in the way of your being effective?

To learn more about the projects

- How are you feeling about the projects you have been assigned to?
- Are there any particular projects that you are particularly interested in?
- What do you think you are learning at the moment?
- What frustrates you about the work?
- Which areas would you like to spend more time on and why?
- What do you think has gone well? What could be even better? What would you like to do next? Is there anything you need for your development?
- What can I do to make things more manageable?
- How might I make this project more challenging or interesting for you?
- What do you think I should know about the project that I may not?

To learn your direct report's biggest challenges:-

For some discussing a challenge is like admitting a failure. Let your direct report know that you want to hear about his or her concerns because you care about making things better.

- What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing? How can I help that?
- At what point in the past week were you most frustrated with or discouraged by your work? What can I do to help you manage that?
- What are your biggest concerns about your current workload?
- I have noticed that xx is happening ? Can you help me to understand that a bit better? Talk me through your process and challenges?
- Which parts of your role are unclear or confusing?
- How is your workload right now?
- How has your work/life balance been recently?
- What sort of resources will make this project timely, effective and cost efficient?

Workload:

Problems with workload are a frequent topic for 121 discussions. People can sometimes feel overwhelmed with too much to do and find it difficult to prioritise and cope. This is liable to impact on the performance, quality of work and wellbeing. Helping individuals to prioritise can be a helpful approach as can reflecting on how efficient they are at getting work done. Tools such as the importance/urgency matrix can be used to help decide and prioritise tasks <https://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/>

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Important and Urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crises• Meaningful deadlines• Emergencies	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Important not Urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long-term projects• Process Improvements• Development
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not Important but Urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interruptions• Many emails• Some meetings	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not Important and not Urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trivia• Busy Work• Time-wasters

To draw out an issue

If your direct reports seems to stop short or gives a curt response on a topic where you think there may be important issues that are not being shared, use open-ended questions to encourage them to continue

- Could you tell me a little more about that?
- Can you share some of the details around that particular issue? (Who was involved? Where? When? For how long?)
- What was that experience like for you?
- How did that make you feel?
- If you could change what happened, how would you alter it?
- What do you think caused that to happen?

To coach a direct report on a problem:

Coaching can be a powerful way to encourage, empower, and help direct reports to solve their own problems. Ask questions that help the person establish a good outcome, explore the situation, generate a set of potential solutions, and finally plan the way forward.

- What is your number 1 problem right now? How are you feeling about it?
- What would be the most helpful thing for you to take away from this conversation in order to progress this.
- What have you tried so far to make progress on it?
- In our last 1 to 1 we discussed x – how is that going?
- In our last 1 to 1 we discussed your frustration with xxx and we discussed the solution – how is that going?
- What development areas do you want to work on in the coming weeks?
- What actions will you take before our next meeting?
- What targets do we need to discuss today?
- What actions will you take before our next 1 to 1 to make progress on x/y/z (Also discuss and agree any actions that you as a manager may need to take to support the activities)
- During this meeting you have mentioned that you would like to pursue x. What steps can you take toward that before our next 1 to 1.
- What additional resources can I provide for you between now and the next time we meet?

If you feel like your 1 to 1s are stuck in a rut, or ineffective:

You want a 1 to 1 to be a good use of your time, as well as your direct report's. Sometimes a simple change of scenery can help. Other times, direct and honest questions about issues may be needed and can really open up difficult conversations. If you think the 1 to 1's are not that helpful, chances are your staff member will be thinking the same!

- Would you like to walk around the block whilst we talk for the first 30 minutes?

- I have noticed that our last few 1 to 1's seem to be lacking energy. What are your honest impressions of this meeting? What are your honest impressions of this meeting? What could we be doing differently or better?
- What changes would you like to see about our meetings and discussions? How can we make them more interesting and useful to you?
- What would you be doing right now if we weren't having this meeting? How do you feel about being taken away from that task?
- I am trying to make my 1 to 1s better and would appreciate your honest feedback on this? How did you find this meeting? Please be honest. What could be better?

To address the direct report's personal life

Asking about your direct report's personal life can be a good way to show that you care about him or her as a person. Be sensitive and keep in mind that some people are more private than others. Depending on the individual, personal topics could be informal small talk about the person's family or interests, or more serious matters. It is often a good opportunity to carry out an introductory conversation where you know there are concerns for the individual. Start with a broad question, like these, and be very careful not to make assumptions.

- How are things going for you outside of work?
- How do you feel about your work/life balance?
- What, if anything, did you used to do that you find you don't have time for right now?
- I have noticed that you are a little quieter than is usual for you, is there anything you would like to talk about?
- What could we change about work that would improve the rest of your work life balance?

Remind the employee of support that is available from the Employee Assistance service - <http://insite/people/health-and-wellbeing/employee-assistance-programme/>.

To ask for feedback on the 1 to 1 meetings and on your performance as a manager

Getting feedback from your direct reports can be just as important as giving it. Not only will it help you improve as a manager, it can also build trust and strengthen your relationship with your direct reports.

However, only ask for feedback if you feel confident in your ability to take the feedback well and act on it; asking and then doing nothing could do more harm than good. Plus, given the power dynamic involved, how you ask is critical.

- I am interested in feedback on how I can improve as a manager. In preparing for our next 1 to 1 meeting, would you be willing to think through what you like about how I manage the team (i.e. how I run meetings, how regularly we meet, how you feel about the communications of our time and the wider team etc) and what I could do differently or better?
- I would like to improve as a manager and would be grateful for your help. Next week, would you share one or two things that you think would improve my management skills?
- What can I do to help you enjoy your work more and remove blocks to your progress?
- Which areas would you like more or less direction from me on your work?
- I am trying to make my 1 to 1 meetings better and would appreciate your honest feedback on this one – what did you like about it, and what could be improved.
- What are your impressions of our meetings? What could we improve?

Courageous conversations

Conversations are such an important part of daily life and a key aspect of good communication and strengthening relationships. As David Whyte the poet and organisational psychologist says, “The conversations are not about the work they are the work.”

**Be brave
enough to
start a
conversation
that matters.**

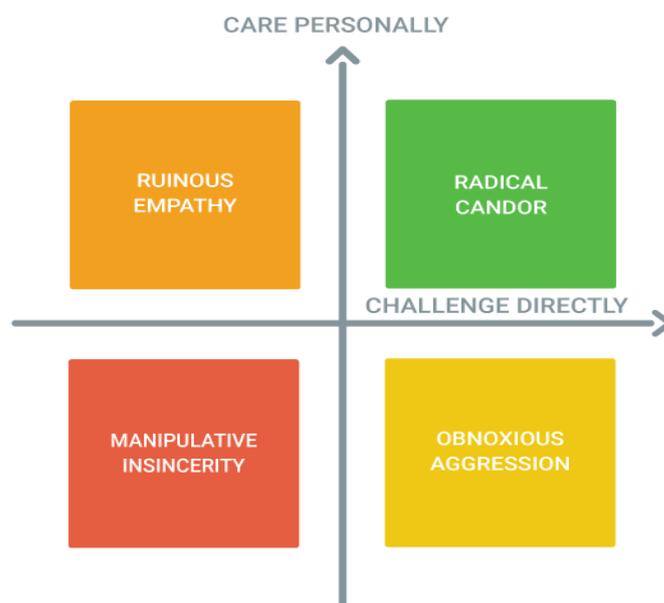
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Courageous conversations, where difficult issues are addressed, can feel overwhelming. It's common for people to prolong taking action in the hope that the issue will be resolved without them having to say something. However, it is much more likely the problem will escalate and become even more difficult to resolve. It is healthier to deal with issues early and avoid them getting any worse. You need to be equipped to work with colleagues in challenging situations to maintain positive and productive relationships. If an individual makes sure they prepare for these conversations, develop the right skills and take the best approach, it is possible to achieve positive outcomes.

Tips for having a courageous conversation

1. **Establish the situation** - be clear about your purpose (why do you need to have the conversation?). Try to understand what may be behind the issue (health, family, work, personal issues) and think about the outcome (what do you want to achieve?). Keep returning to your purpose if difficult moments arise.
2. **Be prepared** - a successful outcome depends on how you are prepared and what you say.
3. **Plan the conversation** - write out a plan to clarify your approach in advance. For example, how are you going to open the conversation? Practise the conversation in your head. Think about how the person might react and how you will respond to their reactions. Carefully choose a place and time and ensure the other person has enough time to prepare too.

4. **Think about your style** – you may need to move out of your comfort zone and adopt a more assertive approach but make sure you have a mature, cooperative style. Think about your posture, body language and don't interrupt them.
5. **Honest conversations** – some people find it more helpful to think of honest rather than courageous or difficult conversations. For some it is easier to think about being honest than it is to be courageous or raise difficult subjects. Moreover, framing the conversation as difficult may end up being a self-fulfilling prophecy.
6. **Present and listen** – ensure you listen to what they are saying, establish the difference between fact and opinion and demonstrate that you are genuinely interested. Practice the skill of Active Listening. Don't assume they can see things from your point of view and don't prejudge the meeting before it's started. This will help to build trust.
7. **Radical Candour** – aim to challenge directly while caring for the other person. Radical Candour is a powerful tool for thinking about how and when to give feedback.



CANDOR

<http://www.radicalcandor.com/>

8. **Acknowledge emotions** – both yours and theirs and direct these towards a useful purpose. Think self-awareness and self-control. If you are mindful of your emotions then you are supporting the other

person to demonstrate a similar mindset. You won't ever be able to guess exactly what will happen but there is likely to be defences, shock, sadness and maybe even tears, so give them space to respond but keep control of your own.

9. **Be positive** – difficult conversations lead to changes in behaviour, so create an optimism that moves the conversation into action by finding a middle ground. Again, consider the language you are using, tone of voice and body language.
10. **Ensure there's action** – think about how you will close the conversation and commit to action.

Here's a short video with guidance on how to handle a courageous conversation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGcl6RWCohk>

Informal Action – Tackling performance concerns in 1 to 1 Supervision meetings

Document specific incidents of an employee's poor performance

It's not enough to simply tell your employee that they need to improve. You need be ready to provide specific examples and evidence of their poor performance. Make sure they have a copy of the Managing Performance Policy and Procedure.

Put yourself in the right frame of mind

Remember that you're talking to your employee about their poor performance. You want to encourage them to make the necessary improvements and to still contribute to the work of the council. Be calm, collected and methodical in your approach. Focus on the facts and the evidence.

Speak with them privately

Make sure you have the conversation in an appropriate venue and that you give sufficient time for the meeting.

Be timely

If your employee's performance is slipping, don't wait until three months from today to have a conversation. Take action right away so that your employee can return to form sooner.

Listen to what your employee has to say

There may be a very valid reason as to why an employee's productivity and the quality of their work has taken a hit in recent weeks. Imagine, for example, they're very close with their father who's been gravely ill in the hospital for the last month. There may be perfectly understandable reasons for a temporary dip in productivity. If the employee has a disability consider any reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 that may support their improvement.

Be clear with what your expectations are

As the conversation winds down, be very clear about what your expectations are. The last thing you want is to sit down for a long chat only to have your employee leave the room without the two of you being on the same page. Agree a Performance Improvement Plan – see Appendix D.

Only when these informal discussions do not lead to any improvement should the formal stages of this procedure be applied.

If the discussions within supervision meetings do not lead to improvements, you should inform the employee that their performance is still not at a satisfactory level and that you are progressing to the Formal Stage of the Managing Performance Policy and Procedure.

Formal Action

There are 3 stages of formal action. The employee has the right to be represented in the formal stages of the procedure.

Stage One – Performance Review Meeting

Stage Two – Formal Meeting

Stage Three – Performance Review Hearing (Dismissal Stage)

The line manager will chair Stage One and Two and present the evidence in respect of the employee's poor performance and the employee will have the opportunity to respond, raise points and present any documents. Stage three is a hearing and the line manager will present the case for dismissal to the panel. The employee will have the opportunity to respond, raise points and present any documents.

The employee has a right of appeal at each stage of the procedure.