

29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

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## **PERFORMANCE REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **1. Policy Statement and Purpose**

- 1.1 The WLGA aims to achieve the highest standards of service delivery, conduct, integrity, quality and value for money in all of its activities.
- 1.2 The Association's employment policies reflect these aims as well as ongoing workplace and legislative changes, hence this **Performance Review Policy and Procedure** which sets out details of the Association's approach to engaging all employees in regular and meaningful discussions with their manager about how each individual's contribution at work links to the achievement of service and organisational priorities.
- 1.3 This policy and procedure has been developed recognising that today's fast-moving workplace environment requires a focus on the future, on the support required by individuals to carry out their work effectively and on maintaining a suitable balance between business needs and employees 'well-being.
- 1.4 The Association is committed to ensuring that there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, civil partnership/marriage, disability, gender, gender reassignment, human rights, language, part time working, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or trade union membership.
- 1.5 In addition, the Association acknowledges its legal duty to make any reasonable adjustments to the workplace, or to the way in which work is carried out, to ensure that a disabled employee is not disadvantaged; this will include discussing with the employee any reasonable adjustments that may be required to support him/her to achieve and sustain required standards of performance.

### **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all WLGA employees.
- 2.2 The key principles set out in this policy and procedure also apply to agency workers and to those individuals who are on secondment to the Association, with any necessary amendments being made. The WLGA's HR Team is available to provide advice in this respect.

### **3. Aims**

- 3.1 The aims of this policy and procedure are to assist every employee to -
  - Have regular and meaningful discussions with their manager about their role within the Association and what is expected of them at work

- Feel empowered to plan and carry out their duties in a flexible way, with business needs and personal wellbeing being balanced in a suitable way
- Be provided with regular feedback about how they are doing in their job
- Acquire and improve the knowledge, skills and experience they require to successfully fulfil their current role as well as preparing themselves for the next stage of their career
- Ensure that their personal circumstances and personal wellbeing are regularly taken into account by their manager when considering work-related matters
- Be treated in a fair, transparent and supportive manner should a manager have any concerns about the employee's work performance

#### **4. General Principles**

- 4.1 Every employee is entitled to know what is expected of them. Managers are responsible for establishing clear and realistic standards of performance and behaviour which are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. The required standards will be exemplified and reinforced through day to day management practice and periodic reviews so that there are "no surprises".
- 4.2 There is an expectation that employees and managers will jointly take responsibility for ensuring that a continuous meaningful two-way dialogue takes place throughout the year regarding work-related and personal wellbeing matters. These discussions will be a combination of 1:2:1s and team meetings.
- 4.3 Managers and employees are encouraged to build on existing good practice in respect of how often, and when, work-related discussions take place, and which topics are discussed, subject to the minimum standards set out within this document.
- 4.4 Regular meaningful conversations between employees and managers are considered to be more important than a focus on completing paperwork, albeit some documentation will be both helpful and necessary.
- 4.5 Separate performance review arrangements will apply to those newly appointed employees who are subject to a formal probationary period.

#### **5. Procedure**

- 5.1 The key features of this performance review policy and procedure are designed to complement, and to be compatible with, the Association's organisational culture and wider business processes.
- 5.2 This policy and procedure is based on a "light touch" and flexible process, underpinned by some prescribed minimum standards.
- 5.3 There are significant differences between the work of the various teams within the Association in relation to service objectives and professional practice. The lack of certainty often applicable to the work of grant funded teams sometimes prevents longer term service planning and career development taking place. In these circumstances, it is appropriate that an approach based on minimum standards is adopted, with suitable flexibility being made available to all teams to build upon prescribed minimum standards.

- 5.4 **Frequency of discussions** - this policy and procedure is based on timely and regular conversations taking place, rather than a single annual appraisal-type interview.
- 5.5 The WLGA's organisation-wide business planning framework, and existing performance management processes for grant funded teams, both have a clear focus on planning and delivery on a forward looking quarterly basis, so it will make sense to also have formal performance review discussions taking place on the same basis.
- 5.6 Formal performance review discussions should, therefore, take place on a quarterly basis, ie on four occasions each year. Managers should ensure that all such quarterly discussions are suitably prioritised and diarised. This is mandatory.
- 5.7 It will be for employees and managers to jointly set the tempo / formality for these discussions in a way which best suits their circumstances.
- 5.8 These discussions will supplement the other regular discussions which take place during the intervening period/s. It is important that all work-related and personal wellbeing matters are progressed in a timely manner, ie they are discussed at the most appropriate time with no unnecessary delay/s.
- 5.9 **Focus** - the predominant focus during performance review discussions shall be on looking forward at what needs to be achieved and removing any potential or actual barriers to success which may exist.
- 5.10 However, it will also be helpful to briefly review what has happened recently and to identify any lessons learned, new experiences gained and/or any improvements required.
- 5.11 In practice, the balance between looking back and looking forward will change from time to time. This will be jointly decided by individual employees with their manager.
- 5.12 **Review topics** - each quarterly performance review discussion shall take place having regard to the framework of topics outlined below. The amount of time spent discussing each topic will be for individual employees and managers to determine on a discussion by discussion basis.

**A. Reflection on the last 3 months**

- What work has gone well during the last 3 months?
- Has there been any key learning about how to do, or not do, things in future?

**B. A look forward to the next 3 months**

- What are the key work objectives for the next 3 months?
- What challenges / difficulties may need to be addressed?
- What support is needed from (your) manager, or others?

**C. Personal wellbeing**

- Are home, remote and/or office working arrangements going well? Are any changes needed?
- Are working hours and annual leave being managed well? Are any actions needed?
- Is any assistance needed to support (your) wellbeing?

#### **D. Personal Development**

- What skills and/or experience should be developed over the coming months?

##### **Note:**

A competency framework may be introduced at some stage in the future to support personal development. This will require this framework to be further developed.

#### **E. Additional discussion topics**

- Discuss, and agree any actions arising from, any service / organisational topics discussed over and above the matters referred to above; for grant funded employees, this will be an opportunity to keep future funding plans under continuous review

##### **Note:**

**Items A, B, C and D above** will be Standing Items for discussion at each quarterly review.

**Item E** will be an opportunity for a discussion about specific service-related or WLGA-wide matters. This will require careful planning and diary management.

#### **F. Any Agreed Actions**

- (a) review previously agreed actions; (b) confirm new actions agreed, to be followed up by employee and/or manager

5.13 Discussion topics should not be stockpiled; any matters which require prompt attention should be discussed without delay as part of the continuous dialogue between all employees and their manager.

5.14 **Annual performance assessments** - this policy and procedure supports forward planning, effective service delivery arrangements, continuous learning, personal development and prompt action being taken in relation to any personal wellbeing issues which may arise. A “no surprises” workplace environment will become the norm.

5.15 Within this context, it is **not** considered necessary to establish a mechanism which ranks individuals on an annual basis according to pre-determined categories such as excellent, satisfactory, some improvement required etc.

- 5.16 Likewise, it is **not** planned that any links will be established between performance and pay.
- 5.17 However, it will be helpful - in the final quarter of each financial year - to reflect on personal achievements over the last 12 months, to recognise success, to prepare for the year ahead and to plan career development activities.
- 5.18 **Documentation** - this policy and procedure has been designed so that performance review discussions focus on conversations rather than the paperwork. A short pro-forma (**see Appendix A**) should, though, be used as a framework for all quarterly performance review discussions.
- 5.19 Each employee will, in advance of the quarterly performance review discussion taking place, complete the pro-forma with brief details of the specific topics which they wish to discuss. This will be sent to the manager by email 3 to 5 working days before the planned discussion takes place. The manager will add details to the pro-forma regarding any additional matters to be discussed and will email the pro-forma back to the employee before the discussion takes place.
- 5.20 Brief notes of the outcome of the performance review discussion should be recorded by the employee or by the manager. In particular, a note should be made of the actions which need to be followed up. Any matters which are not agreed should also be noted.
- 5.21 The notes of each quarterly performance review discussion are to be filed on the employee's personal record on Breathe HR by the individual's manager. This is mandatory. The HR team is available to advise on the process to be followed.
- 5.22 There is no requirement to file notes on BreatheHR of any other discussions which take place; this will be a matter for the manager to determine, as appropriate.

### **Chief Executive - Policy and Procedure**

- 5.23 The JNC Chief Executives 'Handbook of Conditions of Service makes provision for a performance review / appraisal process with the following key features -
- "... a focus on clarifying what the chief executive is expected to achieve and on identifying any continuing development needs which, if met, would maintain a high level of performance. The process of setting objectives should be by agreement and the result should be to identify objectives which are relevant and challenging but achievable".
- "The process should not become complex. At all times it needs to focus clearly on a few basic issues: what the chief executive's job is; what has been done well; what could have been done better; the major issues over the next year; and what developmental needs the process clearly identifies".
- "It will be for local decision in the light of local circumstances whether the appraisal should be carried out by a small committee representing all political groups or by a senior representative or representatives of the controlling group. Whichever approach is adopted, those conducting the appraisal need to bear in mind at all

times that the chief executive is employed by the council as a whole, not by the controlling group, and is therefore required to serve all of the council”.

“Appraisal should take place on a predetermined date, at least annually, backed up by regular monitoring meetings at which targets can be reviewed for continuing relevance”.

- 5.24 It is appropriate that the WLGA’s Chief Executive participates in a performance review / appraisal process which is broadly similar to that which applies to local authority Chief Executives, whilst also being aligned to the Association’s performance review process for all other employees.
- 5.25 The Chief Executive’s performance review discussion will be led by one or more Elected Members, as designated for this purpose from time to time.
- 5.26 There will be a formal performance review discussion between the Chief Executive and the designated Elected Member/s on two occasions each year. These will take place during the final quarter of the financial year and approximately six months later.
- 5.27 Performance review discussion topics for the Chief Executive will typically include the key strategic objectives to be achieved during the coming year, for example the Local Government Financial Settlement and other WLGA support for member organisations, along with a review of the leadership, management and governance of the WLGA (and Data Cymru).
- 5.28 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all WLGA member organisations and their Member representatives, all political groups and all officer networks are suitable supported. The Chief Executive’s review shall take these and all other relevant factors into account.
- 5.29 The outcome of the two formal performance review discussions will be recorded in the form of a brief note and filed on the Chief Executive’s personal file on Breathe HR.
- 5.30 As is the case with all other WLGA employees, there is an expectation that the Chief Executive and designated Elected Member/s will jointly take responsibility for ensuring that a continuous meaningful two-way dialogue takes place regarding work-related and personal wellbeing matters and not just on two occasions each year.

## **6. Performance Standards**

- 6.1 This policy and procedure will assist employees and managers to identify the situations where individuals may require support to enable them to fulfil their duties to the required standard.
- 6.2 This may arise where an individual first joins the WLGA as a new employee, where an employee carries out a specific piece of work for the first time, where an individual’s responsibilities change, where a new statutory duty or WLGA / external policy is introduced or where, eg, an individual takes on management duties for the first time.

- 6.3 In all of these instances, it will be appropriate for the employee and the manager to agree how the required new skills, knowledge and/or experience will be acquired. Details of such agreed actions will be recorded so that progress can be planned and monitored.
- 6.4 In a small number of instances, concerns may exist about an employee's performance. Experience indicates that such performance issues can mostly be resolved informally if they are addressed sufficiently early. This approach is strongly supported.
- 6.5 Details of any concerns and consequential actions should be recorded and followed up at suitably regular intervals during the subsequent review period/s.
- 6.6 Ultimately, if a manager's concerns about an individual's performance are not addressed, the formal stage/s of the Association's *Managing Unsatisfactory Performance Policy and Procedure* will need to be initiated -

*"A decision to initiate the formal stages of this policy and procedure should not constitute a surprise to the employee who should already have been made aware by his/her manager about any issues of unsatisfactory performance".*

## **7. Personal and Professional Development**

- 7.1 Performance review-related training will be provided to employees and managers, as necessary, to ensure that maximum benefits are obtained from the operation of this policy and procedure.
- 7.2 Performance Review Guidance Notes are set out in **Appendix B** to this policy and procedure to assist employees and managers to carry out their discussions as effectively as possible.
- 7.3 This policy and procedure will also assist employees and managers to identify and prioritise each individual's job-related training and personal development needs. A discussion will take place about how and when these requirements will be addressed within the budget/s which are available.

## **8. Policy Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 8.1 The Association will monitor the operation of this policy and procedure and will ensure that it assesses its impact across the "protected characteristics" and in respect of human rights. This will require the collection, monitoring and reporting of workforce equality data for all employees subject to the provisions of this policy and procedure.
- 8.2 The HR team will, from time to time, review employee records to monitor the effectiveness of the operation of this policy and procedure. SMT will be alerted to any consequential organisational actions which might be required.
- 8.3 This Performance Review Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at intervals of no more than 24 months, but may be reviewed earlier where necessary to address any significant operational issues arising and/or any relevant legislative changes.

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**Author:** Graham Jones, Associate HR Adviser to WLGA  
**Email:** [Graham.jones@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:Graham.jones@wlga.gov.uk)  
**Tel:** 07778 573091

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## APPENDIX A

### Quarterly Performance Review Discussions - "Let's Talk"

Employee:	Manager:	Date:

#### A. Reflection on the last 3 months

- What work has gone well during the last 3 months?
- Has there been any key learning about how to do, or not do, things in future?

Notes:

#### B. A look forward to the next 3 months

- What are the key work objectives for the next 3 months?
- What challenges / difficulties may need to be addressed?
- What support is needed from (your) manager, or others?

Notes:

#### C. Personal wellbeing

- Are home, remote and/or office working arrangements going well? Are any changes needed?
- Are working hours and annual leave being managed well? Are any actions needed?
- Is any assistance needed to support (your) wellbeing?

Notes:

<b>D. Personal Development</b>
• What skills and/or experience should be developed over the coming months?
<b>Notes:</b>

<b>E. Any Additional discussion topics</b>
• Discuss, and agree any actions arising from, any service / organisational topics discussed over and above the matters referred to above; for grant funded employees, this will be an opportunity to keep future funding plans under continuous review
<b>Notes:</b>

**F. Agreed Actions** - (a) Review previously agreed actions; (b) confirm new actions agreed, to be followed up by employee and/or manager

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Guidance Notes for Managers**

#### **Performance Review Quarterly 1:2:1 Discussions**

##### **1. Create a regular meeting schedule**

1:2:1 discussions are an opportunity to touch base with individual employees to be clear about expectations, to understand what is working well, what you can do as a manager to support their success and to provide details of the necessary context relating to the decisions you make.

Add planned 1:2:1 discussions to your calendar on a regular basis so that they become routine and predictable. This will help your employees prepare for their 1:2:1 and also streamline the communication process.

Make your employees a priority. Do not cancel 1:2:1 discussions unless absolutely necessary; always reschedule as soon as possible. Actions speak louder than words, so a failure to respect your employees' time shows you don't value them - no matter what you may say to the contrary.

##### **2. Listen to your employees**

Employees value a manager who respects them and listens to their ideas. Don't turn your 1:2:1 discussions into a lecture or a presentation. Instead, use this time to have an open and honest two-way dialogue.

Practice active listening by:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Seeking clarification
- Demonstrating concern
- Making eye contact

Make performance review 1:2:1 discussions conversational.

##### **3. Be prepared**

1:2:1 discussions are the perfect opportunity to check in with each employee to see how they're doing, what challenges they're facing, and what you can do as their manager to support them.

Understand and be clear about what they're currently working on and the progress they've made since the last discussion. This will demonstrate that you know and value their contribution.

Each employee is responsible for completing and submitting to you by email a pro-forma with brief details of the topics which it is planned shall be discussed at the 1:2:1 performance review discussion.

If you have any additional specific topics for the 1:2:1, prepare questions you want to cover in advance and gather any information you'll need to reference. Provide details to the employee in good time about what to expect at the meeting.

When the individual knows what to expect, and comes prepared to the 1:2:1, the discussion will be more productive.

#### **4. Set and track priorities and objectives**

As a manager, you can use 1:2:1 discussions to help your employees to -

- Be clear about expectations
- Understand current and future work priorities
- Set achievable personal objectives
- Create a plan to meet those objectives, including key milestones
- Work collaboratively with colleagues within and outside the WLGA
- Safeguard their personal wellbeing

Focus on problem-solving.

Identify what you can do as the employee's manager to remove any barriers which might get in the way of the employee being successful in meeting their objectives. This is a critical role for all managers.

Take some time to reflect on successes; discuss what has worked well and see how this can be mirrored across other aspects of the employee's work.

#### **5. Personal wellbeing**

You have a responsibility to exercise a duty of care in relation to all employees. Regular 1:2:1s provide the time and opportunity to identify if there is any action you can take to support an employee's wellbeing. This could be in relation to -

- Workload; is it at a reasonable level?
- Agile working arrangements, including home working facilities
- Working hours; working time; non-working time; annual leave
- Relationships at work with colleagues
- Physical and mental health
- Personal / family circumstances

The WLGA HR team is available to provide advice about how to have discussions relating to these matters.

#### **6. Focus on personal development opportunities**

No one wants to feel stagnant in their job or career. Managers are in the perfect position to empower employees and to assist to create personal growth and advancement pathways.

When you meet, don't focus solely on current performance and short-term goals. Talk to your employees about the future. Where do they see themselves in a few years? What roles are they interested in?

Work together to identify opportunities to develop / acquire skills, knowledge and experience within the team and the wider organisation.

Most employees will welcome the opportunity - in the final quarter of each financial year - to look back at achievements over the last 12 months to identify and recognise success and to support career development / planning activities.

## **7. Summarise and agree what happens next**

Conclude the 1:2:1 by summarising what has been discussed and who is responsible for actions moving forward.

Keep the discussion going. Confirm when you will meet again.

## **8. What a good performance review 1:2:1 discussion looks like -**

A constructive appraisal meeting is one in which:

- The employee does most of the talking
- The manager listens actively to what the employee says
- There is scope for reflection and analysis
- Performance is analysed, not personality
- Recent or isolated events do not over-shadow the longer term situation
- Achievement is recognised and reinforced
- The meeting ends positively with agreed actions to improve and sustain future performance

## **9. A bad performance review 1:2:1 discussion -**

- Focusses on a catalogue of failures and omissions
- Is controlled by the manager
- Ends with disagreement between the manager and the employee
- Leaves the employee feeling disengaged and/or demotivated by the process