

DWP briefing

Department for Work & Pensions Group

To: All Members [Guidance for Managers]

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Public and
Commercial
Services Union

Managers must focus on equality not quotas!

Performance ratings must not be changed or forced simply to fit the distribution guide

Guidance for managers

This Briefing provides guidance for managers when carrying out their responsibilities under the DWP performance management process, *People Performance*. This Briefing is a summary of DWP Policy and best practices advocated by DWP.

End-of-year rating must be fair

People Performance Procedure requires that end-of-year ratings *will always be based on a balanced consideration of the employee's personal performance over the entire period* and

- ***Decisions must be transparent, fair and reasonable*** (Procedure 9.7)
- ***There must be no surprises*** (Procedure 13)
- ***Ratings will not be changed or forced simply to fit the distribution*** (Procedure 9.3).

Do not apply quotas

DWP People Performance has a procedural requirement that ratings must be consistent with *known performance expectations* (Procedure 12.1). There is no procedural requirement that managers *must* meet the distribution ranges at the end of the year.

Managers must not co-operate with any local misuse of the guided distribution as 'box mark quotas'. Distribution ranges must not be misused as a quota for 'forcing' ratings.

Focus on equality

The end-of-year rating stage is also the starting point for setting work objectives for the period ahead. When setting Work Objectives you should focus on *special categories of employees*. DWP provides guidance in the guide for '*How to: Set Performance Expectations Consistently at the Start of the Year*'.

You must take into account circumstances that are relevant and might legitimately influence the level at which objectives should be set. For example:

Newness to the role – numerical, deadline and quality objectives should take the employee's level of experience and knowledge into account.

This includes new entrants or trainees, employees who have recently changed jobs, but may also include employees who have returned to work after long absence such as maternity leave, carers leave or prolonged sickness absence.

Disability - Managers must provide employees with equal opportunity to meet their objectives.

Some disabled people will require reasonable adjustments. Depending on the nature of the disability, one such reasonable adjustment could be adjusted work objectives. The Occupational Health Service is available to give advice.

Managers should consider and implement any other reasonable adjustments agreed, make an appropriate adjustment to the work objective on a trial basis, taking OHS advice into account, and review progress regularly.

Part-time employees - Managers must ensure that objectives for part-time staff are weighted appropriately.

Although they work fewer hours, it is impossible for part-time employees to 'pro-rata' down the time they spend attending meetings, undertaking training, reading communications, etc. so this activity will take a larger proportion of their available time than for full-time employees. In such circumstances it could be unfair to give them targets that have simply been reduced in proportion to the reduced hours that they work (i.e. it would be unfair to simply give 50% targets to someone who works 50% hours).

Older workers - Employees over age 55 are more likely to be rated *Must Improve* than other employees. They are also much more likely to be part-time. Managers must ensure that the contribution of older workers, which might be different to other employees, is identified and fully taken into account whether they are part-time or full-time.

Performance management process

Performance management is a continuous process supported by regular discussions. The end-of-year rating stage is also the starting point for the next performance year. At the start of the year Managers must explain what the performance expectations are in the employee's own work context so that *there is a shared understanding of performance expectations for the employee's peer group*. End of year ratings are awarded by assessing:

- the 'What' (delivery of objectives) and
- the 'How' (demonstration of behaviours, competencies and values)
- evaluated against *known performance expectations*, which are the standards set at the start of the year with equal weighting between 'What' and 'How'.

People Performance Myths

DWP has published new guidance for People Performance in the format of a series of 12 Myths. This new guidance is listed as '*Myths busted*' under Tools on the DWP intranet site for People Performance.

Guided not forced distribution

DWP People Performance uses *guided not forced* distribution. Guided distribution ranges provide a framework for setting *known performance expectations* or 'standards' at the start of the year and must not be misused as quotas at the end of the year. Official DWP '*myths busted*' guidance confirms:

'Myth One: The distribution of 25% in Exceeded, 65% in Achieved and 10% in Must Improve must always be met'

Truth: The distribution is a guide to support standards setting, not a quota for 'forcing' ratings. Managers award performance ratings based solely upon achievement of objectives (the 'What') and demonstration of required behaviours (the 'How') evaluated against the agreed performance standards. Nobody should have their rating changed simply to meet the guided distribution.'

Guided distribution provides a guide for standard setting not quotas for final ratings. Managers should focus on delivering fair standards for equality not unfair quotas. Every employee must be awarded the performance rating which they have achieved.

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