

# PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

## A QUICK GUIDE FOR MANAGERS



Prospect members in the civil service are facing a new performance management process, and those who are line managers are under pressure to deliver a forced distribution of performance markings. If not closely monitored and challenged, the process may be used to force managed exits and drive down pay.

Prospect is challenging this approach. This card contains some tips on how to ensure fairness in the performance management process, and how to address pressure from above to impose forced distribution. Above all, act early and get advice from Prospect.

## KEY GUIDANCE FOR LINE MANAGERS

Many Prospect members will be expected to operate the civil service performance management procedure in their capacity as line managers. Being expected to deliver a forced distribution of marks puts pressure on them.

It can be difficult to stand up to this, especially if you feel isolated or have faced threats that failure to comply will affect your own performance rating or lead to you being put on a poor performance procedure.

Experience in other Prospect sectors shows that challenging such pressures can be effective.

## **Training and evidence are crucial**

Line managers should ensure the following:

- Ensure that you are trained to conduct performance appraisals, including equality training, to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all staff being appraised.
- Take time to satisfy yourself that agreed objectives are 'specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed' (SMART) and are within the control of the postholder to achieve.
- Work with the postholder to ensure that any identified development needs are addressed, preferably in good time to provide evidence of outcomes.

- Ensure that your assessments are evidence-based and recorded in writing.
- Challenge any aspects of the performance management procedure, including validation, that are unclear or appear to foster unfairness or inconsistency.
- Make sure to keep an audit trail of any queries you raise and the responses you receive.
- Ensure you are also trained to manage performance improvement processes if called upon to do so.

### **Challenging forced distribution**

If you are asked to allocate performance rating according to a forced distribution, consider doing the following:

- Explain that if performance rankings become disconnected from individuals' actual performance, genuine performance problems can't be addressed effectively.
- Ask for the instruction to be put in writing.
- If the pressure continues, email the person concerned confirming the content of the conversation and putting the onus on them to respond.
- Remind an appropriate senior manager that forcing marks without evidence could constitute harassment and bullying, which could lead to disciplinary action.
- Ask what stance the organisation will take if a member





of staff makes a complaint about actions taken by you to comply with the organisation's requirement to achieve a forced distribution of performance marks.

Remember that you are not alone: make sure you raise this issue with your Prospect workplace representative or full-time officer. Prospect will pursue any such instances with the employer, while protecting confidentiality.

**More advice: [www.prospect.org.uk/CSperformance](http://www.prospect.org.uk/CSperformance)**

- For further guidance visit **[www.prospect.org.uk/CSperformance](http://www.prospect.org.uk/CSperformance)**
- Prospect 'Members' Guide to One to One Interviews' – [http://bit.ly/prospguide\\_onetoone](http://bit.ly/prospguide_onetoone)
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