

Management of Underperforming staff



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Overview

In order to deliver a high quality service, all employees are expected to perform the duties of their post to an acceptable standard and in accordance with the nature and grade/level of their role.

Capability, in relation to undertaking a job role, is defined as 'being able and competent to perform to a required standard'. These standards may be laid down in the job description for the post, a role profile or even simply a list of duties.

When managing staff every line manager should ideally ensure that their staff receive the following:

- A clear job description/role profile that reflects the role they are required to perform
- A clear Personal Development Plan
- Regular appraisals/performance review
- Regular supervision/1:1's

It is an expectation, where issues arise around an employee's performance, that these are addressed at the earliest opportunity through supervision or 1:1's by the employee's direct line manager. Early intervention when poor performance is identified should be encouraged enabling a supportive approach to be taken. In cases such as these the employee needs to be fully aware of the performance issues and the standards that need to be met. Line managers should seek to establish the type of support that can be offered to assist the employee in reaching the desired performance level.

The following types of support may be considered useful:

- Time out to concentrate on certain aspects of poor performance
- Shadowing other members of staff
- Increased supervision
- Training courses
- Mentoring/coaching

Informal Stage

In most cases, addressing performance issues during supervision will be enough to lead to the necessary improvement in performance. However, in some cases a more structured approach may be necessary.

If a line manager has concerns regarding an employee's performance an informal meeting between the line manager and the employee should be held initially. The purpose of this meeting will be to focus on the particular performance issues and how these can best be overcome to lead to the necessary improvements in performance. Usually the content of this meeting will not be a surprise to the employee as most of the issues would have already been raised during supervision/1:1's.

This meeting will also look at what type of support can be offered to assist the employee in improving their performance. The line manager should try to ascertain if the employee accepts that there is a problem and if so if they will respond positively to constructive support and assistance.

The informal meeting often concludes with an agreed action plan containing targets and timescales with the employee being notified of the consequences of failing to achieve the required performance standards. In addition, a monitoring period should be set to monitor and review the achievement of the action plan.

If, following the monitoring period and review of the employee's performance, there has been little or no improvement more formal action should be taken under the formal stages of the process.

Formal Stage 1

Where an employee is failing to perform to an acceptable standard, despite having been given informal guidance and support, the line manager should arrange a formal meeting, this may be held under your Disciplinary Policy or your specific Capability Policy if you have one.

The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss and agree where the performance is unsatisfactory and to discuss any support that has been offered to assist the employee in improving their performance during the informal monitoring period. The line manager will also discuss with the employee if any further support or assistance can be offered. This meeting may result in a formal warning being given and the employee being told that failure to improve over a further monitoring period may result in moving to Stage 2 of the process. A further action plan should be completed and a further monitoring period implemented.

Formal Stage 2

Where an employee continues to fail to perform to an acceptable standard, despite having been given guidance and support at Stage 1, a meeting under Stage 2 of the process will be arranged. The purpose of the meeting will be to thoroughly assess performance over the previous stages and to hear why performance has still not met the required standards following the implementation of the improvement plan and the dedicated and continuous support given previously. This meeting may result in a further formal warning being issued and the employee being informed that failure to improve over a further monitoring period may result in moving to the final stage of the process. A further action plan should be completed and a further monitoring period implemented.

Final Stage – Potential Dismissal

Where an employee continues to fail to perform to an acceptable standard, despite having been given guidance and support at all of the previous stages, a further formal meeting will be called at the final stage of the process. The purpose of the meeting will be to thoroughly assess performance over the previous stages and to hear why performance has still not met the required standards following the implementation of the improvement plan and the dedicated and continuous support given previously. This meeting may result in an extended period of support, dismissal or, in some cases, demotion may be an alternative to dismissal.

Right to be accompanied

An employee has the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting that may result in a warning. The companion may be a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

Appeals Process

The right to appeal exists at all stages of the formal procedure and employees will be made aware of this,

Conclusion

Managing underperformance can be frustrating and time consuming for the line manager as great effort needs to be provided to assist the individual in improving their performance. Whilst it is easy to put these difficult and time consuming matters off, early management of performance concerns will allow for issues to be addressed before they grow into bigger more complex problems. Far too often line managers turn a blind eye to performance concerns with the hope that they will get better and mainly because a lot of managers find it hard to address negative performance issues with their staff. Unfortunately, the issues never get better, only worse and then the manager has a much larger problem to deal with.