

Planning for difficult conversations

If you recognise performance issues in your employee, the first step should be to address these in a conversation. If and when performance issues occur, it is useful to plan these difficult conversations carefully. Be clear about the objectives you have for the conversation and about what each of you will want to achieve. Document your outcomes in the planner, then use this to anticipate and plan. Think carefully about how you will close the conversation and where you both go from this point.

Please remember, this is the first step when addressing performance issues and you should try and resolve the situation through conversations such as these before thinking about letting someone go. In many cases, an employee might not have realised that they have been underperforming or not conducting tasks in the right way. Typically, the result of these conversations will result in a much-improved performance in the workplace.

Top Tips:

- Choose the time and place for the conversation carefully.
- Practice the conversation - at least in your head - and visualise a successful outcome.
- Be clear about your purpose, know and return to your purpose at difficult moments.
- Keep in mind that how you say what you are going to say is just as important as what you say.
- Acknowledge emotional energy - yours and theirs - and direct it towards a useful purpose. Don't ignore it.

Conversation planning document

Your outcomes What do you want to achieve from this meeting? How would you like the other person to go away feeling?	Their outcomes What might the other person be expecting from this meeting?

Conversation plan (Introduction) How will you open the conversation?

What messages do you need to get across?	What evidence/examples do you have that will help get the message across?

Their reactions - what might their objectives be? What counter arguments will they have?	Your responses - What counter arguments/reactions do you have to their objections?

Theirs - what emotions or behaviours might they display?	Yours - what responses do you need to make to give the meeting its best chance of success?

How will you close the conversation?	What are the next steps?