

# Performance Improvement

## Performance Improvement Process

The aim of the Performance Improvement Process is to enable the Trustees and CEO to give early feedback to individuals when their performance falls below the required standards and to support staff to resolve performance issues.

The process should be used at an early stage to encourage improved performance when:  
Previous discussions have not led to the employee improving their performance to an acceptable level;

or

Where the Annual Performance Appraisal (APA) discussion shows a failure to achieve objectives. Please note APA's will only be conducted with paid employees.

This policy applies to all Liberate staff. The process is for issues related to capability, skill, and performance.

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring all required and job specific learning is completed and updated;
- Giving relevant and constructive feedback regularly;
- Raising performance concerns early and exploring the reasons with the employee, giving appropriate support;
- Using this policy at an early stage where concerns continue after feedback;
- Setting a clear performance improvement plan (PIP) where needed;
- Ensuring a written record is made of any meetings and saved appropriately.

Employees are responsible for:

- Asking for help as soon as required and bringing any difficulties to the attention of their Line Manager;
- Contributing to the performance improvement plan (PIP);
- Taking responsibility and action to complete the PIP within the timescale set.

Liberate recognises people are motivated by their responsibilities to the charity and our beneficiaries to achieve their best performance and that very few people intend to underperform, make mistakes or fail to complete tasks.

At each of the formal meetings (Stage 2 onwards) and appeal stage, the employee may request to be accompanied by a colleague.

If, during the process, the manager has evidence that the targets are not being achieved, or, if further significant concerns emerge, the manager may move to the next stage of the process.

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Following the successful completion of a performance improvement plan, the employee's performance will continue to be monitored through regular meetings. If, at any stage during the following 12 months, the employee's performance again starts to fall short of an acceptable standard, their line manager may decide to restart the procedure at the last stage used.

Before commencing Stage 1 of this process, the line managers should give feedback to the employee, explain their concerns and give opportunity and support to them to improve. The policy can also commence after the employee's APA, where there has been a failure to achieve targets.

## Stage 1 – Informal Meeting

The line manager will invite the employee to attend an informal meeting to discuss the concerns and give an opportunity to respond.

Following the discussion, the manager may choose to:

1. take no action and monitor in supervision/one-to-ones;
2. develop a performance improvement plan (PIP) with the employee to support the employee to improve;
3. refer the matter for consideration under another policy.

The manager will send the employee written confirmation of the discussion and agreed actions/outcomes of the meeting and confirm the next steps.

## Performance improvement plan (PIP)

A PIP is designed to help improve the employee's performance. Line managers and employees will work together to create an achievable plan which the employee must take responsibility for achieving. Each PIP will be specific to the particular situation and will contain the elements below:

### *Timescale*

The overall timescale in which the performance must improve and timescales for reaching individual actions/targets. Stages 1 to 3 of the process will typically last for a minimum of one month and a maximum of three months. The timescales used in the procedure are guidance only and managers may decide it is necessary to amend these. Managers will make employees aware of the timescales applicable.

### *Targets*

The PIP will specify the areas where improvement is needed, give specific tasks and targets to be achieved and set out how the employee's performance will be assessed.

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## *Employee responsibility*

The employee will be asked to identify the actions they will take to achieve the targets set within the PIP, including any development activities and support requests.

## *Support*

The PIP will specify what support the employee should utilise and/or the line manager will provide. Such measures may include but is not limited to additional supervision; coaching; development; the reallocation of duties; or additional support from colleagues.

## *Feedback*

As part of the PIP, the employee will be given regular feedback from their line manager indicating the extent to which the employee is on track to deliver the improvements set out in the PIP. This can take place within regular meetings.

## **Stage 2 PIP Review Meeting – (First Stage Warning)**

If the issues have not been satisfactorily resolved under Stage 1 of this policy, the line manager will write and invite the employee to a Stage 2 PIP Review Meeting. The purpose of a PIP review meeting is to review progress against the PIP and discuss areas of achievement and any areas still giving cause for concern. The employee will be given an opportunity to respond to any areas of concern and to put forward any explanation he/she may have for the matters identified by the manager.

An outcome of the meeting may be:

1. confirm successful completion and return to normal supervision/one-to-ones;
2. revise the PIP and give a first stage warning;
3. refer the matter for consideration under another policy.

The manager will send the employee written confirmation of the outcome of Stage 2 and confirm the next steps for review and consequences if performance does not improve. Where an employee is given a warning, they will have a right of appeal and the letter will specify a nominated appeal's person. The warning will remain current for 6 months, after which it will be removed.

## **Stage 3 PIP Review Meeting – (Final Stage Warning)**

The line manager will write and invite the employee to attend a Stage 3 PIP review meeting. The letter will set out the areas of performance which the employee's manager believes still fall short of an acceptable standard.

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At the meeting, the employee will be given an opportunity to respond to the concerns about their performance and to put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified.

The outcome of the meeting may be a decision to:

1. confirm successful completion and return to regular supervision/one-to-ones;
2. revise the PIP and give a final stage warning;
3. refer the matter for consideration under another policy.

A formal warning will be given if the PIP has not been successfully completed. The warning will explain the improvement that is required and that the improvement must be immediate and sustained. It will also explain that, if the necessary improvement does not take place, the employee may be dismissed. The warning will remain current for 12 months, after which it will be removed.

Where an employee is issued with a warning, they will have a right of appeal and the letter will specify a nominated appeal person.

## Stage 4 – PIP Dismissal Hearing

If the employee's performance does not improve or falls below requirements during the 12-month warning under Stage 3, the manager will refer the matter to a Stage 4 PIP dismissal hearing.

The employee will be invited to attend the hearing and receive 5 working days' notice. The letter will specify where their performance remains below an acceptable level.

The hearing will usually be conducted by a minimum of two Trustees. At the hearing, the employee will be given an opportunity to respond to the concerns about their performance to put forward any explanation they may have for the matters identified

The outcome of the meeting may be a decision to:

Amend the PIP for a final period;

or

Offer to seek redeployment to alternative work;

or

Dismiss the employee.

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## *Redeployment*

Any offer to redeploy the employee will be entirely at the hearing's discretion and will be made only where an alternative permanent post exists, and the hearing believes the employee's current level of skill and ability could be successful elsewhere. It will normally be offered only as an alternative to dismissal in circumstances in which the hearing is satisfied that the employee should no longer be allowed to continue to work in their current role. Any post offered may include a lower grade or salary and may require different working arrangements. The terms and conditions of the new role will apply.

As any offer of redeployment will be an alternative to dismissal, if the employee refuses the offer, the only alternative will be dismissal. If redeployed, the employee will also receive a formal warning which will explain that performance must be improved and sustained. It will also explain that, if the necessary improvement does not take place, the employee may be dismissed following a further Stage 4 hearing. The warning will remain current for a period of 12 months, after which it will be removed.

## *Dismissal*

If the hearing manager Trustee decides that there is no alternative role available that is suitable for the employee, and that they have not met an acceptable standard of performance, they may decide to dismiss. Any dismissal will be with notice. The decision to dismiss together with the reasons for dismissal will be set out in writing and sent to the employee within 5 working days.

Where an employee is dismissed in accordance with this procedure, they will have a right of appeal and the notification letter will specify a nominated appeal person.

## **Appeal**

An employee has a right of appeal against warnings and dismissals within this procedure. A request for an appeal should be sent in writing to the nominated appeal person and set out the grounds on which the employee believes that the decision was flawed or unfair. The request should be sent within 5 working days of the employee receiving written confirmation of the sanction. The PIP process will continue while appeals against warnings are in progress.

An appeal hearing will be convened to consider the matter, usually within 20 working days. It will usually be chaired by a more senior manager than the manager who made the original decision, or a selected Trustee. At the appeal hearing, the appeal person will review the decision to impose the sanction and the employee will be entitled to make representations about the appropriateness of that decision.

The result of the appeal will be either to confirm the sanction or substitute any outcome that was available to the person conducting the hearing at which the sanction was imposed.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to the employee in writing, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

**Updated: May 2026**