Managing Work Performance Policy

Managers Toolkit

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This toolkit is designed to be read in conjunction with the Policy, and provides practical guidance and support for managers in applying the Policy.

2.   WHY MANAGE WORK PEFORMANCE

2.1   Successfully managing work performance is essential to the delivery of high quality services. It is an integral part of a line manager's responsibility to provide appropriate support to help an employee maintain improve their work performance. Managing work performance is central to the relationship between managers and employees and to the personal development of staff which can help:

- increase employee capability/competence;
- improve morale/confidence;
- reduce sickness absence;
- improve attitudes towards colleagues/managers;
- ensure fairness and equality;
- reduce grievances;

2.2   Determining measures to help improve performance at an early stage can negate the need to invoke formal procedures.

2.3   The effects of underperformance can be wide-ranging.   Failure to meet targets, poor attitude towards colleagues/managers, sickness absence and misconduct can all be attributed to underperformance.

3.   DEFINITION

3.1   Underperformance is defined as a significant and/or a persistent failure by an employee to achieve the standards of performance required in their job. This could be caused by lack of ability, aptitude, experience, knowledge, skills or inadequate or insufficient training or an underlying work or personal situation affecting the employee.

4.   FAIRNESS AND CONSISTENCY

4.1   At all stages of the process managers must ensure that:

- the process has been applied fairly;
- the rules have been applied consistently;
- the employee has received regular feedback;
- the communication and engagement with the employee during the processes has been sufficient, sincere and genuine; and
- the agreed arrangements have been implemented fairly and followed through timeously.

5. EQUALITY ISSUES

5.1 When considering an employee's performance a line manager must consider whether the employee's health or other personal circumstances entitle them to particular support. The Equality Act 2010 provides certain employees with special protection whilst in the workplace, where a manager believes that an employee may qualify for such protection they should consider the following scenarios:

employees with visual impairments	have I taken account of the need to provide written communication in large font or Braille?
staff with mental health conditions	have I considered their ability to cope with stressful situations?
employees with long term health problems	does the person require an extended break to take medication?
ethnic minorities	is English the employee's first language? Do I need to provide information in the employee's native language?

5.2 The above examples are illustrative and are not an exhaustive list of the Equality issues that employees may face.

5.3 Where it becomes apparent that an employee has a protected characteristic to which specific support may apply the line manager must consider what adjustments and supports are available and appropriate.

5.4 In these circumstances the employee may be the best person to identify what supports they require to assist them in achieving the desired outcomes. Advice should also be sought from HR and if relevant, Occupational Health.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 **Service Managers** are responsible for:

- overseeing the operation of the Policy in their Service area;
- setting performance targets for their area;
- supporting line managers to achieve these targets;
- ensuring that performance management procedures are applied fairly and consistently;
- participating in the advanced formal stages of cases being managed through the procedure; and
- ensuring that they are familiar with the content of the Managing Work Performance Policy.

6.2   **Line Managers** are responsible for:

- ensuring that they are familiar with the content of the Managing Work Performance Policy;
- applying the provisions of the Managing Work Performance Policy fairly and consistently;
- recruiting, selecting, promoting, training and managing employees in a manner that will minimise the risk of poor performance;
- setting, communicating and explaining realistic and achievable standards of work that are capable of being measured;
- reinforcing the required standards of work through regular supervision, one to one meetings and training;
- ensuring if at all possible that 1:1 meetings are not interrupted or re-scheduled;
- providing on-going and regular feedback on work performance;
- providing appropriate support and assistance to help employees maintain the standards of work required;
- dealing with work performance issues promptly, sensitively and consistently; and
- seeking advice and guidance from Human Resources in complex cases.

6.3   **Employees** are responsible for:

- being aware of the duties and responsibilities of their post and the standards of work required;
- performing their duties to the required standards;
- asking their manager for clarification if they are unclear about what is required of them;
- taking part in any training and development required to enable them to maintain the required standards for their job;
- obtaining any qualifications necessary to enable them to do their job effectively when this has been identified in their PIP;
- positively adapting to change; and
- co-operating in any processes identified to assist them improve their work performance.

7.   ROLE OF THE LINE MANAGER

Line managers are usually the people who work closely with individual employees and teams and it is their role to set work performance targets and standards, coach employees, listen to their concerns and ensure their employees carry out their duties to the standards required for effective service delivery.

(i) Understand the job

7.1 Line managers need to understand the jobs within their area of responsibility. This does not mean that they need to know in great detail how to do any particular job, but what standards are expected, how these affect service delivery and how they fit with other jobs in their section/team.

7.2 With regard to each specific job the line manager needs to:

- be clear about the content of the job;
- be aware of the extent to which a job may be changing;
- know what resources are required to perform the job effectively;
- be aware of any barriers to performance;
- know what quantitative and qualitative standards are required for the job.

(ii) Know the employee

7.3 Line managers need to know their employees to ensure they have, and maintain, the required knowledge and skills to effectively carry out the duties of their post.

7.4 Managers must obtain an accurate view of the performance of each of the employees they manage. Managers may relate more easily to some staff than to others and it is essential to focus on an objective assessment of performance i.e. the outputs, outcomes and behaviours essential for the effective performance of the required the duties of the post. Line managers should not to focus on employees particular personal styles of working.

7.5 Managers must distinguish between the person and their performance in a work context. This can help to reduce employee anxiety and defensiveness associated with feedback from their manager.

(iii) Analysing reasons for underperformance

7.6 There are a number of reasons why an employee's work performance can fall below the standard required to fulfil the duties of their post. Line managers should consider the following questions:

  ➢ Does the employee fully understand the job? Is there:

  a. an insufficient explanation of the duties;
  b. insufficient management feedback;
  c. recent change in the job requirements.

> Is the employee unable to do the job because of:

   a. inadequate induction;
   b. inadequate training;
   c. too much or too little supervision;
   d. duties that are too diverse or too difficult;
   e. a lack of aptitude for the job;
   f. a lack of assertiveness;
   g. difficulty in prioritising tasks;
   h. having too much to do;
   i. another underlying reason, e.g. health, medication, relationship problems etc.

> Is the employee unable or unwilling to do the job due to:

   a. a disagreement with other team members;
   b. a perception of unfairness;
   c. not accepting the responsibilities of the post;
   d. a personal lack of willingness to work.

(iv)   Preparation phase for managers

7.7   Before entering into a discussion with an employee about underperformance the Manager must develop a preparation phase and consider the following objectives:

   a. consider as many angles as possible, and avoid looking at the potential exchange within the frame of mind: *they will do it my way, or I will make this formal;*
   b. collect all the evidence and develop an openness of mind that will ensure the employee feels that feedback and communication is fair;
   c. consider seeking advice from a more experienced manager.

7.8   It is important that the manager is open to the employee's views, including the possibility that the employee will challenge the evidence about performance levels. Therefore the Manager should consider the following questions:

   a. has the employee a history of underperformance? If so are there meeting notes / 1-1 records to support this?;
   b. is my perception of their underperformance really as bad as I believe;
   c. what hard evidence do I have to support this view;
   d. do other managers share my perceptions;
   e. in precisely which areas is the employee underperforming;
   f. could there be other factors contributing to underperformance;
   g. has my behaviour contributed to the issues with the employee.

8.   MANAGING UNDERPERFORMANCE

8.1   Line managers are also the people who will have to deal with occasions of underperformance. Underperformance can have many root causes (see7.5 (iii)), it is therefore important to understand the potential reasons before discussing underperformance issues with an employee.

8.2   To be effective in managing work performance managers must recognise that:

- positive re-enforcement is more likely to achieve success;
- large problems usually start small so it is appropriate to intervene and resolve issues quickly;
- an employee may be struggling in a particular area of their work, but that does not mean they always will;
- employees require proper induction;
- employees require changes in the job requirements to be effectively communicated;
- employees need to be aware of the process that will be used to monitor and measure their performance;
- there is an on-going need to provide appropriate training and skills development which can assist in the improvement of service delivery;
- giving feedback is a two way process and employees should always be allowed to express their views;
- reasonable adjustments to an employees working practices, patterns of work or workplace may be required;
- it is essential to be fair and consistent in the monitoring of work performance for all employees.

9.   STEPS TO HELP IMPROVE UNDERPERFORMANCE

9.1   It is important that line managers discuss with employees how their work performance can be improved and to provide specific examples of where their performance is failing to meet the requirements of the post. Line managers need to be able to explain the effect that the employee's poor performance has on service delivery, team dynamics and the employees self esteem etc.

9.2   It is essential to:

- agree objectives and standards of work;
- ensure the employee feels comfortable enough to approach the manager with problems;
- enable employees to ask for help when needed;

- agree the support mechanisms required e.g. mentoring, coaching, shadowing a colleague, formal training, changing workloads, altering working patterns etc.;
- identify a specific review period, ensuring the timescales set out in the Policy are neither cut short, nor exceeded;
- ensure that PIP's are always completed; and
- ensure progress meetings are scheduled regularly e.g. weekly or every 2 weeks.

9.3   The following steps can be used at both the informal and formal stages of the Policy. These can be vitally important to achieving successful outcomes:

- collect evidence of underperformance whilst considering the points/questions outlined in sections 8 and 9;
- ensure you have made a fair assessment of the problem;
- understand what issues might be contributing to poor work performance;
- ensure the evidence represents the requirements of the job as detailed in the job description;
- ensure the process feels fair to the employee by asking direct questions e.g.:

    a. which aspects of your post do you find easiest/most difficult?
    b. what duties are you most comfortable/uncomfortable with?
    c. is there any training or other support I can offer to help you improve your work performance?
    d. are there any interpersonal difficulties affecting your work performance?