

New professional development review guidance launched

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New guidance offers a more personal and supportive approach to professional development reviews (PDRs)

News 2 mins read

The new **professional development review (PDR)** guidance builds on traditional once-a-year appraisals by introducing a more supportive, year-round approach focused on wellbeing, career growth and personal development.

The guidance promotes regular, two-way conversations between managers and staff to discuss:

- professional development
- wellbeing
- career progression
- performance management

Video Transcript

Effective professional development review (PDR) is much more than an annual form-filling exercise.

It's about having conversations throughout the year that support your

- development
- wellbeing
- career journeys

Good PDR is having

- regular catch ups that fit around your shift and flexible working patterns
- open conversations about the support and development you need
- recognition for the work you do and your achievements

- clear plans to build your skills and explore career opportunities
- a safe space where you can talk about any challenges you're facing

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Putting people first

The new PDR approach recognises that when police officers and staff feel supported, communities benefit through improved service delivery, more effective crime reduction and enhanced public safety. This approach puts people at the centre of the process – highlighting wellbeing, skills development, recognising achievements, and exploring career aspirations as key topics of regular conversations between staff and their managers.

At the heart of the new guidance is a simple but powerful idea: PDR is not a tick-box exercise – professional development isn't something that happens once a year, it's an ongoing, meaningful conversation that supports people throughout their careers. While forces can tailor the approach to suit local needs, the emphasis is on open, regular dialogue throughout the year.

Helping people stay and develop in policing

This refreshed approach comes at a time when many forces are working to improve staff retention and engagement. Research shows that meaningful conversations about career development and wellbeing help people feel more connected to their work, more motivated, and more likely to remain in policing.

By supporting people to set goals, understand their contribution, and plan for the future, PDR strengthens that connection – leading to greater job satisfaction and better outcomes for the public.

How it works

Good PDR practice includes:

- regular conversations that work around shift patterns and flexible schedules

- opportunities to discuss career goals and development needs
- recognition of personal and team achievements
- clear plans for developing skills and continuous learning
- a safe space for staff to talk about challenges and find practical solutions

Success depends on effective leadership. Senior leaders are expected to model the approach, while line managers are given the tools and support they need to lead confident, meaningful conversations.

Video Transcript

It's really important that all police forces identify and nurture the talent which exists in abundance in policing, so that we can identify people going to be the future leaders, the future specialists or people who simply want to be the very best at what they do because they care about serving the public. Meaningful professional development reviews underpin all of this.

I've also experienced PDRs – professional development reviews – myself that have felt like tick boxes, so we don't want that. What we do want is professional development reviews done properly, a real exchange of information about how things are going.

That could be about workloads. It could be about work-life balance. It could be about training needs. Of course it is about ongoing, urgent performance, but it's got to be about much more than that.

It cannot be done once a year and must be built from regular one-to-ones.

There was a time when I was a sergeant, when I experienced cancer.

But because I had a good relationship with my line manager through regular PDRs and one-to-ones, he knew exactly what's happening. He knew that I was probably pushing myself too hard to come back to work through my chemotherapy treatment, and he arranged for me to be seconded.

None of that would have happened without good PDR management and good leadership that I was lucky enough to experience.

I wouldn't be here now, having achieved what I've achieved in policing, without that sort of leadership and support through good PDRs and meaningful one-to-ones. I want everyone in the service to experience that. It will make a difference to wellbeing.

It will make a difference to our performance, our trust and productivity, and it will make sure that we keep the very best people in policing for as long as possible.

PDR is a fantastic tool because it harnesses good leadership and it harnesses our attention around improvement and talent spotting and wellbeing.

But it also, importantly, harnesses all of our efforts towards what the objectives of policing should be: cutting crime, catching criminals, keeping people safe and building trust.

National talent development strategy

The new PDR approach supports the [**national talent development strategy \(NTDS\)**](#), which aims to help all officers and staff realise their potential – whether that's progressing into new roles or growing in their current ones.

By embedding continuous learning and recognising talent, the approach helps develop future leaders and strengthen the service as a whole.

Resources and support

The goal is to embed PDR as a regular feature of professional development, nurturing talent, supporting wellbeing and building a more capable workforce better equipped to serve communities.

- [**Go to professional development review for more information and guidance.**](#)

Tags

Leadership development