

## **I'm concerned that a team member will get emotional during our under-performance conversation what can I do?**

It's completely understandable to feel concerned about a team member becoming emotional during an underperformance conversation. These discussions can be sensitive, and anticipating emotional responses shows care, preparation, and a commitment to managing the conversation well.

Below is a clear, practical approach aligned with the **Managing Underperformance Policy** and supported by the **Values and Behaviours**.

### **How to prepare for and respond to emotions in an under-performance conversation**

#### **1. Create the right conditions for the conversation**

- Choose a quiet, private space.
- Allow enough time so no one feels rushed.
- Begin with a calm, factual, and compassionate tone.
- Give the person advance notice of the conversation so it doesn't feel like a surprise.

These all help to reduce anxiety before emotions surface.

#### **2. Acknowledge emotions without avoiding the purpose of the conversation**

If the team member becomes upset—tearful, frustrated, overwhelmed—acknowledging their emotion demonstrates kindness *to others*.

You might say:

- "I can hear this is difficult for you."
- "It's okay to take a moment if you need one."

This is supportive without stepping away from the purpose of the meeting.

#### **3. Pause if needed, but don't abandon the conversation**

In line with the policy, you still have a responsibility to discuss the performance concerns.

A brief break can allow the person to regulate their emotions.

For example:

- "Would you like a short break before we continue?"

Avoid postponing unless absolutely necessary and agreed, as it can create more anxiety.

#### **4. Stay grounded in evidence and clarity**

When emotions rise, it's even more important to stay factual.

Work only with specific examples that relate directly to the concerns.

- Use neutral, objective language.
- Avoid generalisations (“you always...”, “you never...”).

This helps keep the conversation constructive and reduces emotional escalation.

#### **5. Invite their perspective**

Adult learners respond well when they're given space to explain and reflect.

Ask open, supportive questions like:

- “What do you think has contributed to this pattern?”
- “What support do you feel would help you move forward?”
- “What do you need from me to support you?”

#### **6. Offer support and options**

Your role includes exploring support options, in line with the Managing Underperformance Policy.

These could include:

- opportunities to practise aspects of the role differently
- coaching, buddying or peer learning
- formal training if required

#### **7. Maintain boundaries and expectations**

Being compassionate doesn't mean lowering performance expectations.

Reinforce both support and accountability at the same time—this balance reflects confidently taking the initiative and Making a plan and making it happen

You might say:

- “I want to support you fully, and we do need to see an improvement in these specific areas.”



## 8. Close with clarity and reassurance

A clear close helps reduce anxiety and builds trust.

Summarise:

- The next steps as required by the policy
- The key issues
- What's been discussed
- Agreed support
- Next review point

