**How to set expectations**

Do you staff know exactly what is expected of them at work? A failure to effectively communication expectations can lead to issues with performance and disengagement at work, and can increase stress levels. Setting clear expectations relating to performance, requirements and behaviour can support effective performance, keep people focused and avoid problems in the future – doing this well is a key management responsibility. Expectations can be set through P&DR meetings, 121s and team meetings.

Managers should consider:

* Supporting new starters in particular – many organisations and teams have ways of working. New starters need to understand what these are. Effective induction can help.
* Ensure people understand *all* of their responsibilities – this is likely to go beyond the job description so be clear and document these where necessary. Ensure they understand too the boundaries of their responsibilities – what they can and can’t do and when they need to involve others or seek permission.
* Checking for understanding – the only way you can check if you have communicated clearly is to ask the individual.
* Don’t assume people have everything they need to meet these expectations. Ask them what they need.
* When expectations relate to teams and not just individuals, communicate these at the team level and make sure everyone gets the same information. Where necessary assign specific tasks within the team to keep people accountable.
* Make sure that goals are SMART – see our separate guidance on this. Document what you agree.
* Don’t just focus on tasks – setting expectations is about how people do things and their behaviour at work too. If there is a way you want something done, tell people.
* When things change re-set any expectations accordingly.
* If people aren’t performing of behaving as you expect tell them. Don’t wait until the next review meeting. Addressing issues early will benefit both parties.