



Supporting Performance Improvement Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a supportive and consistent framework that helps colleagues improve their performance when the required standards are not being achieved.

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Relevant forms and letters:

- [SPI flow chart](#)
- [Supporting Performance Improvement Plan](#)
- [SPI letter templates – invites to meetings](#)
- [Letter of concern – performance template](#)

Related policies:

- [Disciplinary Policy](#)
- [Ill Health Capability Policy](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing hr@southkesteven.gov.uk

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

1. Policy Statement

At South Kesteven District Council, we want to be a great place to work where all employees feel supported and empowered to perform their roles effectively. This policy is designed to support employees who are not performing to the required standard by providing a supportive and structured process that encourages improvement. Where improvement is not achieved, this policy outlines the steps that may be taken.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of South Kesteven District Council. The policy applies when an employee is failing to perform their duties to the required standard due to a lack of capability, including skill or aptitude.

Poor performance arising from misconduct will be managed under the Council's Disciplinary Policy, while performance concerns linked to ill health or frequent absences will be addressed in accordance with the Council's Attendance Policy or Ill Health Capability Policy as appropriate.

3. Guiding principles

- Performance concerns will be dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner to ensure staff are supported to achieve and maintain job performance.
- Early identification and intervention when capability issues arise is important.
- Support and guidance will be provided to help the employee improve.
- A fair, transparent and consistent approach will be applied.
- Consideration will be given to any underlying health or personal issues and other Council policies and support mechanisms may be used if appropriate.
- Employees will be given clear expectations, reasonable time to improve and access to appropriate support.
- Capability concerns will be treated confidentially and with respect.

4. Process Overview

The 'Supporting Performance Improvement' process consists of four progressive stages, each designed to provide structured support, clear expectations and fair opportunity for improvement. The table below outlines each stage with typical timescales (although timescales may vary depending on specific circumstances).

Stage	Description	Typical Timescale
Informal Stage	An initial discussion to identify concerns, explore causes, and agree informal support.	4–6 weeks
Stage One – Formal Performance Review	A formal meeting to set clear performance objectives and support through a structured improvement plan.	4–6 weeks

Stage	Description	Typical Timescale
Stage Two – Formal Performance Review	A second formal review where remaining issues are addressed with a revised improvement plan.	4–6 weeks
Stage Three – Consideration of Dismissal	A final meeting to assess whether all reasonable support has been exhausted and whether dismissal is appropriate.	One meeting

5. Informal Stage

When concerns are first identified, in most cases the manager will hold an informal meeting with the employee to discuss, explore any underlying causes and agree a plan. The manager may discuss the issues with the employee either at their scheduled one-to-one meeting or in a separate arranged meeting. It is important for the employee to understand why the manager is concerned about their performance and be given the opportunity to address the concern.

The informal stage can include:

- A letter of concern explaining how the employee's performance is causing concern (following a discussion)
- A Performance Improvement Plan to document the issues, expectations and goals
- Additional support being put in place to support the employee's performance, for example coaching, mentoring, training or adjustments to duties.

At the meeting, the manager should explain what is expected and why the individual's performance is causing concern. The manager should listen to the employee to understand if there are other factors that they need to be aware of, including medical, domestic or underlying personal circumstances. If there are external factors that have impacted the employee's performance, these should be taken into account in any subsequent actions.

There is no right of accompaniment or appeal at this stage.

5.1 Performance Improvement Plan

In some cases, in order to address the performance issue, an informal 'Supporting Performance Improvement Plan' will be developed through the discussion between the manager and employee. This plan should include timescales for improvement, regular review meetings and support mechanisms (e.g. mentoring or training).

Progress will be reviewed within reasonable timeframes and if performance improves to an acceptable level, no further action will be required. If no significant improvement is observed, the formal steps outlined below may be initiated.

6. Formal Process

6.1 Stage One – Formal Performance Review

The manager should invite the employee to a formal meeting to discuss why the employee's performance is not meeting expectations and agree what actions are required to improve. The employee will be given the opportunity to discuss their performance and what might be causing the issues. The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or Union Representative.

A formal performance improvement plan should be developed collaboratively between the manager and employee, and should include SMART actions (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) designed to address the areas where performance is not meeting the required standards. The manager will clearly outline the expected improvements and support available.

A formal review period, normally lasting six weeks, will be agreed upon. During this time, regular review meetings will be held to assess progress, offer feedback and adjust support as needed.

The formal process should be confirmed in writing to the employee, alongside a copy of the performance improvement plan. The timescale for review should be confirmed in writing along with confirmation that should the standards not be met, it may result in moving to the second stage of the formal process and potentially dismissal.

At the end of the stage one period, the manager should invite the employee to a formal meeting. If satisfactory improvement is made by the end of the review period, the formal process will conclude and normal performance management will resume. Where performance continues to not meet expectations, the manager and employee should discuss moving to the second stage of the formal process.

6.2 Stage Two – Formal Performance Review

If, following Stage One, the employee has not made sufficient progress to meet the required performance standards, the process may move to Stage Two. The manager should invite the employee to a Stage Two meeting where they should explain why their performance continues to not meet expectations. The manager should listen to the employee to understand their viewpoint, suggestions and reasons. The employee may be accompanied to the meeting by a Union Representative or colleague if they wish.

At the meeting, the manager will review the actions taken during Stage One and the outcomes of those actions. A revised Performance Improvement Plan will be agreed, again using SMART actions to provide clarity and structure. The plan will focus on specific areas still requiring improvement. A second review period will be set, (usually between four and six weeks but other timescales can be set where there is justification to do so), during which review meetings will continue to track progress, provide feedback and adjust support where appropriate.

At this stage, failure to meet the objectives may result in dismissal or other formal action. This stage represents the final opportunity for the employee to demonstrate sustained improvement.

If the employee's performance meets the required performance levels during the stage two period, the manager should confirm in writing that they are no longer on the formal process and normal performance management will resume.

6.3 Stage Three - Consideration of Dismissal

Where the employee's performance does not meet expectations following Stage One and Two, the manager needs to consider moving to the final stage of the formal process. At this stage, the case should be referred to a more senior manager, usually at least one level above the line manager, e.g. the employee's second line manager.

The manager hearing the case should review all the available information and if appropriate, write to the employee to invite them to a 'consideration of dismissal' meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to this meeting by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative. With the invitation, the manager should include a copy of all the information they have available regarding the employee's performance from the formal process.

During the meeting, the employee will have the opportunity to explain any mitigating circumstances.

The potential outcomes of the meeting include:

- Dismissal on grounds of capability
- Voluntary demotion (if a suitable role is available and mutually agreed)
- An extension of the Stage Two formal performance review
- No further action and normal performance management resumes

The manager should consider all the available information and feedback from the meeting before making their decision. This could be communicated verbally following a break in the meeting, or in writing following the meeting.

The decision should always be confirmed in writing setting out the employee's right to appeal. Dismissal will only be considered after all reasonable opportunities to support improvement have been exhausted.

7. Appeal against Dismissal

If the employee wishes to appeal a dismissal outcome, they should put this in writing to the decision-making manager or HR within 5 days of receiving the written confirmation of the decision. The employee should include why they are appealing the decision. An appeal meeting will then be arranged. The employee will be notified in writing of the time, place and manager dealing with the appeal at least 3 days beforehand. The employee can be accompanied by their Trade Union Representative or a colleague.

After the appeal meeting, the employee will be informed of the decision in writing. This concludes the process.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at hr@southkesteven.gov.uk.

- This policy applies to all employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
- The Council reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.