

## Making the most of your PDP during Covid-19

### Introduction

The Covid-19 crisis has had a huge impact on our services, teams and staff.

Despite this, we believe that it is still important to have our performance conversations (PDPs) so that we can:

- Look back over the whole of the previous year so as not to forget the achievements prior to Covid-19
- Reflect on what our experience has been and our thoughts about our future ways of working
- Recognise the work and achievements during our response to Covid-19
- Focus on setting objectives for the coming months as we move through ‘recovery and renewal’ into our ‘new normal’

Of course, there will be some significant differences to how our usual performance reviews happen, not only in the content of our conversations, but also the way in which we have them.

### PULSE survey

During June 2020 there is a Covid-19 PULSE survey running to temperature check the way our staff are feeling, their circumstances and challenges, and their thoughts about future ways of working.

PDPs will help you to continue that conversation with your manager on a more personal, 121 basis. To accommodate this, there is a new section on the PDP form:

### Section 2 – Covid-19 Pandemic - Response to the crisis

**In Appendix 1 you will find some suggested questions you can use to prepare for this section.**

### Recognising your achievements

When reflecting on achievements since we went into lockdown because of Covid-19, it is so important to bear in mind your own individual circumstances.

Not everyone has been able to continue their roles at home for various reasons.

There will be some people that have gone over and above in response to Covid-19, redeployed into services to help colleagues, or maintained a service from home.

However, for some, your achievement could be maintaining their wellbeing whilst self-isolating or shielding. It could be juggling work whilst having the whole family at home and having to home school. These are equally important to remember and recognise.

## Setting objectives

It may seem challenging to think about setting objectives when things are so different and uncertain. However, it is still important.

Despite Covid-19, [Our Plan 2020 to 2023](#) still stands. We have draft [Directorate Plans](#) in place which were developed pre Covid-19 and these will be refreshed by the end of September.

[Service Plans](#) are being drafted for the end of June which will take account of the Covid-19 context as much as possible. These will give us direction as to what our teams need to focus on and what our individual objectives should be.

**However!** As already stressed, we need to take your individual circumstances into account. We recommend you:

- Really focus on the **R** in SMART – Are the objectives **realistic** for your situation? (Childcare, other care, home-schooling, access to IT etc)  
Setting realistic objectives can be really motivating and focuses attention on what our priorities should be.
- We need short term objectives that can flex – regular 121s allow for the review of objectives and areas of focus.
- Ideally objectives should be broken down into specific deliverables so you have clarity on what is important right now.

## Discussing development needs and opportunities

A key part of the PDP conversation is discussing what development you might need to help you achieve your objectives and personal progression.

Since we can no longer run face to face training, here are some ideas for formal and informal learning activities to consider:

- eLearning modules via the Learning Gateway
- Virtual training sessions
- 121 coaching
- Peer support/learning from each other
- Reflection/learning from daily experiences
- Apprenticeships/qualifications
- Being part of a workers forum
- Learning from the web, accessing online courses and resources – national webinars, Future Learn, Open Learn
- Networking
- Video based learning e.g. Ted Talks

**In Appendix 2 you will find further, practical guidance on having remote performance reviews (PDPs).**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Section 2 of the PDP form – Covid-19 Pandemic - Response to the crisis**

This new section of the PDP form allows us to reflect on our experiences so far during Covid-19, recognise the associated work and achievements, and discuss our thoughts on future ways of working.

It is still not certain when or in what format those currently working from home, self-isolating or shielding, will return to the office buildings.

Remember, the Covid-19 PULSE survey will give us an overall picture of how our staff are feeling, what their circumstances and challenges are and what they think about future ways of working.

PDPs give you the opportunity to widen that conversation with your manager on a more personal, 121 basis. It is quite likely that you will have already discussed some of this before, but it is good to get an up to date view.

You may want to use some of the following questions to prepare for your PDP:

#### **New ways of working**

- 1) What have been the benefits to you and your family with your new working situation?  
What would you like to see continuing?
- 2) What has been the most challenging for you? How did you manage that and what did you learn from it?
- 3) If your current work situation were to continue, what challenges might you face going forward and what could be done about that? What support might you need?
- 4) If and when you were asked back to an office building, what would need to be in place to make sure you were comfortable going back?

#### **Recognising achievements**

- 1) What achievements are you proud of?
- 2) What could you have done differently? What did you learn from that?

#### **Staying connected**

- 1) How do you like to stay in touch with your manager and colleagues?
- 2) How much contact is enough or too much?

## **Looking after yourself**

- 1) How do you feel now compared to the beginning of lockdown? Why do you think it has changed (if it has)?
- 2) What, if anything, have you learnt about yourself? What new skills have you learnt?
- 3) What have you been doing to take care of yourself during this difficult time?
- 4) What else can you do going forward?

## **Appendix 2 – Remote performance reviews (PDPs)**

### **Preparation is essential**

- Book a mutually agreeable date and time with your manager. Spending a lot of time in online meetings can be exhausting. Try to choose a day/time when neither of you have many other meetings or choose to have the meeting as early into the morning as possible.
- Agree between you what remote method you will use (technology/phone) and test it ahead of the meeting.
- Complete as much of the PDP form as you can and share it with your manager before the meeting.
- Make your own notes on anything specific you want to discuss.

### **During the meeting**

Everyone will have their own preferences as to how they take part in remote meetings. Phone or Skype? Camera on or off? Headphones or loud speaker?

Some things to think about:

- What has and hasn't worked for you so far having remote meetings? If you haven't shared this with your manager before, this will give you the opportunity to do so.
- How far from the camera are you both going to sit?
- If you look directly at the camera, to the other person that is direct eye contact, and not everyone will be comfortable with that.
- If you don't maintain eye contact that could give the impression you are not engaged. Are you looking down at how you yourself look on screen? Are you sat by a window and keep looking out as you get distracted by what's outside?
- If you have a separate webcam, you could position it so that it feels like you are sitting side by side.
- Lighting can make a big difference to the tone of a meeting. Make sure it's not too dark.
- Headphones may be an idea for both of you so that others cannot hear. This can help making you both more comfortable if you have to discuss sensitive matters and/or give feedback.

### **Sharing screens/documents**

If you were having the PDP meeting face to face, it is quite likely that you would both be looking at the same PDP form and your own notes.

Whilst you can still look at your own notes, you will be doing so at the same time as trying to stay connected and engaged with someone remotely. Remain aware of that and let the other person know if you are going to refer to your notes.

There are some options for looking at the same version of the PDP form during the remote meeting:

## **By phone call**

- Make sure you both have the most up to date version you are going to be discussing before the meeting.
- You can either print it off if you are able to, or have it on a screen, whether that be a computer or smart mobile phone.
- If only one of you has the option to print, and/or the other person doesn't have access to a computer/phone, maybe you can send a copy to the other person in the post or drop it through their door. (Remember social distancing and hygiene guidelines)

## **By computer/smart phone**

- In Skype for Business you can share your screen. One of you can open the PDP document and then share it with the other person.
- You can both open the same document on the device you are using; one will be read only.

If you and the other person really can't look at the same document at the same time, then your manager can lead the conversation using the copy of the document you both have.

## **Taking notes and following up**

- Consider how you will take notes during the meeting. If you think it will affect how well the remote meeting flows, let the other person know.
- Agree who will type up the notes and finish the PDP form.
- Agree when that person will have that done by and how they will then share it.
- Any signatures will have to be done remotely i.e. typing your names and using email to agree the final version of the document.