

## Career Conversation Guidance for Managers

### What is the purpose of Career Conversations?

Career conversations are an opportunity to understand your team members' career aspirations, strengths, and development needs. These conversations help to build trust, increase engagement, and support growth. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to discussing careers, every discussion will be different. This guidance is designed to help you get started and provide some tips and tools for success.

### Preparing for the conversation

- Set a dedicated time for the meeting (at least 45–60 minutes).
- Let them know this is a career-focused conversation, not a conversation about performance or a goal setting discussion.
- Review any information you have from previous discussions about career aspirations.

It would be helpful if you ask your team member to reflect on:

- What they enjoy most/least in their current role.
- Skills they want to develop.
- Long-term career aspirations (2–5 years out).
- Challenges or blockers to these aspirations (see guidance for employees)



**Use a coaching mindset**

**“Listen actively. Ask more than tell. Be curious.”**

## During the conversation

### Start with a reminder about the purpose

- "Today is about you — your career aspirations and how I can support you in achieving them"

### Explore individual career aspirations

Ask open questions such as:

- "What do you enjoy most about your work?"
- "How would you like to see your career evolving or progressing over the next few years?"
- "Are there other roles or career paths you're curious about?"

### Identify strengths and gaps

- "What do you think are your core strengths?"
- "What skills or experiences do you think you need to develop to support your career aspirations?"

### Discuss opportunities

Career development is not always linear, people may be happy to stay in their current role but would like the opportunity to develop new skills or get involved in new projects. Explore aspirations and consider the range of options including the following development routes with them:

- Lateral growth (new projects, skill-building).
- Vertical growth (promotions, internal opportunities, leadership roles).
- Skill-based development (training, mentorship, certifications).
- Cross-functional work (exposure to other departments).

## Define next steps

- Agree on 2–3 concrete actions (e.g., stretch project, course, mentorship).
- Set check-ins to discuss progress and revisit the conversation regularly.
- Offer support (resources, introductions, development opportunities).

## Tips for success

- Be authentic and supportive, even if you can't offer immediate opportunities.
- Focus on skills and growth, not just roles or promotions.
- Encourage ownership — career development is a partnership.

## What to avoid

- Turning it into a conversation about performance.
- Making promises you can't keep.
- Judging their career aspirations or plans.
- Avoiding tough conversations (e.g., unrealistic goals).