

Professional Conversation Process Document

Professional Conversations, to ensure employees feel valued and empowered to deliver the Council Plan

Version 2 January 2022

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to ensuring that all employees are able to deliver the outcomes in the Council Plan in line with their role.
- 1.2 The process to ensure this happens is called the Professional Conversation . All employees will receive at least four Professional Conversations with their manager per year. They will be recorded on Agresso and documented. Copies of the Professional Conversation should be kept locally by both manager and employee.
- 1.3 This is a mandatory process that both managers and employees will undertake.
- 1.4 The Professional Conversation is designed as part of the council's commitment to being restorative. The restorative approach is a collaborative way of working based around high support and high challenge outcomes. Support and training is available for both managers and employees, ensuring they understand this way of working, the skills required and the behaviours expected.
- 1.5 All employees must understand the expected outcomes of their role and the tasks required to deliver them as the support will be focussed around these.
- 1.6 All employees will have the opportunity to highlight where good outcomes have been achieved through their work and where things could have been done better.
- 1.7 All employees will be encouraged to discuss areas where they feel they need support, with the expectation that reasonable support will be put in place. Should the support implemented not improve the employees working outcomes, further advice can be sought from Human Resources (HR).

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 All employees across the council are expected to undertake Professional Conversations, to ensure that they are having direct conversations with their assigned line manager on a regular basis. This procedure applies to all employees of the Council. It excludes NJC employees and Teachers employed by Governing Bodies who are covered by Schools HR policies and procedures. Policies and procedures adopted by the Council may, following discussion with relevant trade unions also be recommended as good practice models for adoption by maintained school governing bodies.
- 2.2 This procedure applies to all employees of the Council, after they have been in post for 3 months; the first 3 months are covered by induction meetings, this does not replace the final probation meeting at 6 months but can be incorporated into it.

2.3 This process is cascaded down from Chief Executive level to ensure that the objectives of the Council Plan and the Our People Strategy are reflected within all the Professional Conversations between managers and employees.

2.4 This is a supportive process for both managers and employees to cover specific elements of employment including; skills and support required to deliver the employees role, employee wellbeing, employee development and any Equality, Diversity or Inclusion (EDI) matters. It is also an opportunity for employees to contribute and feedback on new ideas for service delivery.

2.5 This will not replace any necessary management or HR related meetings.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Employees who have responsibility for managing or supervising employees are required to hold a minimum of four identified and documented Professional Conversations over a 12 month rolling period. Areas that currently hold supervisions or 121 meetings more frequently than quarterly should use 4 of them throughout the year as PC's.

3.2 Both managers and employees have a joint responsibility to ensure Professional Conversations take place. Both managers and employees can put a Professional Conversation in the diary.

3.3 The process of conducting professional conversations can be designed and adapted by the service area to suit the work being undertaken, allowing for more agile management of employees. The length of time taken to undertake a professional conversation will be dependent on the employee's role and expected deliverable outcomes. This may vary from a 10 to 20 minute discussion built into a general conversation, to a meeting taking up to one hour. The statements below can be used as guidance to help managers to design their own:

- Both managers and employees have the knowledge and skills to undertake these conversations together in a constructive way, following the restorative approaches being embedded within the council. *All employees should have completed the Professional Conversation and Restorative Practice Mandatory Training or attended a Professional Conversation briefing.*
- The Professional Conversations need to be a safe environment for employees to discuss with their manager any areas where they are having problems delivering the expected outcomes of their role.
- The manager and employee will work together to create appropriate development plans or reasonable adjustments to the role where required and agree the time scales for any reviews required, in order to support the employee to meet deadlines and work outcomes.
- The manager will involve employees where appropriate in

conversations concerning service delivery and changes, seeking feedback and ideas to compliment were possible.

- Managers and employees will discuss opportunities for engagement in appropriate development and wellbeing activities, encouraging and facilitating participation to support and motivate employees were possible.
- Employees will have the opportunity to showcase achievements and good working practice, identifying their strengths and celebrating their successes.
- The conversations are planned by employees and managers and agreed according to local process.
- Employees will fully understand the expected outcomes of their role prior to the process being implemented. This will align to the employee’s job description, service priority plan and council plan. Time scales and specific activities will be agreed by both the manager and the employee at an initial meeting and will be monitored during future professional conversations.
- Employees and managers are encouraged to discuss Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters, and to promote the attendance at Staff Equality Forums, and other engagement forums

3.4 The overarching purpose of this process is to give managers a flexible approach to managing the expectations of service delivery and supporting employees to deliver on the expected outcomes of their role. This process may compliment an existing one to one communication process, if this already happens, or may need to be developed within management practices of a service. If the service already implements a regular one to one process, when appropriate (every 12 weeks) these can be used as a Professional Conversation as long as it is carried out in a restorative way and covers the 5 areas stated below.

3.5 Organisational Development (OD) will support managers and employees with this process; looking at appropriate training and development, methods of carrying out the conversation and understanding the restorative approach required.

4.0 Monitoring and Review

4.1 As well as measuring % completion through the Agresso system, it is proposed that a broader suite of indicators are used to measure more outcomes of the Professional Conversation process, including but not limited to:

Benefit	How we will measure this
Improved performance of all employees	Delivery of Council Plan
Increased motivation and satisfaction in workforce	Employee Surveys carried out at various times of the year

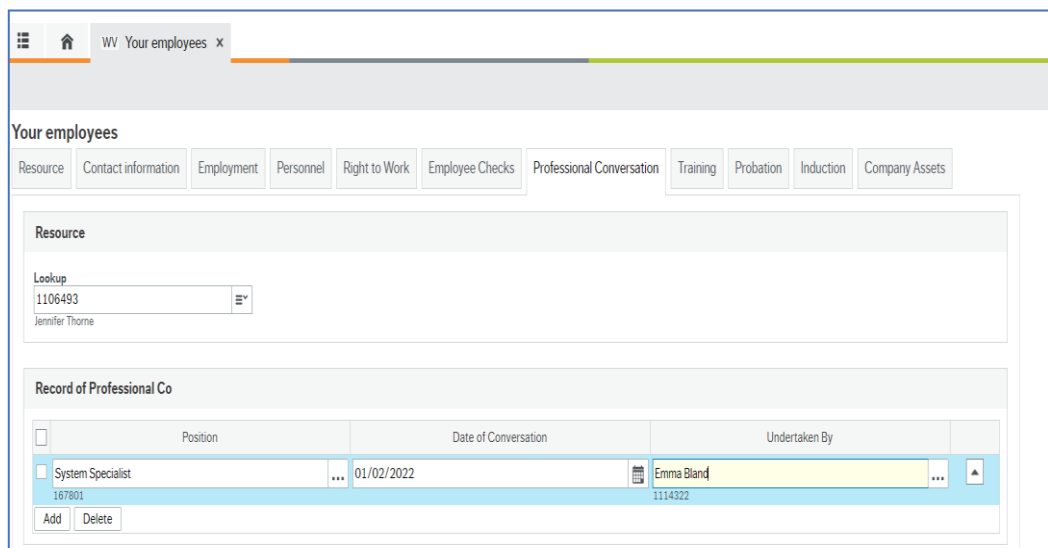
Reduce the requirement for more formal processes including but not limited to; capability and grievances	Quarterly and Annual Equality reports
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4.2 Managers will be required to record the dates of Professional Conversations on Agresso. This will be recorded on the employee record and will include date and name of manager undertaking the Professional Conversation. The data gathered will be used to identify the employees who have not received Professional Conversations. Managers will create an outcomes and actions record that will be kept locally by the manager and employee. If it is found that the process is not being carried out, discussions will take place in the first instance with the manager and/or employees by the OD Team, to support and create a solution to ensure that all employees are receiving Professional Conversations. Any continual discrepancies will be highlighted and discussed with the relevant Head of Service/Director.

4.3 In order to log the Professional Conversation a separate section has been created on Agresso. Please follow the guidance below to access the section.

1. Manager logs into Agresso from the link on City People
2. Choose Personnel from the drop down menu
3. Click on your employees
4. Click the space bar to reveal list of employees
5. Choose employee name that you want to create the record for
6. Click the Professional Conversation Tab at the top of the page
7. Click on add Professional Conversation
8. Add the employees position number, date of Professional Conversation and the name of the manager who has undertaken it. Press Save.

4.4



4.5 Professional conversation will be recorded on a template provided by OD or managers can create their own, ensuring that it covers the 5 key areas. The manager can use the digital recording process on teams and then ensure the outcomes and actions are included in the record. Alternatively write up the conversation on one of the templates provided on the Our

People Portal on the Professional Conversation pages. A copy of the records should be kept locally by the manager and the employee.

4.6 The key areas to be covered in the professional conversations are;

- a. Outcome performance in the delivery of the role
- b. Wellbeing
- c. Training and development
- d. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters
- e. Opportunities for involvement in new ideas for service delivery and delivering the Council Plan, career development and other opportunities relevant to employment

5.0 Equality

5.1 The Professional Conversation is for all employees to be engaged in. If for any reason this two way communication process is not taking place concerns should be raised with OD who will contact service managers and through discussion seek a solution. Employees have a responsibility to undertake the professional conversation as the manager has in leading it.

5.2 Where reasonable adjustments are required to enable effective participation in meetings, the employee should make a request to their line manager in advance of the meeting.

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