Improving Performance Employee Guide
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Purpose of the policy

The Improving Performance Policy enables managers to challenge poor performance and work with the employee to improve.

The principles behind the policy are:
- To enable managers to promptly deal with performance issues to bring all employees up to required performance standards.
- To resolve performance issues as early as possible and at as low a level as possible, with the aim of supporting the employee to improve so that formal action is not needed.

Employee’s responsibilities

- Take responsibility for own development, and alert the line manager as soon as possible if struggling with any aspect of the work.
- Engage with the process, contributing to support plans and action plans and attending meetings when invited.
- Act on feedback, and proactively strive to make improvements.

Manager’s responsibilities

- To take prompt action as soon as a performance issue is identified.
- To provide any reasonable support, including considering any training needs identified, to help the employee to improve their performance.
- To progress to the next level where sufficient improvement has not been made, despite adequate support being given.
- Failure to deal with performance issues in the team is a performance issue for that manager, and could result in action being taken by their line manager to resolve this.

The manager is responsible for the application of this policy in their work area.

Trade union representative’s role

- Provide support and advice to members.
- Attend formal meetings and hearings, and if unable to attend, arrange a suitable alternative date or a replacement representative.
- Work with all parties to facilitate timely resolution.
- Work with managers, HR advisors and staff to ensure the policy is adhered to.
- If the employee is not in a recognised Trade Union, they may be accompanied at formal meetings and hearings by a work colleague.
Process
– for the employee with a performance issue

When your manager tells you there is an issue with your performance

1 You can expect your manager to tell you as soon as possible if they think you are not performing to the standard required. You should already be aware of what the required standard is, and should be aware of any routine monitoring that your manager carries out.

2 When your manager talks to you about the issue, they will make clear what the problem is and what the impact is on the wider team or service. They will tell what they want you to do to resolve the situation, and will arrange to meet with you again to check on progress. You will be sent an email or letter just to confirm what you agreed.

3 If you improve your performance, then the second meeting will be a chance for your manager to recognise this.

Creating and implementing a support plan

4 If your performance has not improved after at least the above two conversations with your manager, they will work with you to create a support plan. The aim of the plan is for you to work together to identify ways that you can be supported to improve. You should be honest with your manager about what you are finding difficult, and what you think may help you, so that they can help you in the most effective way. The more input you can have into creating your action plan, the more likely you will be to succeed.

5 You should work together with your manager to suggest and agree actions that you feel you can realistically achieve within the timescale, so that you end up with a plan that you are both comfortable with. If you cannot agree the plan because you feel that the targets your manager sets for you are unreasonable, or they are not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) then you should suggest alternatives and try to reach an agreement you are both happy with. If you still cannot agree, you have the right to ask for a peer review. This means that you and your manager will ask another manager at the same level as them to review the plan. They will let you know whether they accept the plan as it is, or will work with your manager to make the targets more achievable or SMART.
Once the support plan is agreed, you must follow it. This could include:

- attending regular review meetings as agreed
- your manager monitoring your progress
- accessing and attending any training as agreed
- you, your manager, or a third party carrying out any other actions agreed in the plan.

If you are absent due to sickness at any time during this process, you should let your manager know by the usual notification method. Your sickness absence will be managed under the Supporting Attendance Policy. Your manager will let you know how your sickness will affect your support plan. Usually your manager will be able to “stop the clock” and resume the plan from where you left off when you return. You should note that your absence will not be allowed to unduly delay the progress of your support plan.

Reviewing your support plan

At the end of the review period agreed in your support plan, your manager will invite you to a final review meeting. At this meeting, you will look back over the plan and review your progress against it. If you have achieved your targets as set out in the plan, your manager will confirm that you have successfully improved your performance, and that will be the end of the process.

You will need to sustain your performance after the review meeting. If your performance drops again in a similar way, your manager may revisit the support plan with you. If this happens, your manager will invite you to a meeting, where you will be able to look back at your support plan and discuss the circumstances around your drop in performance and the reasons for it. As a result of this meeting, one of the following could happen:

- The problem and circumstances are similar to before, so your manager can ask you to improve your performance within four weeks. If you fail to do so, you will progress to a formal action plan.
- The circumstances or issues are substantially different, so you will begin a new support plan.

Creating and implementing a formal action plan

If at the end of your final review meeting, you did not achieve the targets set, your manager will invite you to a formal meeting, where you and your manager will create an action plan for you. You will receive a letter confirming this and you will be entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or other colleague to be decided on at the meeting. It is your responsibility to arrange this. The meeting and action plan are formal, and you should be aware that if you do not achieve the targets set out in the action plan, this could potentially lead to your dismissal.

Your manager will bring the outline plan to the meeting, based on what has already been done at support plan level. At the meeting, you will discuss this, and you will be able to contribute to the plan. It is important for you to be clear about what you think might help you at this stage, and for you to agree to the targets. At the end of the meeting you will have finalised the action plan and review dates.
If your performance issue is a very specific skill, and it is clear that you will not improve regardless of the amount of support you receive, you might consider the option of transferring to another role within the council that does not require that particular skill, as long as you have transferrable skills relating to the new role. You do not have to agree to transfer if your manager suggests it, so think carefully about what will be right for you. If you do not want to transfer, you and your manager will need to continue to try to improve your performance, and if you cannot, then you should be aware that one of the options could be your dismissal.

If you cannot agree your action plan because you feel the targets are unreasonable, or not SMART, then you can appeal this with a more senior manager. Trade union support is available to members.

Once the action plan is agreed, you must follow it. This could include:

- attending regular review meetings as agreed
- your manager monitoring your progress
- accessing and attending any training as agreed
- you, your manager, or a third party carrying out any other actions agreed in the plan.

Withholding increments – if you are paid at less than the maximum spinal column point of your grade, and your performance has not reached the required standard within the timescale agreed in your formal action plan, your manager may withhold further increments, in line with the council’s Pay Policy, until your performance has improved satisfactorily.

Reviewing your formal action plan

At the end of the review period set in the action plan, you will be invited to a final review meeting. This will be similar to the one held at the end of the support plan stage, but it is a formal meeting, and it could be a dismissal hearing if significant improvement has not been made. You will have been told if dismissal is a possible outcome of this meeting. You will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or another colleague, and it is your responsibility to arrange this.

If the action plan has been followed successfully, you have achieved your targets and your performance has improved, this is the end of the process. However, if your performance drops in a similar way within 12 months of completion of the action plan, your manager can revisit this with you at the same formal level and you could potentially move straight to a dismissal hearing.

If at the end of the review period set in your action plan, you have still not made sufficient improvement, your manager may decide on one of the following outcomes:

- transfer to another role if applicable (see point 12 of Creating and implementing a formal action plan above)
- a further review period with support as appropriate
- dismissal.

If you are dismissed, you have the right of appeal. Please see the Appeals Policy.
Improving performance

Performance issue becomes apparent. Manager discusses it with employee.

- Performance has not improved. Informal support plan is created.
  - Performance has not improved. Peer/parent review of plan.
    - Invite and hold formal action plan meeting and create formal action plan.
      - Action plan /final review meeting held.
        - Options: • Transfer to another role; • a further review period; • dismissal.
          - Employee appeals (dismissal only).
            - Process ends.
  - Employee appeals (dismissal only).
    - Process ends.

Follow up meeting is held to discuss employee’s progress.

- Performance improves, no further action required.
  - Process ends.

Review period.

Action plan /final review meeting held.

Employee accepts outcome and process ends.

Process ends.
Additional guidance and support

This policy provides you with an overview of the purpose of the policy and the roles and responsibilities of those for whom it is intended. It also provides guidance in the Process section on the application of the policy. There are other documents which provide more detail and helpful guidance that should be read in conjunction with the policy and these are listed below.

Additional guidance

Employee Assistance Programme
Telephone number 0800 840 6844

PMDS information

The Bristol employee competence framework

Improving performance FAQs

Associated policies

Code of conduct for employees
Employee development policy
Supporting attendance policy
Redeployment policy
Improving performance manager guide
Annual PMDS for JNC Chief Officer posts
(1st and 2nd Tier)
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The audience of this document is made aware that a physical copy may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on The Source.

Those to whom this policy applies are responsible for familiarising themselves periodically with the latest version and for complying with policy requirements at all times.

**History of most recent policy changes – must be completed**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1.00</td>
<td>01 April 2014</td>
<td>New policy</td>
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