

# Implementing the Review and Career Conversation

## A guide for embedding the conversation within your organisation



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**The Review and Career Conversation**

## What is it?

The Review and Career Conversation provides a structure for individuals and their reviewer to have regular conversations. It is intended to combine appraisal, career conversations, a review of health and wellbeing and personal development planning into a series of regular and joined-up conversations. The conversation is based upon the following principles.

Key principles from an organisational perspective:

* the conversation has been designed to be used in its entirety, but you are also free to copy and embed individual sections within your existing appraisal,
* it is designed to provide a holistic and inclusive approach which is relevant to employees at all levels,
* its overarching focus is to enable a high-quality conversation rather than provide a form to complete,
* it can be linked to other talent management tools or function as a stand-alone conversation,
* it has been designed to be simple and intuitive, but reviewers will need to receiving training in order to get the best out of the conversation, which also forms part of the talent management toolkit. Additional and more detailed guidance notes have been created for the user and reviewer that once again can be found in the toolkit.

Key principles from a user perspective:

* the quality of the conversation is the first priority,
* its focus is individualised, humanistic and based on the person, their role and their career,
* it happens frequently and is complimented through regular one-to-ones
* it assumes people’s lives, career, motivations and performance are subject to change
* it promotes and requires an adult and respectful relationship between the individual and their employer

**and what it is not…**

* A way of categorising people or putting them into a box
* A judgemental process that makes rigid assumptions about people’s future
* A way of dealing with performance issues or having difficult conversations
* A process that is driven and led by the reviewer
* A once a year event

## Who is it for?

The Review and Career Conversation has been designed to be used for employees at all levels, regardless of their professional background. It is a personal and individualised conversation that should enable people and their reviewer to reflect upon, discuss and agree where they are at a given point in time.

A degree of flexibility is built into the conversation in order for it to be relevant and meaningful for different individuals. This includes options:

* to agree short or long-term objectives depending upon the nature of the individual’s role,
* for using the behavioural or leadership qualities most relevant to your role and organisation;
* for those who wish to link this with other Leadership Academy tools we have provided guidance and suggestions towards the end of this document.

## How often does it happen?

Given the constantly changing nature or life and motivations within and out of work, it is recommended that elements of this conversation form part of an ongoing dialogue between the individual and their reviewer.

* *Weekly* - Ideally most employees will have weekly (or at least monthly) one-to-ones with their manager. Elements of the conversation (particularly their goals and objectives) could form part of this conversation.
* *Quarterly ‘light touch’ reviews* - It is also recommended that these are supplemented with light touch reviews at least once a quarter to review additional elements such as wellbeing and behaviour. If relevant to the individual’s goals and objectives these could also touch upon career considerations.
* *Bi-annual review conversations* - Of the quarterly ’light touch’ reviews, every other can form a six-monthly conversation during which all elements of the review can be discussed and completed.

**Preparing for the conversation**

## Individual preparation requirements

Some individuals can find the conversation easier to have when it is spread across two separate meetings. Starting with sections 1 – 3 in one meeting and then returning to discuss and agree on sections 4 – 5 is a natural way to split the conversation. Generally, it is best to ensure that the gap between these meetings is no more than a fortnight.

To maximise the quality of the conversation individuals are advised to reflect and work through a number of the sections of the conversation in advance. It is anticipated that this may take 30 mins to 60 mins, and that in return the conversation will be more focused, of higher quality, and should also be shorter. The elements they will need to prepare for include:

*Section 1 - About me*

All of this section needs to be completed before the conversation. They can choose whether or not to share this with their reviewer beforehand.

*Section 2 – Reviewing my goals and objectives*

The individual will need to summarise the goals and objectives agreed during their last conversation in this section. This doesn’t need to be in detail as they can always refer back to the notes taken during their conversation. They will also find benefit from rating their progress against each of their objectives in advance of the meeting. Generally speaking, it is advantageous for the individual and their reviewer to share this information with each other beforehand.

*Section 3 – Reviewing my behaviour*

The individual needs to rate themselves against these behaviours before the conversation and reflect on any high and low points. Once again, it helpful for both parties to share their ratings in advance of the meeting.

*Section 4 – Reviewing my career*

This section also needs to be considered and ideally completed in advance of the meeting. If the individual is interested in moving to another role now or in the near future, then completing the Reviewing My Current Motivation and Potential section will also be helpful.

## Reviewer preparation requirements

It is also recommended that the reviewer completes the following sections of the review in advance. It is anticipated that this will take them approximately 30 minutes.

*Section 2 – Reviewing my goals and objectives*

They will need to refer back to the goals and objectives agreed during the last conversation and rate each of them.

*Section 3 – Reviewing my behaviour*

The individual’s behaviour will also need to be rated in advance. They may find it beneficial to canvass other people’s thoughts and feedback as part of this, but should always check that the individual is happy for them to do this.

*Section 4 – Reviewing my career*

If the individual has flagged in advance that they are interested in exploring other career options, then it would also be helpful for them to complete the Reviewing My Current Motivation and Potential section in order to share additional insights they might find helpful.

**Having the conversation**

1. ***‘About me’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

The scales in this section are by no means an exhaustive set of criteria in relation to measuring or assessing employee wellbeing. Whilst they have been carefully selected to reflect some of the pressures, staff (particularly clinicians) are known to be experiencing, you are at liberty to substitute (or add) scales for your own.

Similarly, this section can be added to an existing appraisal process or career conversation as required.

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 10 mins – 30 mins*

The conversation begins with an opportunity for the individual to reflect and discuss how satisfied they are within their role and how well this fits and balances with life outside work. They are also encouraged to think about the work they find most rewarding and energising and how much they currently get to experience this. Individuals are encouraged to run through the following steps:

1. Start by indicating where you are on each of the 6 scales. Then take some time to reflect upon your scores and what they mean to you. You may find it useful to consider which out of these factors matter most to you. Also reflect on which direction you think things are going on each scale i.e. are they improving or getting worst.
2. This isn’t an exhaustive list and you may think of other factors that are affecting the balance between your work and home life. You can use this as an opportunity to write these down on the same page.
3. Next, take some time to reflect on the type of work that you are most passionate about and find most rewarding. Also think about how much opportunity exists within your current role for you get involved in this type of work or apply your strengths.
4. Finally, give some thought to the practical steps that you could take over the next 2 – 3 months that would make a make noticeable difference to the quality of your working life. You may find it helpful to consider how your manager, colleagues, friends or family could support you in taking these steps.
5. Be sure to include any goals or actions that you might want to apply at work in section 5 when agreeing your development goals.
6. ***‘Reviewing my goals and objectives’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

Reviewing objectives and development plans will no doubt form part of your existing appraisal process. If you are satisfied with how this works you may prefer to leave this unchanged.

This element of the conversation has deliberately moved away from the detailed forms and boxes which attempt to guide people into setting SMART objectives. Whilst SMART and other objective setting techniques are recommended, they generally work better if people are trained in their use rather than provided with overly complex / arduous forms to complete.

In addition, the design has looked to combine a review of all goals and objectives i.e. career goals, development objectives, and work objectives rather than to break these into separate sections. This enables a more realistic number or objectives / goals to be agreed and ensures that development or career goals are treated with equal importance to work objectives.

For those who are looking to continue with their current approach (rather than adopting this section) we would advise that you use the following rating format:

* Partially or not met or meeting
* Met or meeting
* Exceeded or exceeding
* Not applicable

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 15 mins – 30 mins*

Individuals are provided with the following advice in relation to completing this element of the conversation.

Reviewing successes and progress is a vital part of any review conversation. This section provides you and your reviewer with the opportunity to establish how much progress you have made in relation to your development goals and work objectives.

1. Before the conversation starts, make sure you have summarised the goals and objectives agreed during your last conversation. Also take some time to reflect on how you think you have done or are doing in relation to each of these.
2. During the conversation you and your reviewer can then discuss these in turn, using the rating scale to indicate the extent to which they have been or are being met. If you and your reviewer were specific about expectations when these were agreed, then it should be clear to each of you what rating is appropriate. If, however, there are areas where you are unable to agree, then you can indicate these on the rating scale. It is important to acknowledge at this point that there are sometimes valid and fair reasons why certain objectives have not been met. Your manager may for example have asked you to prioritise other activities. If this is the case, then this should be captured at the bottom of the page.
3. Once you have reviewed and rated the objectives you will need to sum up with an overall rating. This provides you and your reviewer with an indication at a point in time about how successfully you have been able to progress in relation to core areas of work and development. You can agree on an overall rating by doing the following:

* Count up the number of objectives under each rating (i.e. the number that are ‘partially or not met’, ‘met’, or ‘exceeded’
* Exclude any ratings where there were extenuating circumstances that meant for reasons outside of your control you were unable to progress
* Place a tick in the overall rating box that has the highest number of ticks above it
* If you and your reviewer are unable to agree on an overall position, then you can indicate your different ratings in the boxes provided.

1. Finally, the two of you can capture any important overall reflections and comments at the bottom of the page. It will also be useful to consider which of the existing / ongoing objectives you will need to include at the end of your conversation (section 5) when agreeing objectives.
2. ***‘Reviewing my behaviour’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

This element of the conversation relies upon you embedding your preferred choice of behavioural or leadership framework. Many organisations have developed their own behavioural framework based upon their values. Others have opted to rely on national models such as the Healthcare Leadership Model. For individuals operating in senior leadership roles who would like to be considered by their Regional Talent Board the Leadership Success Profile would be the most relevant framework.

Regardless of the framework you use we would advise you to use a 3-point rating scale similar or the same to the format below:

* Rarely or never
* Some of the time
* Frequently

This is element is intended to be used not just for self-reflection, but also as an opportunity to provide feedback from the reviewer and ideally others who work with the individual. Once completed it is hoped that this can provide the insights required to build self-awareness and guide the individual towards specific development goals.

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 15 mins – 30 mins*

1. Before the conversation starts, take some time to reflect on how you have been working, and the level of frequency with which you have been displaying each of the values or behaviours. People often find the process of self-reviewing themselves against behaviours a valuable process in its own right. In order for you both to be prepared your reviewer will also need to rate the frequency with which they see you displaying these behaviours.
2. During the conversation you and your reviewer can compare ratings and use these to form the basis of your discussion. The following tips might help you to get the most from this part of the conversation:

* avoid going through every single item one by one. Instead look for patterns and themes,
* areas of agreement and disagreement should not be seen as a conflict, but rather valuable insights in terms of different perceptions that can be explored and clarified using examples;
* lower scoring areas can provide useful insight into potential areas of weakness, although the predominant focus is ideally on areas of strength to nurture and grow.

1. As with the objectives in the previous section, the overall rating is based upon the column with the most ticks. This helps to provide an overall indicator of how aligned your behaviour is to requirements of your role at a given point in time.
2. If you and your reviewer are unable to agree on an overall rating, then use the separate boxes provided and explain the reason for your differences in the reflections and comments section.
3. ***‘Reviewing my career’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

This section has been designed to ensure that regardless of aspirations and ambition everyone is provided with a structured and meaningful conversation about their career.

The left-hand side of the page focusses on the needs and considerations of individuals content to stay in their current role. This has some obvious and beneficial links back to the ‘About me’ section at the beginning of the conversation.

The right-hand side of the page starts the process of exploring people’s aspirations and motivations. For those who select this side of the page there is an extension of two additional elements that provide the opportunity to review current potential and summarise aspirations.

Both sections are likely to generate development or career goals that will ideally form part of the objectives and goals summarised in section 5.

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 10 mins – 20 mins*

This section has been designed to support everyone regardless of their aspirations, to reflect upon where they are up to within their career and to think through their hopes and needs in the short and longer term.

At a given point in time (and for a combination of reasons) most of us are content to stay in our current role. When this is the case we need to reflect upon our level of satisfaction within the role and what can be done to ensure that it becomes or remains worthwhile and fulfilling.

In contrast, for those of us who are clear about needing or wanting to move to another role it is important that we have the opportunity to explore / understand what options exist and how ready and able you are to be able to make this transition.

1. Start by considering which of the two options at the top of the page best reflects your current position. Remember, you can revisit this page (and if necessary, repeat the conversation with your reviewer) whenever you need, but it is important to be honest with yourself about what feels right for you in the moment.

* *For those content to stay in their current role at this point in time…*

If this is where you are today, then the left side of the page will be most relevant to you and the primary focus is about getting the most from your current role. You may find it helpful to reflect back to previous 3 sections and to think about what is important for you to either achieve or be able to do within your role. Also consider what support you may need and how this sits alongside your life outside work. Having discussed the questions on this page, take a few minutes to record your thoughts and then move on to the final section 5 Agreeing Your Goals and Development Objectives.

**…or**

* *For those considering another role now or at some point in the future…*

If you are considering another role then this section will help you to reflect more specifically on what this is and why you are keen to make a transition. Having discussed the questions on the right-hand side take a few minutes to record your thoughts and then move on to section 4.1 Reviewing My Current Motivation and Potential.

1. The next two elements of the conversation (Reviewing My Current Motivation and Potential; and Summarising Current Career Aspirations) have been designed for people considering another role. If you are content to stay in your current role, then these sections will lack relevance for you at the moment and you can now move to the final section of the conversation Agreeing My Development Goals and Work Objectives.
   1. ***‘Reviewing my current motivation and potential…’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

There are many ways to review and measure potential. This simple self-assessment questionnaire has been designed to help individuals at all levels to reflect upon their current and changing motivations / potential.

Key elements in relation to the positioning and implementation of potential within your existing appraisal are:

* Potential is open to continuous change and can be affected by factors in and out of the work environment. For this reason, it is essential that the scores in this section are understood to have a short shelf life (no longer than 6 months).
* For this information to be used meaningfully for succession planning and with the rest of this conversation, it will help if an overall rating/s come from both individual and reviewer.
* Potential and performance are not the same thing and performing highly in one role is not a guarantee that you will be suited to a different position.

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 20 mins – 30 mins*

This simple self-assessment questionnaire gives you the opportunity to reflect at a given point in time on your appetite and potential to move to another role. Your potential is impacted upon by events in and out of work and also by your current state of mind. This means that it is continuously changing, and it can be helpful to revisit this section at various points throughout the year. There are other ways of gaining insight into your potential e.g. stretch assignments, secondments, and development centres which you may choose to explore with your reviewer.

1. As with other aspects of the conversation you will find it helpful to complete and reflect upon this section before the you meet with your reviewer. It can also be useful to ask them / others to give you some feedback / complete the questionnaire about you.
2. Similar to the review of your behaviour earlier in the questionnaire you are asked to rate how frequently you display a range of behaviours. These behaviours differ from the earlier section as they provide insight into how suited and ready you are to be able to move into another role.

* *Motivational agility*: explores your appetite, ambition and sense of purpose
* *Learning agility* explores the energy, focus and approach taken to learning
* *Emotional agility*: explores insight and understanding of self and others
* *Thinking agility* explores decision making, problem solving and flexibility

1. During the conversation you and your reviewer can compare ratings and use these to form the basis of your discussion. The following tips might help you to get the most from this part of the conversation:

* Avoid going through every single item, instead look for patterns and themes
* Areas of agreement and disagreement should not be seen as a conflict, but rather valuable insights in terms of different perceptions that can be explored and clarified using examples
* Lower scoring areas can indicate potential barriers or risks when transitioning to another role and need to be explored
* High scoring areas are of particular importance as developing and sustaining these play a big part in enabling a successful transition into another role

1. The overall rating is based upon the column (i.e. rarely, sometimes, frequently) that has the most ticks.
2. If you and your reviewer come up with different overall ratings, then use the separate boxes provided and explain the reason for your differences in the reflections and comments section.
   1. ***‘Summarising my career aspirations’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

This section of the conversation has been designed to fulfil two purposes.

1. Firstly, to provide the individual and their reviewer with the structure for a career conversation. By summarising the key conclusions reached earlier in the conversation these four quadrants form the basis for a discussion where performance, potential, aspirations and readiness can be discussed in turn. Whist conclusions about readiness are not an exact science (and can be open to change) they are easier to reach having first explored the other three quadrants.
2. Secondly, this format provides a summary of all of the key information required to inform succession planning.

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 10 – 30 mins*

You and your reviewer should use this section to capture and record the key elements of information from the conversation. Whilst this section can form a valuable conversation in its own right it also provides a summary that can be used to identify opportunities that fit with your aspirations and readiness. You and your reviewer can record your ratings using a tick (in your case) or a cross (for your reviewer).

The quadrants in this section follow a natural order and flow. It is recommended that you discuss and complete them in the sequence described below, finishing with current readiness.

1. Current performance – This is the quadrant to record your overall scores from the review of your goals and objectives; and the review of your behaviour. Together these two elements provide an indication of how you are performing at a given point in time.
2. Current potential – Use this quadrant to record your overall scores from the review of your current potential. Remember this rating is shaped by factors that affect your motivations in and out of work so will be subject to change over the next 6 – 12 months.
3. Current aspirations – This quadrant records the conclusions reached during the review of your career. What you are able to complete at this point will depend upon the nature of your conversation and how clear you are about your aspirations at this point in time. The more clarity you have the easier it will be to explore specific career opportunities. However, this is not a process to be rushed and you may find that at this stage you are still keen to keep your options open. For this reason, you should complete this to the best of your ability, but don’t worry if some of your responses are a little vague at this point, as this can be common experience.
4. Current readiness – It is helpful to complete this quadrant having first discussed the other three. This is the opportunity for you and your reviewer to consider how ready you are to take that next step in your career. This is not an exact science and you can always change your mind. However, it is hoped that through reviewing your performance, potential and aspirations you will be in a more informed place to make a judgement on how ready you are to take on another role.
5. Finally, it is useful at this stage to discuss with your reviewer what the implications are of your conversation and how the information summarised on this page will be used.
6. ***‘Agreeing my development goals and work objectives’***

**Applying this within your organisation**

Agreeing objectives and development plans will no doubt form part of your existing appraisal process. If you are satisfied with how this works currently you may wish to leave this unchanged in your existing documentation.

This element of the conversation has taken a deliberate move away from the detailed forms and boxes which attempt to guide people into setting SMART objectives. Whilst SMART and other objective setting techniques are recommended, they generally work better if people are trained in their use rather than provided with overly complex / arduous forms to complete.

In addition, the design has looked to combine the agreement of all goals and objectives i.e. career goals, development objectives, work objectives rather than place these in separate sections. This enables a more realistic number or objectives / goals to be agreed and ensures that development or career goals are treated with equal importance to work objectives.

For those who are looking to continue with their current approach (rather than adopting this section) we would advise that you use the following rating format:

* Partially met or meeting
* Met or meeting
* Exceeded or exceeding
* Not applicable

**Guidelines for individual and reviewer**

*Recommended time allocation for this section: 15 mins – 30 mins*

As you have progressed through the conversation you will have identified and agreed short and longer-term goals; this is the place to capture and record these. Summarised below are some tips and advice that may help with this final section.

* As an overall principle you should aim to agree and summarise the most important goals and priorities so that you have no more than 6 split between the short and longer term sections. As a rule of thumb many people would consider more than 6 too many.
* Depending upon the nature of your role or development priorities, you may want to substitute some of your longer-term goals for short term or vice versa.
* Treat your development goals with the same importance as work objectives and include a combination of each.
* Objectives need to be written in a certain way if they are to be measured and evaluated objectively. Your organisation will have a recommended approach e.g. SMART. If you and/or your reviewer are unfamiliar with this approach, then it is recommended that you are provided with support to learn and apply it.
* Finally, ensure when you finish the conversation that you and your reviewer have your next conversation scheduled and in the diary.

Your organisation will require you to discuss some other elements at this stage including statutory and mandatory training or professional registration. It is helpful for this to form part of the conversation rather than be discussed separately as this may influence the objectives you agree.

**Linking the conversation to other talent management resources**

## The Maximising Potential Conversation Tool

***Background to the tool***

This tool is designed to support individuals and their managers to have constructive conversations about potential and is based on two axes. The delivery of objectives (described as performance) on the horizontal axis and behaviour is on the vertical. Depending upon progress against objectives and how you the individual has behaved they can place themselves in one of four quadrants or an additional area in the middle of the grid.

***Links to the Review and Career Conversation***

Given objectives and behaviour are reviewed in sections 2 and 3 of the Review and Career Conversation it easy for the Maximising Potential Conversation Tool to be linked or to form an extension to this conversation.

***Reasons for using this as an extension to your conversation.***

* To support managers and individuals to think more laterally about the type of development that could help them to grow in confidence and potential
* To provide suggestions about the type of development interventions that suit the needs of the individual
* To provide managers (particularly those new to their role) with a bit more structure for certain elements of the conversation
* To support managers to find a way of having a constructive and positive conversation even if the individual is clearly struggling with delivery, their behaviour or both
* To provide clues as to how to have a more stretching conversation with people who may be ready or motivated to move into a different role

## The Talent Management Conversation Tool

***Background to the tool***

This tool is designed to support individuals and their managers to have a structured conversation about the individual’s future based upon their ratings (objectives and behaviour) within the Maximising Potential Tool and their readiness to move to another role.

Through using a version of the 9-box grid, which is called the Talent Grid Conversation Tool, this provides the opportunity to place yourself in 1 of 9 categories based upon your overall performance and readiness.

For each position within the grid the tool provides individuals and their managers with a definition of what it means to be there together with a comprehensive bank of questions to help provide further insights. In addition, development considerations, specific leadership development interventions and further possible development interventions are all provided.

***Links to the Review and Career Conversation***

Given objectives, behaviour and readiness are all measured and recorded (section 4.2) of the Review and Career Conversation it is also relatively straight forward for the Talent Conversation Tool to be linked or to form an extension of this conversation.

***Reasons for using this as an extension to your conversation.***

* To tease out and understand the variety of factors that could help or hinder an individual to further develop their potential
* To provide individuals with further insight into where their strengths and capabilities could be best suited i.e. to help them to make the right career choices
* To support managers in having a more exploratory conversation about people’s future aspirations and ambitions
* To identify the right kind of development that fits with the specific needs of the individual