

22 July 2016

Subject

PDP review – IMP Element

Brief for

DAC Ops

Author

DAC Cohen-Hatton

Background

1. The DIOT policy is currently under review, which includes guidance on the issue of IMP points. Parallel to this, DAC Cohen-Hatton is reviewing the use of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) system. Early engagement with the ORT group provided agreement that this guidance would contain a section on the issuing of IMP points and the development of associated PDPs.
2. This brief report is intended to make suggestions for improvement to the current process and will be supported by a presentation at DAC Ops in July 2016.

Current Position

3. The purpose of IMP points is to identify opportunities to develop staff in a meaningful way as a result of feedback on their performance at operational incidents. Secondly, data recorded via the IMP database is used to identify trends in operational performance, which is then used to direct training via operational news.
4. Key challenges include:
 - a. Staff consultation within the review of PDPs has suggested that IMP points are poorly received by personnel (see PDP review report for further detail). This can make the process of meaningful learning challenging.
 - b. The current guidelines mean that IMP points do not need to be agreed with the recipient, only that comments “should be discussed with the recipient prior to recording”. Feedback suggests this current way of working can leave the recipient feeling challenged and “against the system” in some cases. Many recipients dismiss the award and engagement is lost. Although an informal disagreement process is in place, it is seldom used.
 - c. Consultation has highlighted occasions where the IMP point Author has placed individuals on the IMP database without carrying out any discussion, causing resentment and mistrust.
 - d. Development points are shown in red which looks punitive and discourages the recipient. This colour remains even after they have been acknowledged by the recipient and line manager.
 - e. The IMP process is a useful and worthwhile aide to the Brigades monitoring strategies. The organisational comments are invaluable, however many station based personnel rarely place comments on the IMP about equipment. Feedback suggests there is a perception that they are not listened too, possibly due to the lack of feedback received once added to

system.

- f. Some feedback suggests that some find the PRC process daunting, partly because of the fear associated with the public awarding of IMP points. There is a danger that this may lead to PRC participants not giving an exact version of events in order to avoid, what is perceived to be, punitive actions. This in turn means that the PRC process may miss valuable learning opportunities.

Recommendations

5. Some small changes to the guidance for the issuing of IMP points in the revised DIOT process are suggested that are aimed at mitigating some of these issues. These revisions should also be reflected in the PDP guidance, which is currently under review. This would ensure that both the issuing of points and the associated development through the PDP process leads to meaningful learning.

Stage one – Discussion points, fire-ground support and mentoring

6. The recently revised PRC process recognises the value in discussion points. This might encompass something that should be considered in the future, or that could have been done differently, or minor performance issues. These are areas that are unlikely to merit a formal development plan that would be required through the use of a PDP.
7. In addition, the new style Incident Command courses are based on a coaching and mentoring principle. The backbone of this is creating an open and safe learning environment. Such an environment must be free from criticism. Learning is discussed in a constructive way, with the coach assisting the individual in coming to a particular conclusion. This aids meaningful learning in a positive way.
8. Both of these principles of discussion points, and coaching/mentoring are not currently reflected in the IMP process. Some small revisions would mean that they could easily be included:
 - Inclusion of guidance on ‘discussion points’ in the revised DIOT policy and PDP guidance. This will encourage professional discussion on minor issues or areas that have been coached.
 - This should not be recorded on the IMP system as a development point attributed to an individual.
 - Where appropriate, areas of discussion could be (although not a requirement) recorded as organisational learning in order for trends to be identified. This should not be against an individual's personal record and should not generate a PDP.

Stage two – Development points and a formal professional learning discussion

9. In the case of issues that warrant further formal and meaningful development, the author may wish to record a development point.
10. Scenes of operations are often highly charged and reactive environments. To constructively deal with developmental issues, a more structured and familiar environment is required. It is far more likely that the recipient will be more open to learning if this approach is adopted. It also negates personal opinion and demands facts and clarity around fire-ground observations.
11. Should the practice identified meet the criteria for issuing formal IMP development points, the process should be as follows:
 - Clear criteria for performance issues that warrant a development point should be created, and should be reserved for an action that warrants formal development activity that can be written up in a SMART way.
 - The author discusses that they have identified a potential development area and or the professional discussion points could not be agreed on.
 - The author arranges a meeting with the recipient and their line manager within 14 days.
 - The author, recipient and recipient's line manager are able to discuss the points raised constructively and away from the area of operations and the pressure and emotion of the situation. This will allow for reflection and for the author and recipient to discuss candidly and constructively the findings of the author.

- The outcome of this can then be recorded as a development point with all parties formulating a bespoke PDP to best meet the requirements of the recipient. Or if appropriate it can also then be recorded as a professional discussion.
- If a recipient is on a Development programme then the author should report their findings to the candidates assessor. This can then be factored into the recipients ongoing development programme and allows more targeting around development areas. In line with the PDP suggestions, it would be appropriate to make Development a safe place in terms of the IMP system. All issues that relate to an individual on development should therefore be fed back and recorded via the candidates EPDR rather than issuing IMP points that generate separate PDPs.
- Guidance outlining this process should be considered in both the revised DIOT policy and the PDP guidance currently under development.

Conclusion

12. The IMP system is an invaluable means of gathering information for trend analysis. In conjunction with other Brigade systems we have the ability to make development meaningful and to engage positively with staff. Most people welcome meaningful development and are keen to learn. Some small revisions to current processes can help to improve the investment in the development of staff, and encourage positive working relationships. The Leadership model and our Safer together inclusion strategy, offer the perfect vehicle to drive positive change.

Next steps

- Consultation with ORT
- Consultation with Development and Training
- Development of suggested wording for the DIOT review to be provided
- Development of suggested wording for the PDP guidance by the next DAC Ops.