Giving feedback

FEEDBACK is an essential part of the appraisal process. It helps staff to maximise their potential at different stages of the appraisal process, raise their awareness of strengths and areas of improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance. Feedback can be seen informal (for example day-day encounters between managers and staff, between peers or between colleagues). However, this is not one-way communication.

If no feedback is given what is the member of staff gaining, or indeed assuming?

They may think everything is OK, and that there are no areas for improvement. Yet staff value feedback, especially when it is given by someone credible who they respect as a role model or for their knowledge, attitude or competence. Failing to give feedback sends a non-verbal communication in itself and can lead to mixed messages and false assessment by the staff member of their own abilities, as well as a lack of trust.

Why is feedback so important?
- Feedback is important to the ongoing development of staff in healthcare settings.
- Feedback is central to developing a staff member’s competence and confidence at all stages of their career.
- Staff value feedback highly. It helps you as a manager to deal with observable behaviours and to be, timely and concrete. As a manager appraiser this one-to-one relationship enables you to give feedback with sensitivity and in private.

Giving formal feedback at Appraisal
Feedback is a normal everyday occurrence for a manager/appraiser and for specific purposes such as appraisal. If ongoing feedback has been carried out regularly, then formal feedback at appraisal should not contain any surprises for staff. It is important that as an appraiser you are fully prepared for the session.

Prior to the formal feedback session in appraisal you should:
- Ensure the staff member is where they are to receive feedback (so clearly define the propose of the feedback prior to the outset of the feedback session)
- Collect any information you need from any other people.
- Summarise the feedback and ensure you know the positive aspects and areas for improvement (with supporting evidence).
- Make sure feedback relates to previous objectives and criteria.

Setting the scene
- As with the main appraisal review, please create the appropriate environment.
- Clarify your ground rules with the staff member.
- Make notes of specific points raised.

During the formal feedback you should:
- Redefine the purpose of the feedback session and clarify structure.
- Encourage the staff member as per previous self assessment to self access their performance prior to giving feedback.
- Aim to encourage a dialog and rapport with the staff member.
• Reinforce good practice with specific examples, identify, analyse and explore potential solutions for poor performance.

After the feedback session you should:
Carry out any follow-up activities or actions. 
Make sure that opportunities for remedial work or additional learning are arranged and entered onto the Personal Development Plan.

Tips on giving feedback
Begin by asking the learner to tell you what he or she feels confident having done well, met objectives and what they would like to improve.
Follow up with your own observations of what was done well (be specific), and then outline one or two points that could help the staff member improve.

When you are giving feedback, there are a number of basic principles to keep in mind:
• Give feedback when appraising or then asked to do so or when your feedback is accepted.
• Focus the positive.
• Feedback need to be given privately whenever possible, especially more negative feedback.
• Feedback needs to be part of the overall appraisal process.
• Use skills such as rapport or mirroring, developing trust and rapport with the staff member.
• Focus on behaviour that can be changed, not personality traits.
• Talk about and describe specific behaviours, giving examples where possible and do not evaluate or assume motives.
• When giving negative feedback, suggest alternative behaviours.
• Feedback is for the recipient not the giver; be sensitive to the impact of your message.
• Think about the content of your message, the process of giving feedback and the congruence between your verbal and non-verbal messages.
• Encourage reflection, use open questions.

Barriers to giving effective feedback
• A fear of upsetting the staff member's manager's appraiser relationship.
• A fear of doing more harm than good.
• A staff member being resistant or defensive when receiving constructive criticism.
• Feedback given is too generalised and not related to specific facts or observations.
• Inconsistent feedback given from multiple sources, own the feedback.
• A lack of respect for the source of feedback.
Courageous Conversations

Courageous Conversations equip learners with models and examples of how to hold an efficient courageous conversation. Is there a difficult issue you need to approach with another member of staff?

Are you a manager needing to discuss something sensitive with a team member?

Is there a performance issue with a member of your staff that you need to tackle?

Need some advice?

Please contact the Learning and Development Team on 01253 951600