

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

A Network SA Resource for Children's Services August 2011

The performance review is a confidential evaluation of an employee's work. Properly conducted, it will provide a basis for Directors¹ and staff to:

- Review performance against any goals or objectives set in the previous review and agree new objectives for the year ahead
- Evaluate the effectiveness of any training activities undertaken in the previous 12 months and identify any new training needs
- Ensure that working practices ensure reflect and inform the vision and values of the service.

There are also sound legal compliance reasons for conducting performance reviews. Progression from one level to the next in the Children's Services Award 2010 is subject to the criteria that the employee holds competency at the existing level. The performance review is therefore a useful tool for identifying competency or lack of it at a particular level and can form part of the documentation needed to demonstrate that the employee has been treated fairly and given every opportunity to improve before other action is taken.

Performance review is a joint process – both the Director and the employee are engaged in evaluating the employee's performance and the factors which influence it.

Reviewing performance from both perspectives will help both parties to gain insights into the quality of the work performed and levels of productivity achieved, and to make an assessment of professional learning or development needs.

STEP 1 – PREPARATION MEETING

Arrange a brief meeting with the employee to explain the performance review process. This will help both Director and employee to focus on the areas of performance review and analysis, the identification of required skills and competencies and planning for future learning and development needs and activities.

Questions to consider before the performance review

A number of questions follow to assist the employee. They may be used by both the Director and the employee as a means of preparation for the meeting. The answers and comments in note form can be brought to the performance review to assist with discussions.

Do you have an up to date job description?

Does your service have a Strategic Plan? Are you aware of the plan and how your work fits into it?

Do you have one to one meetings with your Director and / or line manager?

¹ Where reference is made to the 'Director' this term refers to the senior manager or line manager engaged in the performance review process, regardless of actual job title.

Have you been involved in team planning previously?

Have there been any changes to your role in the past 12 months?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'no' these matters should be raised at the meeting and any remedial action agreed along with the following questions

What do you particularly like about your role?

Is there anything that prevents you from working effectively in your role and how could this be changed?

What can you do to improve your performance?

How could your Director/ line manager or colleagues support you to reach your full potential?

What learning and professional development activities have you attended in the past year, how effective were they and has this improved your performance if at all?

What learning and professional development activities would be particularly useful to you in the next 12 months and why? (For example these could be training, mentoring, support, resources etc.)

What are your longer term career aspirations?

Skills and Competencies

When identifying skills and competencies for review, consider

- the standards required of all employees in your service, and
- different expectations of employee at different classification levels and working in different circumstances
- the variation of life and work experiences each employee brings to the work place.

For example, all employees will be expected to support the National Quality Framework but you might have higher expectations of employees that have considerable experience versus a new graduate. Your expectations of the employee should also be linked to current individual, organisational or team action plans.

Competencies listed on the next page may be a useful talking point. In general terms a competency may be described as knowing what needs to be done and having the ability to deliver it. Only those relevant to the job in question should form part of the performance review process.

Consider not only *what* is being achieved by the employee, but also *how* the tasks are completed.

What is being done well?

What could be done better?

What could the Director do to help?

What could the employee do to make the centre / service better?

Professional and Technical Knowledge

The ability to acquire and apply appropriate professional knowledge and skills in relation to supporting children's learning and development / curriculum / administration (or other professional skill area as appropriate)

Planning, Organisation and Implementation

The ability to set priorities, plan, implement and evaluate so that objectives are achieved successfully and on time

Work Demands

The ability to meet the demands of the job, including the amount and frequency of physical effort and dexterity required *and/or* the degree and frequency of mental concentration and awareness required

Leadership/Management of People

The ability to motivate people by setting clear goals and directions and providing objective feedback

Teamwork

A genuine intention and the ability to work with others, to be part of an effective team

Communication Skills

The ability to communicate clearly, appropriately, respectfully and tactfully with children, other employees, management and families

Customer Focus

The ability to assist families in a sensitive, supportive and professional manner and respond appropriately to parent requests

Continuous Learning

The ability to apply professional learning to work undertaken, and support the National Quality Framework

Responsiveness

The ability to respond flexibly and positively to children, families, other staff and management, and to changes/challenges

Decision Making and Initiative

The ability to apply knowledge, evaluate situations and select effective solutions in good time, to show initiative when appropriate and to take direction as required

Problem Solving and Creativity

The ability to identify, assess and resolve problems and produce high quality solutions

Ethics

The ability to take responsibility for own behaviour and demonstrate honesty, integrity and accountability in actions.

Most Important

- 1. Arrange a time and place for the discussion where you will not be interrupted and where the conversation will be completely private.**
- 2. Make sure that there is comfortable seating available and that the area is neither too hot nor too cold.**
- 3. It is important that you are able to focus on the discussion and not be distracted by other people or the environment. Phones must be silenced or switched off.**
- 4. Do not schedule the performance review only to cancel it to meet other needs unless an emergency occurs.**
- 5. If you appear not to value the meeting neither will the employee.**
- 6. Of equal importance is the need for Directors to hold regular meetings with employees throughout the year so that matters raised at the performance review meeting do not come as a complete surprise.**
- 7. Make sure any disciplinary issues are dealt with separately from performance reviews.**

STEP 2 – THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEETING

Both the Director and the employee should bring notes to the meeting. They can be in dot point format or brief paragraphs. Each of you should also bring a copy of the job description and any other job-related documentation, and copies of current plans.

What the Director needs to do

- Provide feedback on overall performance
- Refer to job description requirements and responsibilities. If you have identified gaps or inaccuracies in the job description, discuss these with the employee
- Refer to any strategic plan / action plans / improvement plans / individual's professional development plan the service has in place
- Identify key job-related goals and objectives / responsibilities
- Acknowledge and document achievements
- Acknowledge and document difficulties and plans for development of skills
- Identify training, development and support needs
- Discuss appropriate recognition for performance.

What the Employee needs to do

- Reflect on and discuss your views on your overall performance
- Review job description and responsibilities
- Review any strategic plan / action plans / improvement plans / your professional development plan the service has in place
- Identify key job-related goals and objectives / responsibilities and improvements
- Acknowledge your own achievements
- Acknowledge your difficulties and discuss plans for development of skills
- Identify training and development needs
- Discuss appropriate recognition for performance.

STEP 3 - WHAT COMES NEXT

During and after the discussion, agreement should be reached on actions to be taken as a result of what you have learned about the employee's performance and the Director's role in this.

For example, you may agree that there is a need for some extra training or support for the employee or that the employee's interest in an aspect of the job should be encouraged and rewarded with an opportunity for training or provision of extra resources. These agreements should be documented and timeframes set for implementation and the next review.

Setting Goals

Any goals set should be based on SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound - principles.

Specific

- Is the goal well defined – what do you want to achieve and why?
- Is it clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the work area?

Measurable

- How much do you have to do?
- What are the steps along the way?
- How will you know when it has been achieved?

Achievable

- Is the goal set too high? Too low?
- Is there a realistic path to achievement?

Realistic

- Have you taken into account the availability of resources, knowledge and time?
- Does this goal represent substantial progress if this is what is needed?

Time Bound

- Is there a time limit?
- Will there be enough time to achieve the goal?
- Have you allowed too much time, which can affect work performance of others too?
- Have you reached agreement on important dates for entry into diaries or on calendars?

When agreement is reached

If both parties agree, you may take copies of the notes the employee and the Director brought to the meeting. Both parties should sign them and file them in the employee's confidential personnel folder with information about agreements reached as a result of the discussion e.g. new opportunities for professional learning, actions to be undertaken, timelines etc.

If agreement cannot be reached

If the parties have differing perceptions or disagree, the differing viewpoints should be recorded and the reason(s) for them, plus the Director's decision about how the issues will be managed. The employee should be provided with clear guidelines in writing regarding what is expected of him or her in future and offered appropriate support to meet requirements.

If an appeal process is available, the employee should be advised of this. If the Director has undertaken to change his or her practices as a result of the review this should also be recorded, and the Director should make his or her own note to confirm with the employee by a certain date to check that the change has been beneficial.

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