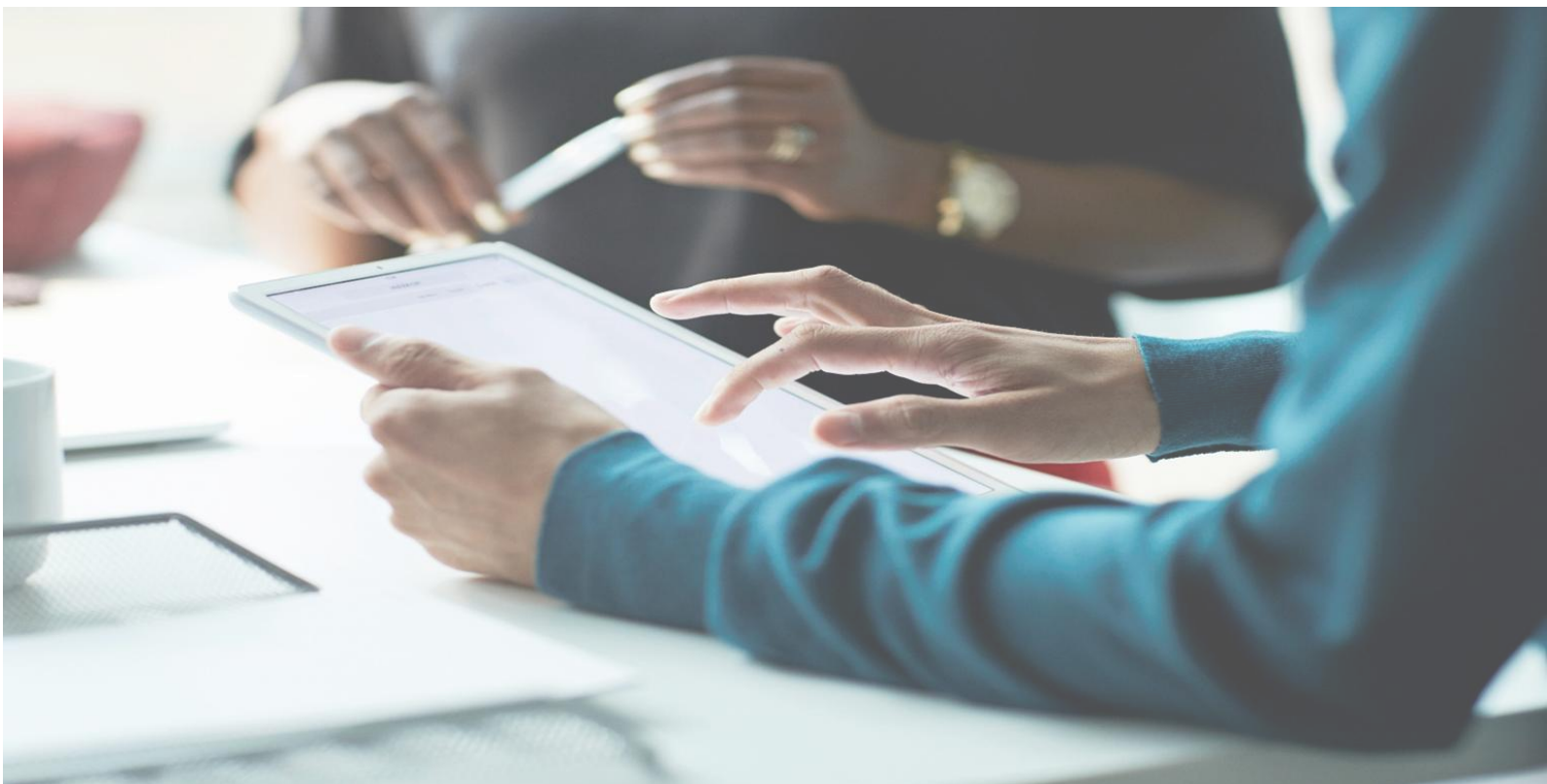




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PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP) GUIDE

Does Your Business Effectively Manage Poor Performance?

INTRODUCTION

Managing employee performance effectively is an important part of running a successful business. Employees should understand what is expected of them and be provided with appropriate feedback, support and opportunities to improve where performance concerns arise.

Poor performance can impact productivity, customer service, team morale and overall business performance. Addressing concerns promptly and fairly can help employers support employee improvement, reduce workplace tensions and minimise legal risk.

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is a structured process that helps employers identify performance concerns, set clear expectations and provide employees with a reasonable opportunity to improve.



Working with employees to address performance concerns at an early stage is often more effective than allowing issues to escalate into formal disciplinary matters.

Contact **Taylored HR Solutions** for practical, commercially focused advice and expert guidance on performance management, employee relations and implementing fair and effective Performance Improvement Plans.

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WHAT IS A PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

A **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)** is a structured process used to address performance concerns by **identifying performance gaps**, **setting clear expectations** and providing employees with a **reasonable opportunity to improve**. It forms part of an organisation's wider performance management process and is intended to support improvement through clear objectives, regular feedback, appropriate support and ongoing review.

Where performance does not improve despite reasonable support, employers may need to consider progressing to formal disciplinary procedures. A well managed PIP can help demonstrate that concerns were communicated clearly, support was provided and fair procedures were followed, before further action was considered. The table below outlines the key components of an effective PIP.

Area	Purpose
Performance Concerns	Clearly identify areas requiring improvement
Objectives	Establish measurable performance expectations
Timeframes	Allow a reasonable opportunity for improvement
Support	Provide training, coaching and guidance
Reviews	Monitor progress through regular meetings
Documentation	Create an accurate record of the process

WHEN SHOULD A PIP BE USED

A Performance Improvement Plan may be appropriate where:

- ❖ Performance consistently falls below the required standard
- ❖ Targets or objectives are regularly missed
- ❖ Quality concerns arise
- ❖ Productivity levels are lower than expected
- ❖ Informal coaching has not achieved the required improvement
- ❖ Additional structure and support are needed

Performance concerns should be based on **objective evidence** rather than assumptions or personal opinion.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER – A PIP should not come as a surprise to the employee. Concerns should normally be raised and discussed before a formal process begins.

SETTING CLEAR PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Employees should clearly understand:

- ❖ What performance concerns have been identified
- ❖ Why improvement is required
- ❖ What standards are expected
- ❖ How performance will be measured
- ❖ What support will be available
- ❖ What will happen if improvement is not achieved

Performance objectives should be **SMART** – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound.

SUPPORT & GUIDANCE

A successful PIP should include appropriate **support measures**.

Support Measures To Consider
Additional training
Coaching and mentoring
Increased supervision
Refresher training
Access to resources and tools
More frequent performance discussions

Employers should ensure employees have a genuine opportunity to achieve the required improvements.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER - An employer may find it difficult to justify performance related decisions where no reasonable support, coaching or training has been offered.

REVIEW MEETINGS

A PIP should not be viewed as a single meeting or document. **Ongoing review meetings** are essential to monitor progress, provide feedback and address any barriers to improvement.

Employers should use these meetings to (1) Review performance against agreed objectives, (2) Discuss areas where progress has been achieved, (3) Identify any further support required and (4) Agree the actions expected before the next review.

Each meeting should be **documented** and retained as part of the overall performance management process.

DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING

Accurate records are essential when managing performance concerns. Employers should retain:

Record Type	What Employers Should Keep
Meeting Notes	Records of performance discussions
Improvement Plans	Signed copies of the PIP
Objectives	Performance targets and measures
Training Records	Evidence of support provided
Review Records	Progress meeting notes
Employee Responses	Comments, concerns and feedback
Outcomes	Final outcome and actions taken

Well maintained documentation helps demonstrate consistency, fairness and transparency throughout the process. Poor performance management practices or record keeping can increase the risk of disputes, grievances and unfair dismissal claims.

WRC CODE OF PRACTICE ON GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

When managing performance concerns, employers should ensure that fair procedures are followed and that any performance management process is consistent with the principles set out in the **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures**. The Code emphasises the importance of fairness, transparency, consistency, the right to respond to concerns and the opportunity to improve before formal action is considered.

A well managed Performance Improvement Plan can help demonstrate that an employee was informed of performance concerns, given reasonable support and afforded an appropriate opportunity to improve in line with good employment relations practice.

EMPLOYER READINESS CHECKLIST

Checklist Area	Action Points
Performance Framework	☐ Performance Management Procedures are in place and up to date. ☐ Job descriptions accurately reflect employee responsibilities. ☐ Performance expectations are clearly communicated. ☐ Managers receive performance management training and understand the organisations performance management procedures.
Performance Management Process	☐ Informal feedback is provided regularly. ☐ Performance concerns are raised promptly. ☐ Formal performance procedures are documented. ☐ PIP templates are available where required. ☐ Performance objectives are clear, measurable and realistic. ☐ Review meetings are documented. ☐ Employees are given a reasonable opportunity to improve.
Documentation	☐ Performance concerns are evidence based. ☐ Review meetings are documented. ☐ Training and support provided are recorded. ☐ Improvement plans are retained securely. ☐ Records can be accessed if required.

Management Practice	☐ Managers understand performance management processes. ☐ Managers provide regular feedback and coaching. ☐ Performance expectations are applied consistently across teams. ☐ Performance discussions focus on objective evidence rather than opinion. ☐ Appropriate support and training are offered where required. ☐ Managers document key conversations and agreed actions. ☐ Escalation to formal procedures occurs only where appropriate and after reasonable efforts to achieve improvement.
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HOW TAYLORED HR SOLUTIONS CAN HELP

Managing employee performance can be challenging, particularly where underperformance is affecting business operations, team morale or customer service.

Taylored HR Solutions provides practical, commercially focused HR support to help employers address performance concerns fairly, consistently and effectively.

Our support includes:

- Performance management procedures.
- Performance Improvement Plan templates.
- Performance review processes.
- Manager coaching and support.
- Employee relations guidance.
- Investigation and documentation support.
- Disciplinary and capability process advice.
- Employment policy development and reviews.

We help employers implement practical performance management processes that support improvement while reducing risk and ensuring fair treatment.

CONTACT US TODAY

Does your organisation effectively manage poor performance concerns while reducing employment law risk?

Contact **Taylorored HR Solutions** for practical advice and expert guidance on Performance Improvement Plans, performance management and employee relations.

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