

# Supporting performance guidance

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**Transform**  
Tewkesbury Borough



**Tewkesbury  
Borough Council**

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## Top tips for supporting improved performance

- Performance management is something you do every day - not just when an employee is performing badly.
- Deal with performance issues promptly - do not let them fester.
- Be consistent in the way in which you manage performance - do not pick on employees you happen not to get on with.
- Make sure everyone understands what is expected of them - and how their performance is assessed and measured.
- Be prepared to give structured and constructive feedback when an employee is not performing well.
- Do not allow feedback to become personal - focus on how the work is being done, not on the personal qualities of the employee.
- Try to reach a shared understanding of what improvements are needed in the employee's performance.
- If you enter into a formal procedure, make sure you understand it fully and can follow it precisely. Speak to HR if you are in doubt about what the procedure requires.
- Take responsibility for managing the employee's performance - do not imply that you are being made to do it by someone else.
- Be sensitive to the employee's position. Avoid anything that may embarrass or humiliate the employee in front of others.
- Do not discuss the process with the employee's colleagues unless this is absolutely necessary - for example, if asking them to provide support or informal training.
- Make sure that any targets set are realistic and achievable. Do not set the employee up to fail. Objectives must be in line with what is achieved by other employees performing at an acceptable level. You should think carefully about each one and ask yourself whether or not you can justify asking the employee to work at this level.
- Remember above all that the purpose of the process is genuinely to improve the employee's performance - not punish the employee for performing badly.
- Always aim for a collaborative, problem-solving approach: how can you get the employee to the required standard.

## How to deal with personal issues raised

The employee may explain personal issues that are getting in the way of their ability to do their job. Where it is clear that a situation has arisen - such as divorce or bereavement - that it will take time for the employee to get over, you should do what you can to support the employee. This might involve making allowances when it comes to their performance at work.

You must always be respectful of an employee's private life so do not press them to give details that they are reluctant to share. Resist the temptation to try to solve the problem by giving advice on how the employee should deal with a difficult spouse or manage complicated childcare needs.

Do not be judgmental.

If the employee raises a personal problem, express sympathy and concern. Ask if there is anything that you can do to help and make sure that the employee is aware of our counselling services.

If your judgment is that this is a short-term problem and the employee needs to be given time to deal with it, consider what help and support you can give the employee in reducing pressures at work. A good conversation on this issue might involve you saying:

"Thank you for telling me that and I'm sorry you're going through a difficult time. I don't want you getting even more worried about work and we'll all do our best to help. I'll see if I can ease the flow of work in your direction while you deal with things. If it all gets too much for you or something urgent crops up that you need to deal with then just come and see me and we'll sort something out."

Ultimately, it is not your job to resolve the employee's personal issues. You should also be aware of the impact that the employee's performance is having on the business or on the work of colleagues. You may need to take a view as to how far you can really go in making allowances - or how long you can continue to accept poor performance. Where it is clear that there is a long-term problem in the employee's personal life that is affecting their work, discuss the issue with HR who might be able to provide additional support or consider a more long-term solution.

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## How to manage a performance conversation

- Book a private meeting room where your conversation will not be overheard.
- Book the meeting for an appropriate time of day - not the busiest time or when the employee's absence will be conspicuous.
- Make sure you allow adequate time for the meeting, and leave some time free afterwards to deal with any issues that arise, or if the meeting itself overruns.
- Outline the areas of concern clearly and objectively. Try to be constructive in your criticism and specific about what you need to see change and by when.
- Review the way forward agreed at the last meeting and the specific improvements you asked for (if appropriate).
- Note the ways in which the employee's performance has improved - try to think of at least some.
- Note the areas of work where the employee's performance is not meeting the required standard.
- Consider whether or not any external factors may have affected the employee's performance (for example a sudden surge of work or colleagues being off sick).
- Note the steps that you would like to see the employee take to improve and record these. Where objectives are agreed or set, make sure that these are clearly recorded in the notes.
- Share the objectives with the employee in writing following the meeting. Using a SMART supportive action plan is often a useful format.

### SMART supportive action template

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Timebound
What is the issue which needs addressing?	What does 'good' look like?	What support might you need to achieve this target?	Why is this target felt to be reasonable?	When does this target need to be achieved by?

