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Subject

Personal Development Plans Review

Brief for

Director of Safety and Assurance

Author

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Background

1. DAC Cohen-Hatton is currently leading a review of current practices associated with Personal Development Plans (PDPs), on behalf of DAC Ops and Development and Training.
2. A comprehensive exercise in sampling existing PDPs and staff engagement identified several areas for concern:
 - a. There is currently no available guidance in relation to the issuing, development and review of PDPs.
 - b. PDPs are rarely used for development. Over 90% of the PDPs issued in 2015-16 related to some element of underperformance.
 - c. There are significant negative connotations with the use of PDPs. The receipt of a PDP was usually perceived to be punitive and as a result people are unlikely to see the development as meaningful, or engage in it fully.
 - d. PDPs are often used in association with Discipline cases without a clear link to development activity which may serve to reinforce the punitive associations
 - e. IMP development points and associated PDP were, without exception (during consultation) perceived to be punitive, and demoralising.
 - f. Development points being highlighted in red where other points are recorded in green which further serves to reinforce the negative associations.
 - g. Follow up questioning indicated that people who had received a PDP from an IMP point felt their receipt had a negative impact on their future operational performance.
 - h. Managers felt pressured to issue PDP's when they thought it was not appropriate.
 - i. PDPs are used inconsistently.
 - j. Potential over use of the PDP system for individuals
 - k. Use of PDPs for overly simple performance issues without a clear link to meaningful development, which could be dealt with by meaningful discussion.
 - l. Disproportionate allocation of PDPs for under-represented groups
 - m. Disproportionate allocation of PDPs for certain operational roles, with WMs and SMs attracting 70% of all PDPs generated as a result of negative IMP points.
 - n. PDPs generated by PDRs are overly onerous
3. The current use of PDPs is considered my most to be punitive, and therefore meaningful engagement is difficult to elicit. Staff engagement found repeated examples of this straining relationships between staff and managers and it currently is not conducive to development. There is also little evidence of consistency in the use of PDPs which may contribute to the negative stigma currently associated with the use of PDPs.
4. The PDP concept should be positive and engaging. It should represent commitment from managers to take agreed action to support the development of staff. It should be a vehicle of best

practice and represent a level of development that all staff should expect. In order to move to this position so investment in the process is needed, along with a review of the current guidance. This should also provide a vehicle for cultural change, moving to people focused management practices.

The vision – a catalyst to cultural change

Lifelong learning logs

5. The introduction of a system that provides a lifelong learning log could encompass a holistic plan for development, as well as recognising maintenance of skills and development to future roles. There is currently no repository to recognise staff accomplishments, qualifications and accredited prior learning.
6. It is proposed that the current Personal Development Record system is adapted to capture:
 - a. Development activity when moving from development to competent within role
 - b. Development activity relating to maintenance of skills (when in the competent phase)
 - c. Development activity relating to career progression
7. This activity would link to both the achieving potential model, as well as the proposed revisions to the appraisal system and would put meaningful development at the heart of the systems.
8. Development activity and evidence could be logged in accordance with the following themes:
 - a. **Training** – courses can be automatically added from the ITR, Ops news compliance, and this could be expanded to include a skills audit that encompasses qualifications, skills, accomplishments and any accredited prior learning.
 - b. **Narrative** – this can include professional discussion, witness testimony and reflective learning
 - c. **Incidents** – data from IMS could be automatically uploaded that would log incidents attended. This could be expanded to include the roles undertaken (linking to reflective learning) and incident command time, thus satisfying the requirements of the revalidation command hours.
 - d. **Station** – drills, lectures, CBT packages and exercises
 - e. **External** – any Word/Excel documents etc. that link to projects undertaken, compliments etc. This should include the ability to upload video gained from headcams (e.g. ORT project, and those associated with Babcock training).

IMS and DIOT

9. These proposals are in line with suggested changes to the DIOT policy, which emphasise the use of discussion points and organisational learning as opposed to negative points aimed at individuals. The proposed changes feature the use of professional learning discussions between individuals, their line manager and the officer who noted the underperformance/issue to discuss the incident and any development necessary.
10. This approach may encourage more honest reporting into the IMS and could be extended within the IMS review to emphasise reporting debrief points about the incident rather than individuals, unless the underperformance was significant. This would maintain the integrity of trend analysis through DIOT and would be in line with the ethos of the Learning and Development strategy. It would also be a move away from the current culture of reporting and individual critique, encouraging a focus on what did 'we' (as in the attendance) do well, or what could 'we' have done better. This will foster a more inclusive team-based culture, rather than the competitive culture currently experienced.

Current PDP system

11. The above proposals would negate the need for the current PDP system, which would reduce the number of systems currently in use. A more streamlined approach to systems and a focus on more meaningful is likely to be welcomed by managers who have expressed frustration with the status quo.

Next steps

12. Information management are currently costing the proposed changes to the PDR system.
13. Guidance on the changes are currently being drafted, subject to further discussion.
14. Managers and staff will need to be upskilled in the use of the new system, and to ensure that it drives the behaviours associated with cultural change. A training package is being considered to support the use of the system.
15. Proposals and guidance are being developed in close conjunction with ORT in order to consider the synergies between DIOT and IMS changes.