

## How To – Conduct Informal Counselling

Informal counselling is a form of management action used to address concerns regarding an employee's conduct using an informal approach. Such an approach will normally be used when an employee's misconduct is not sufficiently serious to merit formal action but where an employee requires further guidance.

Regular and effective communication between managers and employees should enable cases of minor misconduct to be addressed promptly using an informal approach.

Informal counselling is normally provided by the employee's immediate manager who is in the best position to monitor future improvements.

In many cases, the right word at the right time and in the right way may be all that is needed to resolve issues quickly and confidentially. In some cases, additional training, coaching and advice may be required.

Alternatively, informal counselling may be given to an employee, where allegations of misconduct have not been upheld, but for which further guidance is required.

For cases that are being managed in accordance with the Council's Achieving & Maintaining Standards Procedure where the misconduct is not sufficiently serious to merit formal action, informal counselling may be given. This may be as an outcome from information gathering or an investigation.

Key activities for managers to undertake when conducting informal counselling are to:

### Explain the purpose of the meeting

- ✓ Clarify that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss concerns about the employee's conduct.
- ✓ Remind the employee that as this is an informal meeting there is no requirement for the employee to be accompanied.

### Discuss the concerns

- ✓ Have a two-way discussion with the employee regarding concerns. This should be aimed at discussing shortcomings in conduct which may have been observed by the manager personally or brought to their attention by others.
- ✓ Give the employee the opportunity to explain their actions.
- ✓ Ask if there are any personal problems that are affecting their conduct at work, e.g.e.g. caring responsibilities.

- ✓ If an employee discloses information relating to an underlying health, medical issue or disability as a contributing factor further support and advice is available from Human Resources.
- ✓ Consideration should be given to a referral to the Occupational Health Service to determine any support or adjustments that may be required.

**Provide advice/guidance and explain future action**

- ✓ Provide constructive criticism with an emphasis on ensuring the employee understands what is required going forward, finding ways in which the employee can remedy any shortcomings and improvements can be sustained.
- ✓ Remind the employee of relevant policies, procedures and practices to prevent any further re-occurrence or repeat of alleged misconduct. It may be appropriate to issue them with a copy of the relevant policies or procedures as a reminder of the standards expected.
- ✓ Advise the employee that further breaches may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken.
- ✓ Issue the employee with a letter detailing what was discussed/agreed at the meeting.
- ✓ Upload the letter to the employee's personal file via MyView – MyTeam documents.

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