



Good Conversations Guide

Supporting good conversations across our
workforce in Greater Manchester

Overview

This Good Conversations Guide is designed to support a different conversation between team members and their manager.

It is more important than ever that we are all having good and meaningful conversations.

This guide offers a fresh approach to Personal Development Reviews (PDRs)/appraisal processes and provides a structure to support regular 1:1, quarterly conversations and annual reviews. Your organisation may adopt it in full or utilise a number of its principles and resources. Please make sure you are aware of your organisation's policy first.

This guide will support both individuals and managers to have good conversations, which are focused on what is important to individuals and support them in their role.



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Good conversations:

Let's talk about you and what you want to talk about

A good conversation is focused on you as an individual and the issues that matter to you. It should cover the person as a whole; your wellbeing, your experience of work, your development, your successes and where you want to improve.

A good conversation is not a tick box exercise, but a meaningful way of supporting individuals to develop – and be at their best.

A good conversation is just that – a two-way conversation where team members are listened to by their managers, and also have the opportunity to receive feedback.

A good conversation is an ongoing process – that you build on throughout the year, coming back to reflect on key themes and progress.

These conversations provide a great opportunity to explore your organisation's and/or team's objectives and the part you play in achieving these.



How often to have a conversation

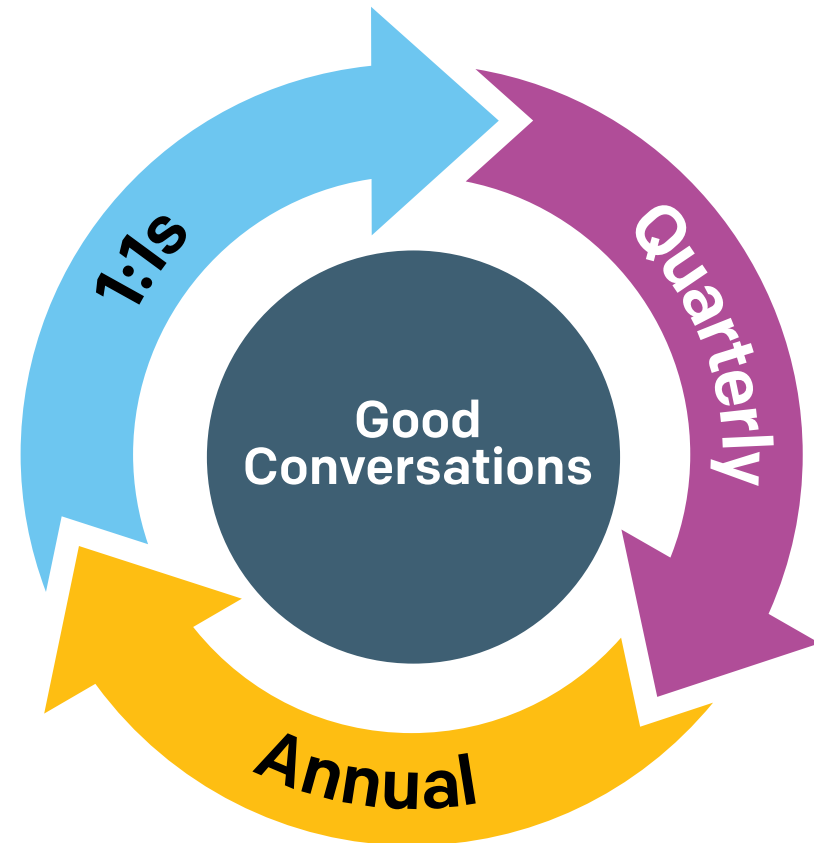
Some people prefer very regular conversations with their manager and others not as frequently. This guide is designed to be flexible to meet your needs, but we would encourage you to have:

- **1:1 conversations** – as regularly as you and your manager feel is appropriate. This may be different for different people, anything from weekly to once a month.
- **Quarterly conversations** – three per year (in the fourth quarter you have your annual review).
- **Annual review** – once per year.

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Group supervisions

In your organisation it might be common practice to do team or group supervision. This is particularly useful where a few individuals are working on a project collectively or may all be dealing with the same vulnerable person – it can provide a good opportunity to embed and share good practice and discuss lessons learned. Team or group supervision can form part of your regular meetings with your manager. We would encourage you to have quarterly conversations and annual reviews on a 1:1 basis with your manager so that these conversations can be focused on you and what you want to talk about, as well as providing an opportunity for your manager to give you some individual feedback.



Making time to have good conversations

Often finding or making the time to have regular conversations can be a challenge; with busy workloads and back to back meetings, it is difficult to ensure we commit to regular catch ups.



Here are some suggestions for ways we can all make sure we are making the time for good conversations:

- Plan ahead and agree a time that works for you and your manager and book in all your conversations throughout the year well in advance.
- Agree a rhythm that works for you both and is realistic to commit to.
- Preparing in advance is an important part of having a good conversation – pencil time in your diary to prepare and make sure you get the most from your conversation.

Building trust with effective conversations

Communication is always more effective face-to-face, so when this is possible try to agree a time and place that you both feel comfortable with. You could consider using any agreed flexible working arrangements which will help you agree a convenient and appropriate location. This will help maintain great communication and continue to build trust.

Examples of how to arrange your meeting:

- Why not take advantage of the opportunity if you're working on the same site to have a face-to-face conversation in the office? Either, find a room you can book or somewhere more informal. It is up to you to choose the space that is right for you both to have the conversation you need, safely and confidentially.
- Head outside for a walking conversation or even a standing conversation – in a local green space.
- If schedules and other factors do not allow this then you could try an online meeting at a time when you feel at your best and to suit your work/life balance. It's best to try and ensure this is not a regular occurrence and take advantage of time together in person.

Planning for your conversation

These conversations are about you and this is your opportunity to share and to shine.

- What is important to you and what do you want to talk about?
- Think about your wellbeing and if it is where it needs to be to enable you to perform to your best. You might find it helpful to take the *Greater Manchester Wellbeing Quiz* from the *Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit*.
- Think about your past, present and future.
- You may want to speak with your colleagues to hear their reflections and feedback. Access the handy *360 tool* below.
- Take time to focus on your aspirations and development.
- Use the *Discussion Wheel* tool below to help your thinking – particularly for your quarterly conversation and annual review.
- Think about what you set out to achieve and what your goals are going forward.

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Resources:

[Greater Manchester Wellbeing Quiz](#)

[Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit](#)

[360 tool](#)

[Discussion Wheel](#)



Your 1:1s

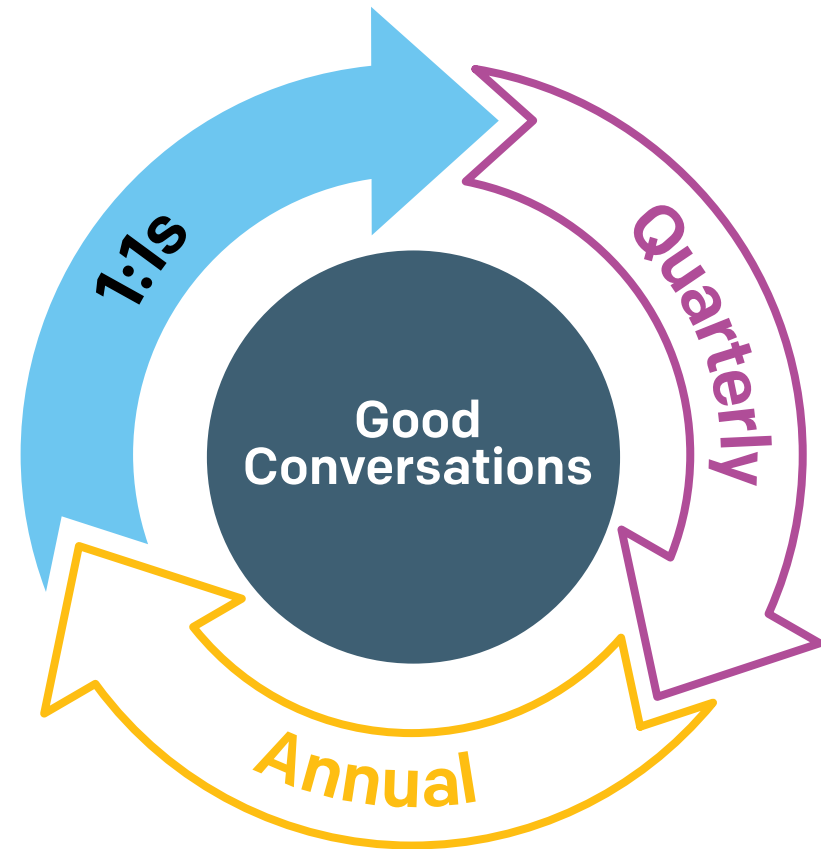
This is your opportunity to:

- Catch up with your manager on the things that are important to you.
- Provide an update on your programme of work.
- Talk about your wellbeing, how you're doing and any support and/or development you need.
- Review what has gone well and what you have found challenging.
- Receive support on any issues as and when they happen.
- Give and receive feedback with your manager.

Some organisations can refer to 1:1s as other things such as 'supervisions'.

Recording your 1:1

You do not need to keep a formal record of 1:1 conversations, but it is good practice to record 1:1's and quarterly reviews especially when the person may be new to the organisation and under probation. Don't forget to agree some actions for your next meeting and keep a note of these. Click [here](#) to access our 1:1 conversation template which you may like to capture notes on. Always check with your organisation/employer on how they suggest you record your conversations.



Your quarterly conversations

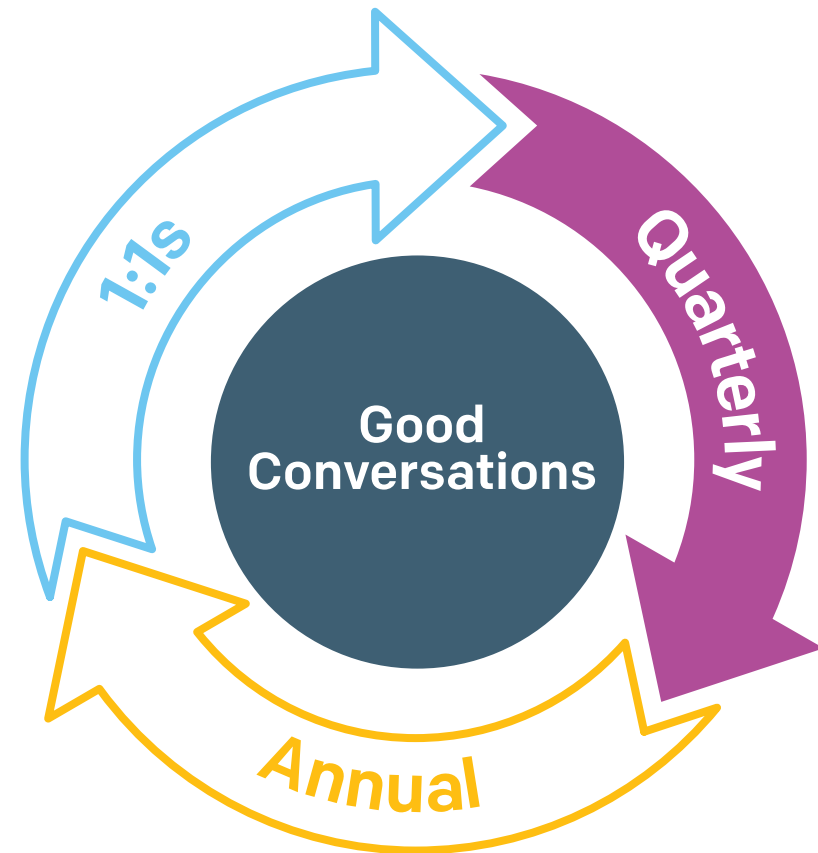
This is your opportunity to:

- Have a more in-depth conversation with your manager about how things are going by using all the themes included in this guide to help frame your conversation.
- Review the last three months.
- Scope any skills development you feel you would benefit from.
- Celebrate what has gone well and what you did that made it a success.
- Think about what you could do differently.
- Refocus what you want to achieve for the next three months.

Recording your quarterly conversation

Click [here](#) to access our quarterly conversation template which we would encourage you to complete to capture your conversation. But first check with your organisation/ employer if there is a template they would like you to use.

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Your annual review

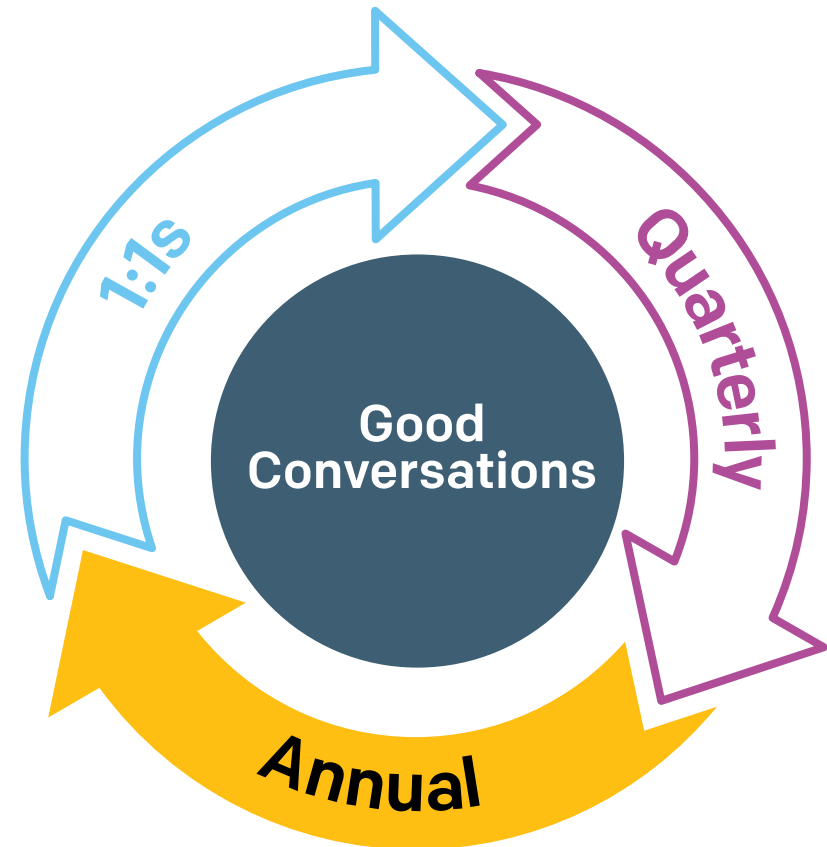
This is your opportunity to:

- Review the last year and assess progress against your objectives.
- Celebrate what has gone well and what you did that made it a success.
- Think about what you could do differently.
- Refocus your priorities for the next three months and for the following year.
- Agree any skills and development opportunities and any actions required to progress these.
- Discuss if you have met your objectives, completed your statutory and mandatory training requirements and where applicable, if you have met your increment pay progression.



Recording your annual conversation

Click [here](#) to access our annual review template which you need to complete with your manager to capture your conversation. But first check with your organisation/employer if there is a template they would like you to use.



Keeping a record of your quarterly conversations and annual reviews

You and your manager will need to agree on how to make and retain a shared record of your quarterly conversations and annual reviews. We would encourage recording the conversation in our **quarterly conversation** and **annual review** templates or your organisation/employer may have their own template.

It's a good idea to refer back to the record you made for any previous conversations you had with your manager.



Keep an ongoing record of **'What I want to achieve'** and revisit it at each quarterly conversation and annual review.

Remember to revisit your **Discussion Wheel** at each quarterly conversation to review progress and how you are feeling.



Don't forget – your role may require you to maintain your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and professional portfolio.



Conversation themes

My wellbeing

My development and aspirations

My achievements

My challenges

About me and my role

My values and behaviours

Flexible working

Compassion and inclusion

My feedback and impact

For each of the conversation themes there are some questions for you to reflect on with your manager during your conversation. These are designed to be discussion prompts, you may not feel you need to cover them all. Remember, it is a great time to hear your manager's feedback as well.

We would recommend discussing the following themes at your meetings:

- **Your 1:1s** – my wellbeing, my development and aspirations, my achievements, and my challenges.
- **Your quarterly conversations** – all the themes.
- **Your annual review** – all the themes.

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Wellbeing

- Share how you are feeling.
- Share how you feel about your work/life balance.
- Share what helps you to stay well.
- Share what you find challenging.
- Share what you have learnt from the above and how you will maintain good wellbeing over the coming months/year.



My development and aspirations

- Share when you have had access to the development opportunities you need to do your job well.
- Share when your personal development and future career aspirations have been listened to and encouraged at work.
- Share your thoughts about your opportunities to learn and grow in the last year. What did you learn? What can you share?
- Share your thoughts about how you would like to learn and grow over the coming months/year.



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*You might find it helpful to have a read of our [Wellbeing Toolkit](#) when thinking about your wellbeing.

The [Wellbeing Review](#) aims to help you have better conversations with your manager or team leader looking at things that you can do or change to support and improve your wellbeing.

My achievements

- Share what you are most proud of at work.
- Share a story about your most enjoyable experience at work.
- Share what you hope to achieve in the coming year.



My challenges

- Share what challenges you most in your role.
- Share a story about something you have found challenging and how you would do things differently next time.
- Share what gets in the way of you performing at your best.



My values and behaviours

- Share what values and behaviours are important to you.
- Share how you feel your personal values complement the aspirations of your team and organisation.
- Share when your goals and priorities at work have aligned with what is important to you.



About me and my role

- Share what a good day looks like at work for you.
- Share what is important to you at work.
- Share something that you are grateful for at work.
- Share what have you learnt about yourself in the last quarter/year.
- Share how you think others would describe working with you.
- Share what you do well.
- Share how you know if you are doing a great job.



Flexible working

- Share how you feel flexible working is working for you.
- Share what else you might need to help you manage your work/home life balance effectively?
- Consider our **flexible working** conversation starter ahead of your conversation. It might also be useful looking at the **Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit's** "Hybrid working – a practical way to support our new ways of working" in the "Looking after yourself" section.



Compassion and inclusion

- Share how you feel valued by your team.
- Share whether you feel included in the team.
- Share any particular needs or support that you might have, and whether they are being met.
- Share where you feel you are being supported compassionately by your colleagues and manager.



My feedback and impact

- Share feedback you have received at work.
- Share a story about when you have received recognition and positive praise about your performance at work.
- Share when your feedback or ideas at work have been engaged with and acted upon.
- Share when you have raised a concern about something troubling you at work.
- Share your thoughts about the difference you have made in the last year/quarter.
- Share when your ideas and contributions have been valued and listened to at work.
- Share a story of how your work contributes to our/your purpose and meaning.



Maintaining energy and motivation

To help maintain energy and motivation check out [Finding your motivation](#) in the "Looking after yourself" section of the [Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit](#).



What I want to achieve

After talking through the conversation themes, at each quarterly conversation and annual review, discuss and agree with your manager what your priorities and objectives are for the next three months.

Don't forget to agree:

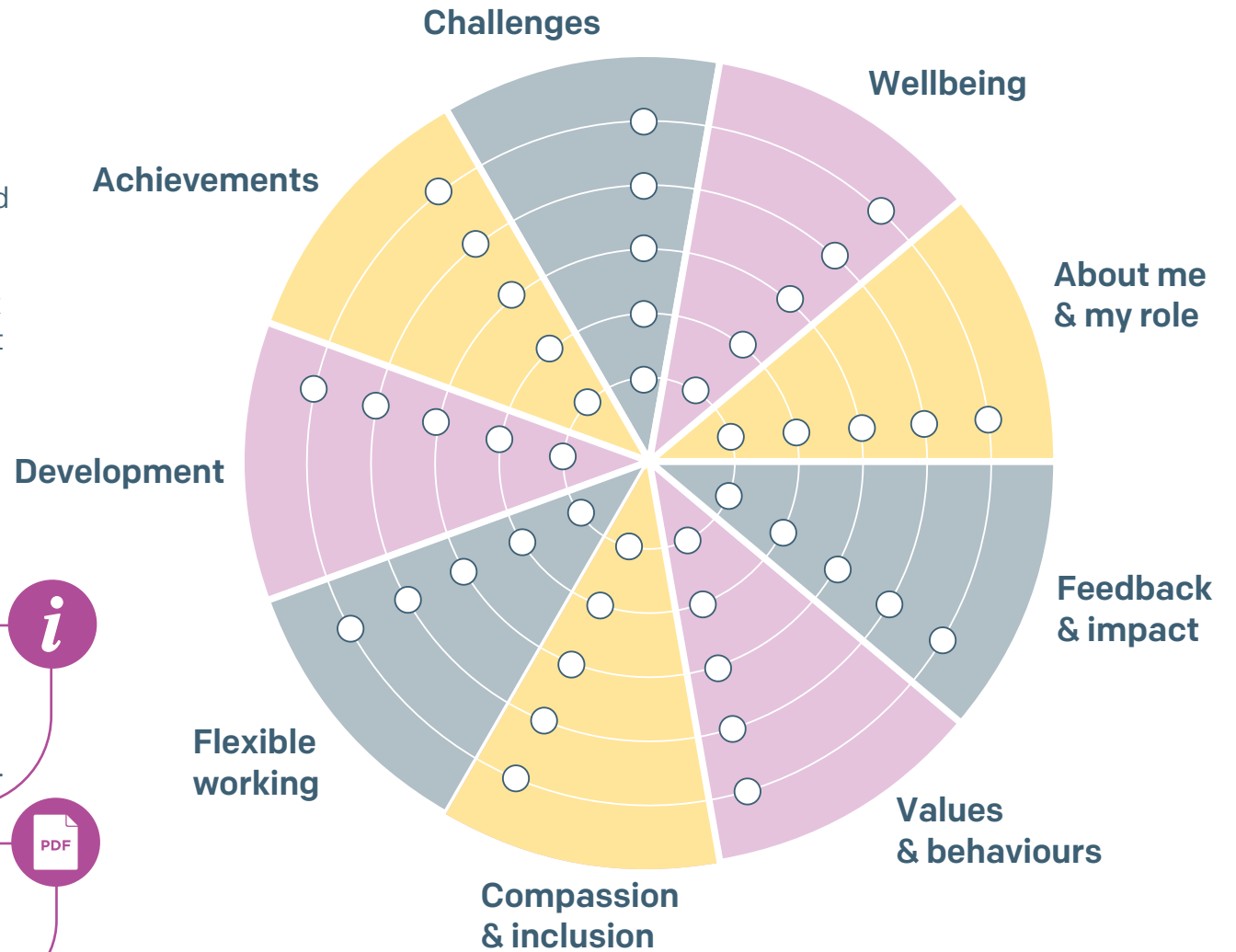
- Any actions to take this forward.
- The timescales.
- When you are going to review your progress.

It is really important you keep a record of these. [Click here](#) to access our 'What I want to achieve' template.



Discussion Wheel

We've created this Discussion Wheel to help you prepare for your conversations. Rate each section of the wheel from 0-5 in terms of your satisfaction (0 is low and at the centre of the wheel, whilst 5 is high and is on the outside edge of the wheel) – have it with you to share at your conversation. It might also help in your discussion to talk about what level you could get to and what actions might help achieve this.



i Update and review your **Discussion Wheel** at each quarterly conversation and again at your annual review, so you can see progress and changes over time.

PDF Click [here](#) to download a copy you can complete and save on your computer/print.

Support for managers

Top tips

During the conversation keep in mind:

- It is key your team members get to lead the conversation about what is important to them, as well as you providing updates and feedback.
- Adopting coaching techniques as a manager can provide a great opportunity to empower your team and support them to unlock their potential. By using powerful questions, you and your team can get the most from your conversations. Read our handy one-page guide – [Coaching techniques to support conversations](#).
- Understand and recognise when to listen, to step in, and to offer guidance.
- Commit to regular conversations – try not to cancel or change at the last minute where possible.
- The conversations need to be adaptable to the needs at the time.
- Recognise your team member's successes and where they are asking for your support.
- Familiarise yourself with information on access to your organisation's training and development opportunities.
- When having good conversations, it's important to make sure that wellbeing is at the heart of your discussions. See page 22.
- Don't forget staff who are currently not in work and consider how you are keeping in touch with them.
- Everyone has had a different career path with a diverse range of life experiences both at home and work – are there any key achievements to note from recent events or changes e.g. redeployments and/or secondments? Are there particular things as a manager you need to be paying attention to? Remember change can have a different effect on people so try to look at a wide range of different support options you can offer/discuss with colleagues as their manager.

Feeling safe in conversations

We know psychological safety is key to great teamwork – and this is also true when having good conversations. Creating a safe space is a crucial part of the preparation and thought needed for good conversations. This is especially true if we are working flexibly where some of these meetings might be done online.

It's important to create this safety for team members to feel that they are able to be honest and open in a conversation, and is sustained through the trust that you build and demonstrate over time.

You may want to think about the following tips to help build good psychological safety with your team:

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- Reflect on how you approach conversations with team members, and are open to listening to what they have to say.
- Equally important is how you respond to the discussions, and whether you do what you have discussed in your conversations – do you see through the actions you have agreed?
- And finally, how do you as a manager share your own psychological safety with your team, so they can see/hear you role modelling what you are asking them to do.

These are practical tips to build these relationships with your team on a day to day basis, and the foundations of trust to have good conversations.



Wellbeing

Good wellbeing is when we are able to be at our best, both at work and home. It is something that is personal to the individual and we all need something different to maintain good wellbeing for ourselves, depending on our circumstances, norms, and behaviours.

As working practices have evolved, the impact on our work and our home lives has seen a change. We need to adapt to a new way of maintaining good wellbeing with a healthy and effective work life balance. Change at work and home can lead to fatigue, or worse if we are not aware of how this might affect us - and more importantly, how we can prevent it. It is critical that we continue to pay conscious attention to our wellbeing, and that of our teams, to remain at our best.



When having good conversations, it's important to make sure that wellbeing is at the heart of your discussions.

Our **Wellbeing Toolkit** looks at how we help colleagues to look after themselves, to support colleagues and practical links and tools to find help when needed. There is a dedicated section for managers and team leaders to help build wellbeing into your working practice, and this is supported by practical guides that you may want to refer to.

There is also a template of a **Wellbeing Review** that you can keep as a record to help you understand how to help build the support for a great working environment.



Resources to support and record your conversations

These resources have been created to support your conversations. Your organisation/employer may already have a range of resources and policies for you to use – we would encourage you to check with your employer first.

My Good Conversation – 1:1

This is a useful template to keep a note of your conversation. You do not need to use this template if you and your manager have other ways of keeping a record of your conversation.

PDF

Discussion Wheel

Complete this in advance of each quarterly and annual conversation and share it with your manager to support your conversation and measure progress and changes over time.

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My Good Conversation – Quarterly Conversation

Use this template to keep a note of your quarterly conversation. Record your conversation and share with your manager via email afterwards so you both have a copy.

PDF

Feedback tool

It can be great to get feedback ahead of your quarterly conversations and annual review from the people you work with.

PDF

My Good Conversation – Annual Review

Here you'll find a template to keep a note of your conversation. Record your conversation and share via email afterwards so you both have a record.

PDF

What I want to achieve

Use this resource to keep an ongoing record of your priorities and goals, your development and the support you need to achieve these. Review and update at each quarterly conversation and annual review. Start a new record each year.

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Resources to support your wellbeing

These resources have been created to support you and your colleague's health and wellbeing.



The Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit

This toolkit is now in its third year of production, and it continues to have an important role to play in supporting the wellbeing of our health and care workforce in Greater Manchester.

Wellbeing Review

The wellbeing review aims to help you have better conversations with your manager or team leader. It looks at things that you can do or change to help you feel well, and helps your manager understand if there are things that they can support you with to improve your wellbeing.

Having good wellbeing conversations as a manager

Tips and suggestions for maintaining regular and constructive wellbeing conversations with colleagues.

How can flexible working help you

A reminder of the questions you need to ask yourself when trying to maintain good wellbeing.

What's in your control

Research shows that when we shift our focus to what we can control, we see meaningful and lasting differences in our wellbeing, health, and performance. Try this exercise to help with that focus shift.

Finding your motivation

You may have heard of the Japanese concept of Ikigai – which simply means 'your reason for being'. Many of us have had to work and think differently recently, and this may have led us to think about our direction or purpose – both in work and at home. This simple tool can help to clarify the things that motivate us and focus on how to develop those things that give us our sense of purpose.

Keep the conversation going

Thank you for taking the time to read this Good Conversation Guide.

The importance of good conversations between you and your manager is key to helping colleagues feel supported; to feeling a sense of belonging; supporting you to be the best you can be and having the opportunity for you to grow and develop for your future.

Please remember to refer back to this guide as and when you need it – it is so important that we keep the conversation going.

If you have any questions relating to this guide please email gmhscp.gmworkingtogether@nhs.net. You'll need to raise specific queries with your manager/organisation/employer.



This guide is an open resource and we encourage you to share it.

We ask that when sharing it directly with colleagues or as a link on your website, please acknowledge **NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care 2023**.

For more information, email: gmhscp.gmworkingtogether@nhs.net

