1:1 meetings

1:1 meetings are an essential tool of managing performance of all staff. Line managers must make space to meet on a regular basis with members of staff to confirm expectations and discuss how they and their work are progressing. You should do this throughout employment.

Regular 1:1 meetings with your staff are a way to be clear on expectations, catch up with key issues, offer support and guidance, and prevent minor issues becoming major ones. They are a crucial way to value, motivate and retain staff, and whilst they require a certain commitment of time by both parties, regular 'managing performance' in this way ultimately saves considerable time and effort in the long run.

Guidance on conducting effective 1:1s:

- **Prepare:**
  Both parties, line manager and member of staff, should prepare for the meeting and bring their own list of items and pieces of work they want to discuss. This is a joint process.

- **Protected time:**
  One-to-one meetings are the key opportunity to catch up and give support, so this time should be protected; Don't cancel the meeting unless really necessary, ask other team members to respect this time and not to interrupt, transfer or put phones on silent, put a "Don't Disturb – Meeting in Progress" sign on the door.

- **Privacy:**
  The meeting must be held in a private room for both parties to be able to talk freely. Book a room or ask someone to give up theirs for a while if you don't have your own meeting room.

- **Frequency:**
  It is up to you two to agree. Once a month or once every six weeks seems to be a common pattern. For new staff in their ISR period, or in roles or at capability levels where greater guidance and instruction is needed, they may be needed more frequently. Plan a year ahead in both your diaries and try to stick to the same day of the week – easier for everyone to remember and to get used to.

- **Notes:**
  You can take your own notes, agree to take joint ones, or ask the individual to be responsible for the notes. Notes should of course be agreed and copied to both of you – especially important if they are joint or by the individual, so that you can check and maintain some control over them as line manager. The notes should be action/outcome focused and can just be bullet points and an action list. Always refer to last meeting's notes in your next meeting.

- **Confidentiality:**
  This is a confidential process and notes should be kept safe. However, both the manager and member of staff need to acknowledge that information from the 1:1 meeting can be used outside the meeting. For example, due to difficult matters that require advice or support from

others such as senior management or HR. Using information from the 1-2-1 meeting outside that meeting should be discussed by the manager and member of staff.

- **How am I doing?**
  This is a rare opportunity to find out how your member of staff is getting on generally. If s/he wants to share any personal or work matters, which they feel you need to know, this is the obvious opportunity. Just ask an open question of "How are you?" Your member of staff can then decide for themselves how they want answer. This is also an opportunity to let your member of staff know how you think they are doing, and to show appreciation of their efforts and contribution to the team.

- **The spirit…**
  The whole idea of this process is that it is a joint one and that it is constructive and supportive. If there are any work or other issues, the manager and member of staff need to talk them through and find solutions. Remember your role as a line manager is to guide, coach, enable, facilitate and remove obstacles for your staff, but *not* to dis-empower them by removing any of their job role accountabilities and responsibilities, nor by doing everything for them. The meeting gives the member of staff the opportunity to discuss any difficulties they have had and to learn from them, or to just offload and accept them if that's all that's required. It is also an opportunity to plan ahead.

- **It's a learning process:**
  Don't be daunted. You will find your own style for this type of meeting and you may well do things differently with different members of staff. Don't forget that this is a forum for them and their progress and development and that they should do most of the talking.

- **Agenda:**
  Agree a standard agenda that you are both ok with. Add whatever else needs to be discussed as and when, for instance personal updates on organisation issues. Sample Agenda:

  - Opening question on how things are going in general
  - Progress on operational work, plans, project work etc.
  - What has gone well?
  - What has not gone well and how to do things differently next time?
  - New training and development needs and progress on training plan and career progression etc.
  - Housekeeping, diary commitments, annual and other leave requests and team events
  - Any other business
  - Date of next meeting

A template for 1-2-1s follows, if you find this useful. However, remember that you and the member of staff may need to tailor any such template.

1:1 template

Employee: ____________________________ Manager: ____________________________

Date: ____________________

(1) Update and review progress

Discuss work that has been done and gone well, underway (milestones or checkpoints achieved), and forecast (what is still to be done), and how that contributes to longer-term objectives. (Likely to mostly be employee talking, updating manager on progress, ensuring manager is in the loop on anything that may be escalated or require their attention)

(2) Reflect

Check if objectives and priorities are still valid and realistic, or if they need to be adjusted; discuss concerns, obstacles and problems, agreeing actions to overcome these; identify any further guidance, support, training or development needed. (Likely to be both parties, two-way; the more experienced the employee, the more likely it is that they can guide this section themselves, and do most of the talking, merely being prompted by the manager asking open questions or challenging)

(3) Actions

Manager to briefly summarise key outputs of conversation, and note/re-iterate actions on each party; re-clarify expectations and objectives; indicate next time of review i.e. next 1-2-1.