

Key skills when having a performance conversation

These skills help managers hold conversations that are clear, fair, compassionate, and aligned with policy expectations.

1. Communicating Clearly and Objectively

Why it matters

The policy emphasises using *specific, factual evidence* when addressing concerns. Clarity supports adults' need for transparency and reduces anxiety.

Skills include:

- Using precise examples rather than generalisations
- Explaining impact without judgement
- Avoiding jargon

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Communicating clearly without jargon*
- *Taking responsibility for what we say and do*

2. Listening Actively

Why it matters

Managers must understand the underlying reasons for performance issues before deciding next steps. Active listening unlocks insight and invites collaboration.

Skills include:

- Allowing space for the employee to speak
- Not interrupting
- Summarising and checking understanding

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Listening, learning and building strong relationships*
- *Thinking about things from other people's point of view*

3. Managing Emotions with Compassion and Boundaries

Why it matters

Performance conversations can trigger emotional responses. The policy requires managers to remain supportive, professional, and focused.

Skills include:

- Acknowledging emotion without abandoning the conversation
- Providing pauses when needed
- Staying steady, calm, and grounded

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Showing kindness to others*
- *Looking for different perspectives to solve problems and find solutions*

4. Asking Open, Exploratory Questions

Why it matters

High-quality questions encourage adults to reflect, think critically, and help identify what's really happening.

Skills include:

- “Can you talk me through what’s been happening?”
- “What support would help you succeed?”
- “What do you think is getting in the way?”

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Nurturing new ideas and backing people when they have them*
- *Going beyond the status quo*

5. Co-Creating Solutions

Why it matters

The policy expects outcomes, expectations, and support to be agreed collaboratively. Adults are more committed when they're involved in shaping solutions.

Skills include:

- Exploring options
- Building on the employee's insights
- Checking feasibility and clarity

Values and Behaviours demonstrated



- *Supporting each other to create positive change*
- *Working together to make good things happen*

6. Setting Clear Expectations and Boundaries

Why it matters

The policy requires measurable expectations, realistic timescales, and planned reviews. Ambiguity leads to anxiety and inconsistent outcomes.

Skills include:

- Defining success clearly
- Agreeing check-in points
- Being transparent about expectations and responsibilities

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Making a plan and making it happen*
- *Confidently taking the initiative*

7. Staying Future-Focused and Constructive

Why it matters

Performance conversations must focus on improvement, not punishment or blame. Adults respond best to solutions and pathways forward.

Skills include:

- Highlighting what's possible
- Reinforcing strengths
- Encouraging ownership

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Learning from mistakes and moving on*
- *Being proud of what we do and how we do it*

8. Following Up Consistently

Why it matters

Consistency builds trust and aligns with the policy's requirement for regular review.



Skills include:

- Keeping structured review meetings
- Recognising progress
- Addressing slippage early

Values and Behaviours demonstrated

- *Doing what we can to help others thrive*
- *Being generous with our knowledge and time*

