

Leadership and Management

Appraisals 2



An appraisal process needs to be well organised and staff require plenty of notice in preparation for their meeting. If your appraisal process is not well organised it is easy to fall into pitfalls that prevent or impact effectiveness. There are many reasons why nursery leaders find it difficult conducting appraisals with practitioners. Some of these include:

- **Time** – in a busy nursery full of children there is often little time to complete appraisal forms and to sit and have a meeting afterwards to discuss.
- **Ratio's** – Practitioners are essential to the workforce and need to be within the room and counted in ratio. To be in ratio and in a meeting, it would mean arranging additional cover, which can come at a cost.
- **Sickness** – Meetings may need to be cancelled due to staff sickness.
- **Upset** – Occasionally appraisals can cause upset for practitioners if they take a certain comment to heart. This can be difficult to overcome and can quickly lead to low morale in the setting which can cause problems in staff performance.
- **Lack of evidence** – A good appraisal should include evidence of a practitioner's performance to give some good points for discussion during the appraisal period, however, due to the nature of childcare there is often a lack of evidence that can be used. There are no figures or data which can indicate how efficiently a person is performing.

TASK 1

With a colleague reflect on the list above. Do any of the common barriers sound familiar? if so, how do you currently manage this?

Below are some tips to help you overcome barriers:

- **Make the most of the spare practitioners** – Plan to try and complete appraisals during quieter weeks such as half terms or over the summer period when numbers are low.
- **Use the ‘feedback burger’ method** – This means starting the session off on a positive note, discuss and explore areas for development in the middle of the appraisal and then finally end on a positive note. Using this method for feedback offers less of a risk of damaging morale and causing upset.
- **Be constructive** – Appraisals are not a time to deal with disciplinary matters or to tell someone all the things you dislike about their practice. Keep it constructive and have a purpose or goal in mind (Read SMART targets Q cards for further support with this).
- **Supervisions** – Hold regular supervisions to build up some evidence of a practitioner’s thoughts, feelings, and performance levels (Read Supervision Q cards for further support with this).
- **Peer to peer observations** – Try to ensure these happen on a regular basis, these will then offer evidence during the appraisal meeting.

For a valuable and impactful appraisal it is important that you consider the following suggestions in list below:

- Have a clear policy in place, that is understood by all.
- Plan in advance and ensure you can go somewhere and not be disturbed.
- Ensure the phone is answered by other staff members and interruption only happens in an emergency.
- Use well-designed, easy to use and clear forms.
- Access training if available to help understand the appraisal process.
- Ask for feedback on your appraisals – do you have a proforma sheet included for practitioners to rate their appraisal process with you?
- Staff being anxious/fearful of the appraisal process - setting the tone of the appraisal process, ensuring that staff recognise it as a supportive and effective process that they should welcome.
- Privacy - Do you ensure the physical environment is laid out to allow the practitioner to express feelings and worries? – are you mindful about confidentiality issues? Think about light, fresh air, comfort, and space.

TASK 2

Reflect on the list above. Are there any suggestions that you feel you need to develop in your own setting to ensure the positive benefits of an effective appraisal process?

Consider the questions below:

- Do you set appraisal dates in advance, giving yourself and the practitioner time to reflect and complete and necessary paperwork? (The paperwork should act as a prompt for reflection).
- Do you prioritise what needs to be discussed and encourage practitioners to do the same?
- Do you specify what the session might include and conversations intended to be had?
- Do you review the previous appraisal and supervision records and note items and actions that need following up.
- Do you discuss timeliness and any additional support that may be needed?

Further reading:

[Using Appraisals in Early Years Settings \(firstdiscoverers.co.uk\)](http://firstdiscoverers.co.uk)