

Informal Support: Guidance for Managers

Purpose of informal support

As a manager, you are expected to address conduct and behaviour issues as early as possible and take appropriate action. Whenever possible, you should take steps to resolve issues on an informal basis without recourse to the formal disciplinary procedure.

The aim of informal support is for you and the employee to work together to explore support mechanisms and ways in which the employee can achieve the necessary improvement within a reasonable timeframe.

Informal support is normally appropriate where there have been infrequent isolated incidents of poor conduct, for example rudeness, poor timekeeping etc.

If the employee is not meeting the required performance standards, you should provide support through the application of the [Performance Improvement Policy](#).

Where attendance is less than satisfactory and this relates to sickness absence, you should provide support through the application of the [Attendance Management Policy](#)

In many circumstances, a confidential informal discussion between you and the employee to bring the expected standards to their attention is all that is required to resolve an issue. However, in some cases, to ensure the necessary support is put in place, this may involve a series of informal discussions, which could form part of your regular one-to-one meetings.

Informal meetings would normally just involve you and the employee. However, if both parties believe that the involvement of a trade union representative might help, you have the discretion to agree to this.

You should take a note of informal discussions and share this with the employee following each meeting to support the process and/or ensure clarity.

Preparation for an informal meeting

- ✔ Collate the evidence of the specific concerns that you wish to discuss with the employee.
- ✔ Book a private room and ensure you provide adequate time to explore the issues.
- ✔ Inform the employee of the arrangements for the informal meeting and what you wish to discuss.
- ✔ Share specific examples e.g. dates, times, frequency, and any other relevant details in advance.



Informal meeting

- ✔ Explain to the employee that the meeting is intended to be supportive to work together to address the concerns that you have previously shared with the employee.
- ✔ Outline the specific concerns that you have and provide factual examples. Discuss the standards that are expected and refer to any appropriate policies that set out these standards.
- ✔ Invite the employee to respond.
- ✔ Work together to explore any potential causes and any special circumstances.
- ✔ Consider the employee's views / perception of all matters involved fully and consider any additional or alternative evidence that has been raised.
- ✔ Explore how the issues can be addressed and discuss whether any training is required or if the employee requires any other support (for example, consider an Occupational Health referral).
- ✔ Develop an action plan which clearly outlines the improvements required; support/development that will be put in place; and clear timescales for improvements to be made.
- ✔ Explain to the employee that should there be no satisfactory improvement within these timescales, or the matter worsens, formal disciplinary proceedings may be initiated at any point.

In some circumstances, you will determine that there is no further support required following the initial meeting. You should advise the employee of this and no further action should be taken.

Review meetings


It is important to hold regular review meetings with the employee to review progress that is being made, ensure that any agreed support is in place and address any concerns that the employee has.

- ✔ You should provide specific examples of improvements or any failures to meet expectations.
- ✔ Invite the employee to comment on their progress and establish if any further support is required.
- ✔ Raise any new issues that have come to light and establish if there are any other special circumstances.

The duration of the review period will be dependent upon the circumstances, but it would be expected that for the majority of conduct related issues, a review period of up to 6 weeks would be appropriate. On occasion it may be appropriate to extend the review period, if for example the improvement is not to the required standard but there is a reasonable expectation that it will be improved within a short timescale.

Final review meeting

- ✔ At the end of the review period, you should meet with the employee to discuss the progress that has been made and their current conduct. If there has been satisfactory progress, then no further action will be required.
- ✔ You should ensure that the employee is aware of the importance of maintaining this level of conduct and there should be agreement about any ongoing support that is required.

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- ✔ You should advise the employee that if there is a reoccurrence of the same issue within the next six months then it is possible that the matter will be considered on a formal basis.
 - ✔ If there has been no, or insufficient improvement, then the matter will progress to the formal disciplinary procedure and written records of informal meetings and any action plans will form part of the investigation documentation.

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