



A Guide to Performance Achievement in the Health Service Executive

February 2016, v5a

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Introduction

The ambition of the HSE is to deliver the best possible care to our patients and service users. To further that ambition we are committed to developing a workforce that is dedicated to excellence, welcomes change and innovation, embraces leadership and teamwork, and maintains continuous professional development and learning.¹

The HSE recognizes that the health sector's workforce is at the core of the delivery of healthcare services². It is therefore critical that we enable a full and effective contribution from our staff to further our ambition and to facilitate their continuing learning and high performance.

Managers and leaders within the HSE have a key responsibility to facilitate and enable high performance through engaging with staff in a facilitative and supportive manner on organizational goals and staff development. This involves a culture change in line with our People Strategy³ in focusing on how we lead, manage and develop the contribution of all staff in an environment that is conducive to learning and wellbeing. Establishing standards, agreeing on what is to be done, by whom and by when, raising skills and competency levels and openly communicating with our staff are key to enabling individuals and teams to take responsibility for continuous improvement of service delivery and of their own skills, behaviours and contributions.

Our staff have a right to know what is expected of them and to participate and collaborate in developing appropriate team and personal goals so as to enable them to be motivated to perform to their potential and deliver on the HSE ambition. This requires a continuous and flexible approach that encourages regular and constructive dialogue and feedback and that supports staff to develop the skills and competencies for success in their work and in their career development.

It is the policy of the HSE *'to implement, maintain and monitor a Performance Achievement System that develops the capacity and capability of its employees, improves the performance of the organization and addresses underperformance in a timely and constructive manner'*.

This guide, which summarizes the approach to performance achievement in the HSE and complements the main guidance document already agreed, aims to support those with management responsibility for others to take full responsibility for enabling the best possible performance from staff reporting to them so that they can be confident, consistent and fair in their performance and development discussions with their staff. The Performance Achievement system reflects international trends and best practice.⁴

¹ Health Service Executive Corporate Plan 2015-2017 *Building a high quality health service for a healthier Ireland*

² Health Service Executive *National Service Plan 2016*

³ Health Services People Strategy 2015-2018 *Leaders in People Services* Health Service Executive

⁴ Deloitte – Global Human Capital Trends 2015 *Leading in the new world of work*

Why Performance Achievement?

Performance Achievement (PA) is the process used by leading organizations internationally to translate strategic plans into action. It enables them to set goals, monitor performance and provide feedback throughout the performance review cycle and to develop staff competencies and capabilities. It was introduced under the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 and its roll-out is a requirement under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (Haddington Road) and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road).

PA is a systemic approach to the management of, and engagement with, our workforce. It is the means by which managers and staff can engage to

- achieve the ambition of the HSE to deliver services of the highest quality in line with best practice
- attract, retain and develop our workforce and promote the HSE as an employer of choice
- enable effective and efficient management
- support staff to give of their best, be successful in their endeavours and develop their skills and careers within the health service

The HSE requires managers to facilitate staff to deliver high performance. While this guide is primarily concerned with the Performance Review Cycle, the PA Framework involves a number of elements in the Performance Achievement Chain that can impact on performance and provide the context within which performance and development discussions can be fruitful. Managers need to be aware of these and to attend to them in their management role.

These are:

- Recruitment
- Induction
- Probation
- Performance Review Cycle
- Development
- Reward Mechanisms
- Skills and Capability Standards
- Disciplinary and Capability Procedures

These are discussed in more detail in the following pages.

The Performance Achievement Framework

Performance does not exist in a vacuum. For successful performance, managers need to attend to a range of interconnected issues that provide the context and conditions for success. Failure to attend to these can result in less than optimal performance and can have adverse consequences for the service and the individual.

Recruitment – successful recruiting begins with being clear on the job to be done, the skills and competencies required for effective performance and the characteristics of the person to ensure a good person-job fit so that the right person is attracted to the position in the first instance. These should be set out in a job description and person specification. Failure to give sufficient attention to these matters may result in a less than optimal recruitment process and outcome.

Induction – it is critical that the new appointee is oriented to the job and the service in line with the HSE induction process and that they receive a positive impression of the HSE in those formative weeks on first taking up duty. Induction will take a number of forms, including completion of the online induction programme, but more importantly, completing a dedicated induction programme at local level. In addition to imparting information to the new staff member, it provides the opportunity to discuss the requirements of the position with the new staff member and to identify their future development needs. Induction is the first step in enabling the individual to achieve their full potential and a successful induction process can contribute to the goal of staff retention. Failing to properly induct the new staff member can result in delays in their becoming effective in their role at best, and at worst, they may leave the organization. This has costly implications in terms of service provision and the recruitment process.

Further details on Induction can be found on www.hseland.ie

Probation – new staff to the HSE are recruited following a selection process in line with the requirements of code of practice on appointment to positions within the public service⁵ and may be required to serve a period of probation. The objective of the probation is to allow an opportunity to monitor the new staff member's performance in the job and to establish if they are suitable for continued employment. The new staff member should be supported in this period to be successful, with regular and appropriate feedback and training being provided to enable them to achieve optimal performance levels. Good records should be kept by the manager to enable them to make an informed and timely decision to confirm the appointment or, where, despite the provision of support and guidance, it is clear that the new staff member is not going to achieve the required standard of performance, to terminate the employment. HR should be consulted before the latter decision is taken. Failure to properly manage the probation period can cause significant problems for all concerned.

Performance Review Cycle (PRC) – The PRC is at the heart of the PA system and it is a process that requires participation, respect, and frequent honest discussion and feedback on issues like role, responsibilities, objectives, resources, risks to success, performance and development goals. It provides agreement on, and a record of,

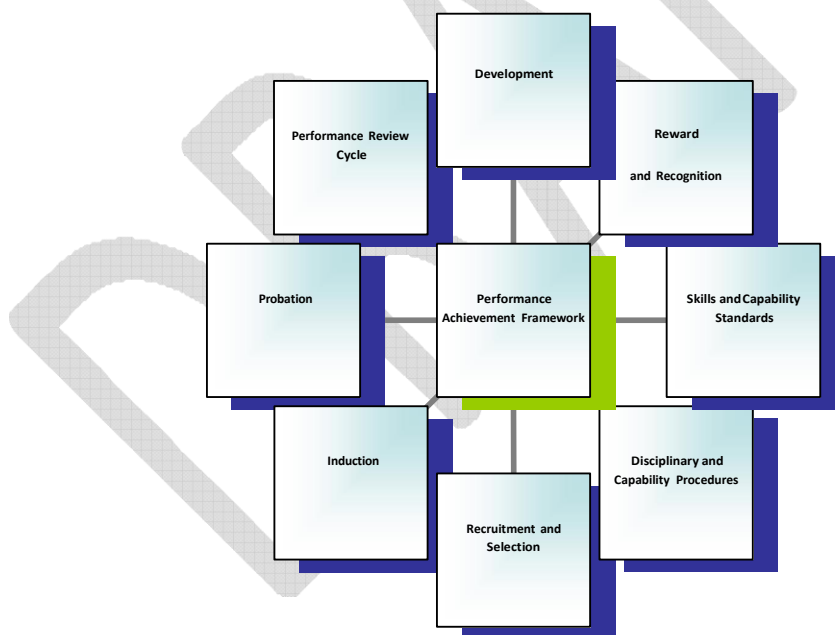
⁵ Commission for Public Service Appointments *Code of Practice – Appointments to positions in the civil service and public service*

performance objectives and expectations, including development. It also informs local and strategic staff development planning. It must be carried out on a regular and consistent basis and includes 3 key meetings between a manager and his/her direct report(s) as part of the cycle.

Further details on the performance review cycle can be found on www.hseland.ie and also www.hse.ie

Personal Development – Personal development planning is a continuous development process that enables people to make the best use of their skills and helps advance both the individual's plans and the strategic goals of the organization. It is integral to the PRC discussion and reflects the emphasis on development in service provision, service quality and personal and professional development. Personal development planning is a form of self-managed learning that enables a strategic approach whereby we can keep abreast of changes, broaden our skills and be more effective in our work. It is an open and transparent approach to development that provides a rational and coherent means for allocating scarce resources. While it is a form of self-managed learning, there is a responsibility on managers to ensure that, in so far as is possible, staff are provided with the opportunities to grow and learn within the HSE.

Performance Achievement Framework



Reward Mechanisms – the HSE aims to offer a competitive base salary structure in line with public pay policy and attractive career development opportunities for staff. Managers should be imaginative in identifying means to reward and acknowledge good performance, such as considering means to broaden and deepen the experience of staff to facilitate their career development.

Skills and Capability Standards – identifying the skills and capability standards for a position are the starting

point for both an effective job design and for specifying the type of person required for the role, thereby increasing the likelihood of their success when appointed. They inform job descriptions and person specifications in recruitment and induction discussions. They provide clarity on the standards of performance that apply throughout the period of employment and inform the assessment in probation and performance reviews. They provide a framework for identifying and addressing training and development needs.

Disciplinary and Capability Procedures – the performance achievement system provides a mechanism for a transparent management of underperformance through the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), which is a time bound process designed to address in a formal manner a performance issue. This is a process that should be implemented as required to address performance issues that are not being improved through normal formative feedback. This process is designed to be managed within a department or unit between the two parties involved. It requires constructive discussions between a manager and their direct report where performance problems are identified. It should be noted that the PIP is not a disciplinary procedure. However, if performance does not improve following the use of the PIP, consideration should then be given to moving to other corrective or supportive HR processes, e.g. EAP, Occupational Health, Disciplinary Process, etc.

Holding an effective PRC meeting

Formal meetings take place three times during the year between the manager and their direct reports, with regular and ongoing engagement taking place between the formal meetings. Below are some good practice tips for ensuring an effective meeting.

Prepare yourself and the staff member

- Schedule ample time and a private place for the discussion
- Give the staff member ample notice of the date, time and venue for the meeting
- Review appropriate documentation (Service/Business Plans, service strategies, job description/role profile etc.), taking into account goals set by the Senior Management Team, and ensure that the staff member does likewise
- Refer to the guidelines on Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Appreciate that Performance Achievement is a key management responsibility and a service to your staff

Make it a priority-time

- Have an agenda for the meeting
- Ensure that interruptions are eliminated or at least minimised

Set a tone of collaboration

- Start the discussion on a positive note and aim to put the staff member at their ease
- Encourage the staff member to fully participate in the goal-setting and review process
- Be positive
- Keep the meeting conversational and encourage the staff member to be open in the discussion

Be clear on your purpose

- Outline the purpose and benefits of the PA system
- Meeting will address performance goals for the year ahead and also development needs identified and agreed and review progress thus far
- The focus of the PA discussion is forward-looking and developmental

Review and agree performance expectations

- Discuss the job description/role profile to clarify scope

- Identify, discuss and agree goals
- Be clear about important behaviours and activities that critically affect performance, using clear and precise language and giving specific examples
- Discuss and agree standards of behaviours required
- Advise staff member that they should notify you without delay if they experience difficulties in achieving the goals agreed, both task and development
- In the interim and final meeting review progress and identify areas that may have impacted positively and negatively on performance to inform further progress
- Be constructive, focused and honest in giving feedback and seek feedback from the staff member

Discuss performance that is below, meets, and exceeds expectations

- Use language that is clear and specific; use specific examples
- Describe the performance, not personality

Review and agree development needs

- Identify and agree the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours required of the staff member in the current position and options to close any gaps
- Discuss career aspirations of the staff member and identify career planning issues and development requirements to address those aspirations.
- Options to consider include:
 - On the job learning
 - Shadowing a more experienced manager
 - Rotation
 - Secondments
 - Projects
 - Self-directed learning (such as reading journals, accessing the Learning Centre at www.hseland.ie, keeping a learning log etc.)
 - Peer support (e.g. action learning sets)
 - Formal development programmes
 - Skills coaching by you, the manager
 - More regular meetings between you and the staff member
 - Executive (external) coaching
 - Mentoring by an off-line senior manager
 - Mandatory training, e.g. health and safety
 - Team development
 - Study visits and workshops
 - Public forums
 - Further and higher education
 - Seeking mobility
- Personal Development Planning process, and learning tools and resources, available online

at www.hsland.ie

- Document any agreement by completing the PA template form or other local documentation .

Ask staff member what he/she thinks

- Allow the staff member to speak freely, without interruption, before responding to his/her comments
- Actively listen to what is being said
- Clarify any concerns the staff member may have and then address them

Agree actions to:

- Improve performance in the goals agreed
- Build on strengths
- Develop the staff member's knowledge, skills and abilities
- Actively promote and follow up on any developmental support agreed (see options list above)
- Align the work of the staff member with that of the team, department and organization

Complete documentation

- Complete documentation (provided templates or other local documentation) to record agreed goals
- Complete PDP.
- Both parties sign documents and each retain a copy.

Agree follow-up arrangements

- Schedule review meetings
- Agree process for ongoing review and dialogue

Close with encouragement

- Offer your help and support
- End on a positive note by summarizing the strengths and contribution of the staff member

Setting Goals

Goals provide the focus for action and set out what is to be achieved. The discussion within the PRC provides the opportunity for managers and their staff to agree on what is to be achieved and to adopt the strategy they are going to use in pursuit of the goals.

A goal or objective may be defined as “something which has to be accomplished, either as a point to be aimed at (a target), a plan or a project to be implemented or completed, a standard of performance to be achieved and maintained, personal development objectives to be achieved, or values to be maintained.”

Characteristics of a Good Goal.

The SMART criteria may be used to define a good objective:

S = Specific
M = Measurable
A = Achievable
R = Realistic
T = Time related

For a goal to be **Specific** it must articulate in precise form what is to be achieved within a definite timeframe. It must be clear and understandable and the individual must know what is required of them and what their accountability to the achievement of the goal is.

A goal cannot be specific unless it is also **Measurable**. There are several types of measurement systems including the following:

- Impact measures – e.g. completion of a project, number of clients availing of a service.
- Reaction measures – e.g. satisfaction survey of clients/customers.
- Time measures – e.g. meeting deadlines, clearing waiting list backlog, response times.
- Quality measures – e.g. quality assurance reports.
- Financial measures – e.g. income and expenditure.

Measurement techniques should meet the following criteria: -

- Measures should focus on results
- Individuals and teams must have control over the achievement of the goals
- Measures should be objective and observable
- Individuals and teams must have access to relevant data
- Existing measures should be used or adapted wherever possible

A measurable goal must also be **Achievable**. This needs to take into account the resources available, both human and financial, and the options that may be considered for raising standards providing a degree of stretch in performance.

Goals may be challenging but for them to be achievable they need to be **Realistic**. They need to contribute to the achievement of organizational goals as well as being aimed at developing individuals and giving them a real sense of achievement. Realistic goals are those that are within the control and capability of the individual and in line with available resources.

It may be necessary to amend goals during the year due to circumstances outside of the direct control of the individual. This flexibility is important. External factors may change one of the agreed priorities, rendering the original goals unobtainable during the performance review period in question. It is important, however, that goals are not amended unless absolutely necessary as this would discredit the process. The manager and staff member, in these circumstances, should consider what other actions may need to be taken to overcome the difficulty rather than to change direction in the first instance.

The goals agreed need to be **Time Related**. Goals should be completed within an agreed time scale. The expected time lines should be specified in the Performance Review Form. At the start of the year the goals for the year are specified and broken down into a timeline for achievement throughout the year. This will allow a focus on those aspects of the goal relevant to the time period of the review and will enable an early detection of deviation from the agreed timeline for the achievement of the overall goal.

Managing Under-Performance

Underperformance is an ongoing failure to meet the standards of performance or behaviour reasonably expected from an employee at the level at which they are employed. It is a measure of reasonable expectancy in terms of employee contribution, effort and achievement that are the required standard for the role and level within the organization. It is consistent deviation from standards associated with the role and grade.

Single incidents or very short periods of poor performance which are out of character for an individual do not fall into the category of underperformance and should be addressed through normal formative feedback and monitored to ensure that they are exceptional occurrences. Should these incidents develop into a trend then the individual's behaviour should be addressed using the process under the Performance Improvement Plan.

Unchecked underperformance impacts negatively the individual concerned, on the morale of fellow employees, the efficiency of the service and is a risk to service users. When underperformance is not addressed the performance of effective employees is liable to deteriorate and public monies are wasted.

Early identification and management of underperformance is of benefit to the employee concerned and their colleagues. When left unchecked the problem may intensify and is more difficult to address and correct as the underperformer may come to believe that they are performing to the acceptable standard.

There is significant input required from the manager to identify and address underperformance. While some managers may feel uncomfortable in addressing underperformance they must realize that by accepting low standards of performance they are licensing low standards of performance throughout the service they manage. When underperformance is addressed in a constructive and professional manner it can result in performance improvements in both the individual and team. Research has shown that early intervention is the best way once the difficulties have been identified.

In addressing underperformance managers should:

- explore the reasons with the staff member – is the cause within the control of the individual, has something happened that may be affecting how they are performing? Don't assume, rather explore and discuss.
- determine if some support is required.
- be clear on what is expected from the staff member and what can be put in place to support them.
- be very clear on what actions need to happen and by when, and the standards required.
- be clear on how progress will be reviewed and set dates for reviews.
- document discussions.

If the problem continues despite the PIP then it may be necessary to engage in other processes.

How Can I Motivate my Staff?

People join the HSE wanting to deliver the best possible service in their area of work and to develop a career within the health services. There is a responsibility on managers to ensure to the extent that they can that these aspirations are met and that staff are supported to do well and to succeed.

The Employee Survey highlighted a number of areas that can be addressed by managers to motivate and engage their staff.⁶ Various studies internationally highlight the role of the manager and the findings are consistent with the issues identified in the Employee Survey. Studies by the Institute for Employment Studies, for example, show the following:

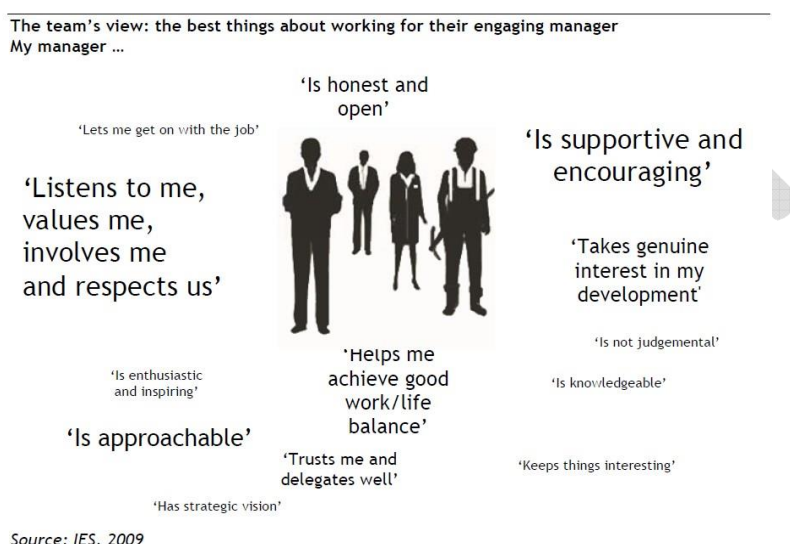


Table 1: Behaviours of engaging managers: top answers

Behaviour	No. of comments
Communicates, makes clear what's expected	36
Listens, values and involves team	32
Supportive, backs team/you up	26
Target focused	22
Shows empathy	20
Clear strategic vision	19
Shows active interest in others	19
Good leadership skills	15
Respected	15

Source: IES 2009

To motivate staff, then, managers need to show staff that they are valued, by:

- Being available to discuss their work with them, being clear on expectations, listening to

⁶ Have Your Say – The Health Services Employee Survey, 2015.

them and by giving regular feedback to them on their performance.

- Being open and creating a positive atmosphere
- Recognizing and acknowledging their successes
- Supporting them in their development and providing opportunities for them to grow

Staff respond to having meaningful work, having scope to work in their own style, understanding the impact of their work and feeling capable of achieving their goals. Managers can support each of these to energize and motivate their staff.

Managers need to think about whether their management style contributes to, or reduces, the motivation of their staff. The consequences of either are significant for the quality of service delivered to our clients.

Giving and Receiving Meaningful and Constructive Feedback

Feedback is at the heart of effective communications. Feedback may be used to strengthen a behaviour that is considered to be positive as well as to change a behaviour that is considered to be negative. Managers and Team Leaders have a responsibility to create an environment where giving and receiving feedback is considered the norm. Feedback provides a way for people to learn how they affect the world around them, and it helps them to operate more effectively within teams.

Giving feedback is based on fact and not subjective judgement. Where evidence shows that something has gone wrong, corrective action may be taken. Alternatively, where evidence shows that something is working well, action may be taken to make the best use of the opportunities the feedback has revealed. Where feedback is used to recognize achievement this can act as a powerful motivating factor.

To give effective feedback you need to be tuned in, sensitive to the person and the situation, and honest. How you give feedback can be just as important as what feedback you give.

The importance of feedback as a process for enhancing performance cannot be overestimated as feedback has a positive effect on individual, group and organizational performance. The lessons from studies on feedback conclude that:

- as individuals we like to know how we are performing
- seeking, giving and receiving feedback are integral to building and maintaining healthy professional working relationships
- to be effective feedback must be an ongoing activity
- the proactive and positive use of feedback is core to good management
- seeking, giving and receiving feedback can be improved by practice

The Employee Survey findings show that staff want the opportunity to discuss their work and to receive regular and supportive feedback.

Giving Feedback

- Feedback is an opportunity to recognize performance and reinforce good behaviours.
- Not giving feedback is a missed opportunity to develop individuals and teams.
- Negative feedback should relate to specific behaviours / performance.
- Although individuals / teams may be praised in public, negative feedback should be given in private.

Giving Feedback

- Adopt an appropriate style (supportive, direct, sensitive, descriptive, helpful etc).
- Be descriptive, not prescriptive.
- Be objective, not subjective.
- Be clear and avoid labels that are ambiguous, such as 'unprofessional'.
- Be exact in the words you use to describe the behaviour or issue. Avoid words such as

‘never’ or ‘always’ as they may represent an exaggeration of the issue and thereby invite a defensive response from the receiver.

- Avoid using judgemental language to guard against moving from constructive comment to prescriptive comment.
- Avoid giving feedback when angry.
- Make sure that the other party is ready to receive the feedback.
- Speak for yourself in giving feedback and avoid ascribing the feedback to others not present – own it.
- Direct the feedback at behaviours that are within the power of the receiver to change.
- Use “I” statements to describe how the behaviour is affecting you.
- Give timely feedback – feedback delayed is feedback denied.
- Model the way – ask for feedback on your feedback.
- Feedback is most effective when it is timely.
- Adopting an open and ongoing approach to discussing goals and performance is more likely to result in staff raising issues themselves.

Receiving Feedback

While there is an art to giving feedback, there is an art to accepting it as well. The giving and receiving of feedback is an important communication tool that fosters healthy and effective working relationships.

- Adopt an appropriate style to be receptive to the feedback (open, respectful, thoughtful etc).
- Feedback is rare. Encourage it and when it is offered you should accept it and value it.
- Be open.
- Listen carefully and actively to what is being said and do not interrupt the speaker – remember that rearranging the letters in the word ‘listen’ spells ‘silent’
- Do not be defensive.
- Clarify your understanding by seeking examples of the behaviour at issue and by summarizing your understanding of what the speaker is saying, and then check for any misunderstandings.
- Acknowledge the right of the speaker to give feedback.
- View feedback as a chance to find out how to improve your performance.
- Feedback sessions can be viewed as a learning opportunity.
- Be aware of your breathing. Receiving feedback can be uncomfortable and stressful, so remember to breathe. This will help you to stay relaxed and alert.
- You, as receiver, determine what it is you will take from the feedback and how you will use it to change any behaviours that might warrant attention. Take time to consider what has been said, particularly if it is something that might otherwise elicit a defensive response if you react immediately.

Receiving Feedback

- Feedback is rare – treat it as a gift.
- Consider what is being said carefully.
- Treat the exchange as an opportunity to build a positive working relationship.

How Can I Reward Good Performance?

We should remember that employment is a mutually beneficial process where individuals develop skills and perform a particular role for the organization, and in return they are rewarded through their salary and other benefits. In addition there are a range of non-financial rewards that managers can offer to acknowledge excellent performance, such as opportunities to gain wider experience that will help the individual to grow and to prepare them for advancement within the HSE. In addition the HSE supports development through access to training and development programmes and support for further education in certain circumstances. Adopting a broad view, there are many ways in which good performance by staff can be acknowledged.

Appendix 1 – Sample Performance Review Form



Féidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Section 1: LINE MANAGER SECTION (to be completed by Manager and agreed with individual)	
MANAGERNAME:	TITLE:
REVIEW PERIOD COVERED FROM:	TO:
Overall Goals:	
Section 2: INDIVIDUAL SECTION (To be completed by Individual and agreed with Line Manager)	
INDIVIDUALNAME:	TITLE:

Key Objectives

No.	Description	Performance Indicators	Delivery date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
Training / Development Agreed Action			
Continuous Professional Development Objectives			
Signature LineManager:		Signature Individual:	
Date:		Date:	



Ref. PM COR RM 2015