



## Feedback Tip Sheet For Supervisors

Feedback provides opportunities to review how things are going, exchange ideas, provide encouragement and build capability. Organisations have formal systems for receiving and recording feedback. As a supervisor, you will also provide detailed feedback as part of day-to-day communications and in structured supervision sessions (see the [Supervision and Support Relationship Guide](#) for more information).

The purpose of feedback is to support workers to continue doing what they do well and improve where things need to change. How you approach these conversations will determine whether workers welcome and apply what you have to say. This tip sheet summarises things to consider when planning, giving and reflecting on feedback.

### What to cover:

- Provide encouragement and recognise when things are done well. Positive feedback is just as important as addressing problems.
- Encourage workers to request feedback. When workers see feedback as being useful to support them rather than negative and critical, they will be more confident to raise concerns or ask questions to get the support they need to do a good job.
- Prioritise what to cover. Pick one or two important issues to raise rather than presenting a long list.
- Do not let things slide or avoid raising a performance issue if it could have a significant impact on the quality or safety of supports delivered to participants, or on the wellbeing of others, including the worker.
- Encourage workers to think about the capabilities they may want to develop.
- If, after providing support you are not seeing an improvement in performance, you could consider whether other types of support or development would be more effective or whether to explore other responses, not related to worker capability. For example, a lack of progress could mean the worker is not a good fit for working in disability. If a worker consistently displays a poor attitude or engages in wilful misconduct, the matter may be more appropriately addressed by a formal process to determine next steps. Processes to do this are usually established and managed separately from ongoing supervision and are not addressed in these resources.

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## When to address issues:

- Some types of feedback can be provided in the moment. For example, you might say something encouraging to reinforce good practice. If you observe unsatisfactory practice, consider whether it is a one-off or a repeated pattern. In the moment feedback can be a good way to address a one-off oversight or single unsuccessful interaction with a participant. An ongoing pattern of poor practice is best addressed when you have time for a more detailed conversation.
- Make regular check-ins a normal part of the way you communicate with your workers. It can be tempting to avoid or put off providing feedback or to store it up for a scheduled performance discussion. By that time, it can be difficult to recall specific examples or issues. Regularly checking in gives you and your workers the chance to practise and build confidence to address issues, provide encouragement and answer questions as they come up.
- Before giving feedback in the moment, consider the context. Who else is present? Are the issues you plan to raise of a private or sensitive nature? Could this conversation have a negative impact on the worker-participant relationship?

## How to provide feedback:

- Plan ahead: what outcome do you want to achieve with this feedback? How can you express it in a way that will give the best chance of achieving it?
- Build on strengths: make sure you are not only focusing on problems.
- Be specific: describe what you observed without expressing your opinion or leaping to judgement, for example:
  - *'I noticed you did not ask (the participant) what they wanted before you started serving the meal.'*
  - Not
  - *'Why do you think you know best about what the participant wants?'*
- Be consistent: some feedback can be difficult to give and receive and both the giver and receiver can get defensive and emotional. Check your own emotions and be supportive of the worker if they get upset. For example, acknowledge how they feel, ask if they want to take a break. At the same time, it is important to be consistent and do not back away from addressing the issue.
- Encourage reflection, for example:
  - *'How do you think that went?'*
  - *'Would you handle this differently if it happens again?'*
- Explore: encourage the worker to think about factors that might have influenced their behaviour. For example:
  - How did their personal values, beliefs or fears influence their behaviour?
  - Were there any circumstances or external factors that contributed to the situation?

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- **Problem solve:** if addressing something that needs to change, ask the worker for their ideas. Record the outcomes you agree on, for example you can record the outcomes in the Capability Development Plan section of the worker's Performance Agreement.
  - **Invite feedback:** feedback is a two-way process. While the focus is on how you can support the worker, it is important to ask them how helpful they are finding your support. Their observations can support you or the organisation to improve the way you supervise and support their work.
  - **Keep the conversation alive:** follow up to see how things are going. Is the worker getting the support they need and what else might be needed?

### **In addition to structuring the feedback conversation, consider the options for giving feedback. For example:**

- What systems does your organisation already use to support inviting and giving feedback such as intranet, social media apps, wellbeing surveys, performance reviews?
- What opportunities as part of day-to-day work could be used for informal conversations?
- Are there opportunities to support peer-to-peer feedback?