

## Appendix 1.

### Guidance on approaching underperformance - Advice for line managers

<b>Contents:</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction .....	1
Understanding external influences.....	1
Preparing for the meeting .....	2
A positive approach .....	3

#### **Introduction**

This guide helps you, as a manager, to adopt a positive, supportive approach with employees who are not performing to the desired level, in line with their job description and person specification. You should take advice from HR for support and guidance.

This guide will support managers in both the probationary and other capability meetings.

#### **Understanding external influences**

When employees appear to be underperforming, it needs to be determined whether this is a case of will or capability.

A lack of capability exists where, no matter how hard an employee tries, they are simply unable to perform the job to the standard required. It is the agreed standard that is relevant, and not a manager's opinion of an employee.

Expectations and standards should be clearly communicated to employees. If it is not clear what an employee should be doing within their role and how you will measure their outputs, then how do you know that they are not performing at the required levels? The basic document for this is the job description and person specification which should be kept accurate and up to date. Managers should regularly review this document to ensure that it is an accurate reflection of the current requirements of the job role.

Where an employee is showing signs of underperformance then a manager will need to investigate the potential causes. It may be capability, but a manager needs to consider other issues that may impact upon a person's performance, which may include:

- whether the employee has had adequate or sufficient training in the role;
- changes to a post as a result of service restructure;
- the way in which the work is undertaken (systems and processes);

- the physical working environment;
- the provision of equipment or tools;
- the support and supervision provided to the employee;
- lack of clarity around the expectations and understanding of the duties and role;
- the levels of work demand placed upon the employee;
- strained or poor working relationships;
- disability or long-term health conditions;
- long term health conditions and/or disabilities;
- whether there may be other personal issues that the employee is dealing with eg financial, domestic abuse.

In cases of probationary interviews, other factors may also be considered. Further information can be found at Appendix 2.

If the concern is about an employee's health advice should be sought from the HR Advice Team.

## Preparing for the meeting

Shropshire Council wants to get the best out of its colleagues, but that means that we need to invest in their development and sometimes employees need a little bit more support for a period of time.

It can be difficult to approach underperformance with an employee in the first instance. Planning in advance can help with the flow of the conversation. Once you have diarised some time with the employee allow yourself some preparation time to draw information together.

Give yourself a bullet-point agenda so that you cover the points you need to. This could follow the example below:

1. Let the employee know your concern(s). Try to be concise about the issues and not get drawn into trivial conversation. This is an important matter and should be treated that way.
2. Share the concerns you have and how these don't meet the expectations of the role. Offer specifics about the actual underperformance including a timeframe. If this is a follow-on meeting, ensure that you bring notes of previous meetings and refer to these.
3. Explain how their performance or underperformance impacts upon the team or service, although be mindful not to bring other individuals in personally. This will help the employee draw a connection. If a negative impact cannot be explained, then an employee will question why they need to change their performance.
4. Work with the employee to draw up a performance improvement plan in order to remedy the situation. This is a two-way process. The performance improvement plan should outline how you will work together to support the employee to achieve the required performance standards, how this will be achieved, who will be involved and when this will be done by. **A template can be found at Appendix 3.**

## **A positive approach**

The purpose of a performance management conversation is not to punish the employee but to support the employee to improve their performance.

It is important that this is a positive process, as much as possible. Managers may wish to express their confidence in the employee and remind them of their good performance too. Since the goal of this conversation is to improve performance, employee may be reassured if they feel that their manager is there to support them to achieve the desired standards wherever possible.

DRAFT