

People Performance Advice and Tools

Questions and Answers

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Q1. Should it always be the employee who produces the first draft of the objectives?

This will depend on both the individual and the team/business roles. In some teams it may be more appropriate for the line manager to produce the objectives and to allocate them to employees, ensuring they are understood. In other roles/teams the employee may be best placed, and able, to develop their own objectives with line manager support and agreement.

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Q2. What should be taken into account when setting an employee's performance objectives?

Individual needs must be considered and reasonable adjustments made where appropriate. More advice and help can be found in the How to: Set Performance Expectations Consistently at the Start of the Year.

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Q3. Is the performance management an annual process?

Performance management is a continuous process. Employees should always have current objectives in place.

There is an end-of-year process to assess performance and development over a 12 month period.

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Q4. How often should performance discussions take place?

There should be an absolute minimum of three performance discussions a year, forming the objective setting, the mid-year review and end of year review. It is strongly advised that these formal, mandatory meetings and reviews are supported by informal regular performance discussions throughout the year.

NB: The end of year review and objective setting for the following year may take place at the same time.

More advice and help can be found in the 'How To: Hold regular performance discussions' guide.

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Q5. What should be considered when assessing employees for a performance rating?

The following should be considered;

- Both the 'What' (delivery of objectives) and the 'How' (demonstration of behaviours, competencies and values) achieved by the employee against known performance expectations, with equal weighting between 'What' and 'How'.
- Taking into account the descriptors of the ratings, where an employee's performance would be plotted on the performance wave.
- Whether any work or personal difficulty beyond the employee's control affected their performance. How well the employee managed this difficulty is also relevant when assessing performance.
- If the employee has any health conditions or disabilities that impact on their work and any reasonable adjustments that are in place.
- Performance ratings are awarded based on fact not opinion with each decision supported by objective examples of performance contained in the Performance Management Report. It is important to acknowledge and set aside any personal bias, conscious or unconscious, to ensure an objective appraisal. Managers and countersigning managers should undertake the Civil Service Learning

Regular discussions and consistency checking during the year should ensure consistency – i.e. that the employee's performance evidence has not been over- or under-estimated in relation to other employees in the peer group.

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Q6. What other considerations should be included in the regular performance discussions?

During regular performance discussions managers should discuss and record any knowledge, skills and behaviours developed as a result of various activities and engagements, such as volunteering.

Line Managers should also discuss any formal and informal training and learning, received by the employee as part of their volunteering experience and explore how to make best use of the employee's transferable skills in the workplace. For example, Reservists undergo extensive military training and gain experience of dealing with a diverse range of people from all walks of life, nationalities and cultures. Such training programme teaches individuals a range of skills, such as

communication, leadership, team work, decision-making, working under pressure and increases their diversity awareness.

For extended periods of absence due to volunteering see Section 2 – Special Circumstances.

Q7. Why do we include an indicative performance rating at the mid-year?

This enables the line manager and employee to have a discussion at the mid-year about where the individual is at that point on the performance wave. This also provides an indication of what they need to do to improve or maintain this performance rating.

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Q8. Is the end-of-year consistency checking another form of validation?

A simple consistency check allows line managers and senior managers to consider the distribution of performance ratings at a high level, to ensure they are realistic and appropriate based on consistency checks during the year. Validation is a more detailed process comparing employees within a peer group against known expectations of performance using actual examples of performance.

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Q9. Why use validation?

Validation ensures appropriate, evidence-based performance differentiation between colleagues within peer groups in relation to the distribution range. It builds upon consistency checks ensuring that performance expectations are being applied fairly and consistently across the business. Validation also provides an opportunity for line managers to discuss an individual's performance and in some cases provide employees with valuable feedback.

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Q10. As part of the validation process should employees be ranked against each other?

The validation process is about using guided distribution so that ratings are justified on the basis of achievement of objectives and demonstration of competencies in relation to known performance expectations for the peer group. There is no requirement or recommendation to rank employees. Regular discussions and consistency checking during the year should ensure consistency at year end – i.e. that the employee's performance evidence has not been over- or under-estimated in relation to other employees in the peer group. To ensure appropriate differentiation between peers, managers may need to look at any recent examples of performance for employees on the margins of the performance ratings to ensure that no manager has over- or under-estimated performance evidence compared to other employees.

Ratings will not be changed or forced simply to fit the distribution.

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Q11. Are there any products/training available which would help line managers improve the skills they need in performance management?

Please refer to the 'Learning Basket.

It is recommended that all employees, including line managers, have completed DWP's equality and diversity training as part of their learning and development, to enable them to do their jobs to the best of their ability.

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Q12. Where can I get further advice on dealing with under performance informally?

There is detailed guidance in 'How to manage dips in performance'.

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Q13. How can performance management be used to help an employee's personal development?

The Civil Service Reform plan demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring civil servants have the right skills for their job, by encouraging employees to develop the skills most needed for their roles.

Employees and their line managers are equally responsible for having regular performance discussions which should include an assessment of development, using the Civil Service Competency Framework, to identify any gaps. These discussions do not have to be limited to development just for the employee's current role. They provide the opportunity to discuss any future career goals that the employee may have, for example, moving to a different area within DWP or other Government Department and/or promotion aspirations. Once identified it is for the employee and the line manager to assess how best to address these needs.

Keeping up to date with changes, extending knowledge and experience in the current role and job shadowing or mentoring can be just as valuable as attending courses or undertaking activities which take a significant amount of time and resource.

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Q14. How should performance management related documentation be handled?

All performance management reports, forms or spreadsheets that contain employee personal data or sensitive personal data are confidential. They must be kept securely, protectively marked and handled in line with departmental data protection and information security requirements.

There are no specific rules covering the retention of Performance Management documents. However, such personal data should be kept no longer than necessary and must be handled according to the Data Handling Policy and Procedures.

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Q15. What happens if the employee cannot attend the end of year review meeting?

If the employee cannot attend the initial end of year review meeting, the line manager should rearrange this at a mutually agreed time to enable the employee to attend. If the employee is still unable to attend, the line manager should complete the performance management report. If the line manager is absent, the countersigning manager will complete this.

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Q16. Can a consultant / interim manager undertake performance reviews or counter signing action?

Yes, if their contract and/or job description includes the role of line manager and they have completed the necessary training within the department.

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Q17. What can a line manager do to recognise and reward good performance of an employee?

Refer to DWP Reward Policy

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Q18. Within the Achieved rating can an employee be considered as satisfactory for both behaviours and outcomes?

An employee can be satisfactory for both behaviour and outcomes. However, given a line manager's detailed knowledge and understanding of an employee's performance, they should be able to be more specific in identifying the areas where elements of performance have exceeded or require further development.

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Q19. What should a line manager do if an employee has undergone formal poor performance action during the year?

Employees whose formal poor performance action has ended before the end-of-year review stage should be given a performance rating which takes into account the whole performance period.

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Q20. Where can an employee find advice on how best to seek feedback to use as examples in a review?

Employees should consult their manager. Further advice can be found in the 'How To: Obtain and share constructive feedback' guide.

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Q21. What if a manager inputs the wrong performance level at mid year or end of year into RM?

If the wrong level is entered into RM or any other information is incorrect, the manager must raise a service request on RM and get the incorrect marking amended.

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Q22. Can the countersigning manager enter People Performance information into RM if the line manager is unavailable?

Yes. Anyone in the employee's line management chain can take this action in the line manager's absence. It is important that they do this so that there are no delays in keeping the information on RM up to date.

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Q23. I've previously accessed the People Performance Activity screen in RM and entered that I am planning to hold performance discussions quarterly for one of my team. We've now agreed to hold them monthly. Do I need to amend the data in RM?

It is important that the information on RM is always up to date and accurate. Several of the input fields have been designed so that the information can be updated if circumstances change. Managers must amend the following fields if circumstances change:

- Have objectives been set for the current performance year?
- Have competencies been agreed for the current performance year?
- Has the development plan been agreed and updated?
- How often will you be holding performance discussions?

Employees can amend the following fields:

- My performance discussions are taking place as agreed
- My objectives and competencies are being reviewed and kept up to date
- My development plan is being reviewed and kept up to date.

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Q24. Can a manager complete the employee questions on the People Performance Activity screen on their behalf or vice versa?

No. The fields must be completed by the correct person. RM will not permit managers to enter information on their employee's behalf or vice versa.

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Q25. I have a member of staff who is going on maternity leave. Do I need to complete People Performance end of year action on RM early?

No, the award of an end of year performance level and RM action should always be completed at the end of the reporting year along with other members of staff.

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Q26. Should numerical objectives be set for Attendance Management?

Numerical objectives should not be set below senior accountability (e.g. G6 and above) level. If an attendance objective is necessary at lower levels, for example team leader or line manager, it should be restricted to requiring the manager to promote wellbeing and complying with attendance management processes to contribute to the Directorate or national target. If it is necessary to set an objective for employees, it should relate to complying with processes, for example Keeping in Touch, but not include a numerical target for attendance.

The Attendance Management Policy should be consulted about any attendance issues.

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Q27 – Who should hear a grievance against an end of year rating?

Where an employee raises a grievance against their final rating the decision maker, normally the line manager, will hear the grievance. They may decide to change the rating after consulting the countersigning manager (where a consistency check has taken place) or the validation chair, to check that any re-assessment is consistent with the standards for the peer group. They must also explain their decision by referencing the standards (i.e. the known performance expectations).

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Q28. Can a work objective be agreed retrospectively?

Work objectives should be constantly reviewed so that they can be amended, if required, immediately it becomes known that one or more has been replaced by higher priority work or turned out to be irrelevant. Where such immediate review did not happen, a manager cannot unilaterally set a retrospective work objective but it is possible to do so in agreement with the employee.

Q29. Can a work objective be set in relation to completing the annual people survey?

No. Completion of the people survey is voluntary and anonymous. Even if it were appropriate to set such an objective, it could not be measured and would therefore not satisfy the SMART criteria for setting work objectives. Please refer to the Good Survey Guide for Managers on the people survey Intranet page.