

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme

General Council Report 1398

(Meeting/s of 30 January 2002)

Introduction of Upward Feedback into the Performance Management and Development System in the Civil Service.

1. Background

In May, 2000, the General Council Report (No. 1368) introduced the Performance Management & Development System in the Civil Service. The General Council Report identified the area of Upward feedback as being an important area in which further work was required. The agreement contained in the Report to the Implementation of PMDS assumed that work on resolving this issue would be satisfactorily completed before the end of the first year of implementation. A Working Group of the General Council Sub Committee was established in October, 2000 to address this issue.

2. Upward Feedback

The approach to the introduction of upward feedback and the associated phased implementation which has been agreed at the subcommittee of General Council is set out in detail in their accompanying report.

3. Implementation

Both sides agree that the implementation of Upward Feedback will take place in the shortest time feasible; however it is recognised that, for practical reasons, implementation of Upward Feedback, as with the implementation of the PMDS itself may take longer in the larger Departments and Offices. The agreed time frame for the implementation of Upward Feedback into the PMDS is as follows:

In year one (calendar year 2002) three developments should be undertaken;

- A staff attitudinal/climate survey will be conducted in each Department/Office.
- In preparation for roll-out in year two (2003) Departments and Offices will incorporate into the PMDS individualised feedback based on the generic template which has been agreed centrally.
- A code of practice will be put in place to ensure that the interests of all parties involved in the upward feedback process are safeguarded and promoted and that feedback is used in developmental and constructive ways.

In year two (calendar year 2003) the following developments should take place;

- Individualised feedback will be introduced in Departments and Offices.
- In this first year of operation the individualised feedback data will remain the property of the recipient without any requirement of onward disclosure.

In year three (calendar year 2004) the following developments should take place;

- Individualised feedback will continue to be sought and given as in year two (calendar year 2003) but the upward feedback will be discussed between the recipient and his/her immediate manager, as part of the normal PMDS process.
- At this stage upward feedback should be fully integrated into the PMDS cycle.

4. Ongoing monitoring & evaluation

It will be important that the implementation of the PMDS and the phased integration of upward feedback is monitored and evaluated as it evolves. The subcommittee of General Council will continue in existence and will now develop an overall framework for the evaluation process. This is being designed to focus on both the implementation of the PMDS and areas of immediate further development.

5. Agreement

At a meeting on 30 January 2002, all parties reaffirmed their commitment to implement in full the terms of the General Council Report no. 1368 and all parties agreed to this report.

Appendix

PMDS - Upward Feedback Report of the Sub-committee of General Council

1. Background

In May, 2000 the General Council Report (No. 1368) on the introduction of the Performance Management & Development System in the Civil Service identified the design of effective systems of feedback as being an important area in which further work is required. The agreement contained in the Report to the implementation of PMDS assumed that work on resolving this issue would be satisfactorily completed before the end of the first year of implementation. A Working Group of the General Council Sub Committee was established in October, 2000 to address the issue of effective systems of Feedback.

In addition to consultations with members on an individual basis, the Working Group met on four occasions between November 2000 and November 2001 and considered the issues involved in effective systems of feedback.

2. Consultation process

In October, 2000, Hay Management Consultants were appointed to assist the Working Group in the development of effective systems of feedback. The assignment involved consultations and workshop sessions with members of the Working Group to gain an understanding of their interpretations of what was meant by upward feedback, and the issues and implications involved in integrating it into a PMDS process that is still at the early stages of implementation. Hay Management Consultants presented their findings to the Working Group, on foot of which they put forward for consideration a template for the introduction of a system of upward feedback.

3. Definition and purpose

In light of its deliberations, and taking account of experience and studies elsewhere relating to feedback systems, the Working Group agreed that a system of upward feedback should be gradually introduced as an integral part of the PMDS. In this context, the Group agreed the following definition and purpose of upward feedback as the guiding framework for its introduction:

"Upward Feedback provides an opportunity for jobholders to constructively comment on:

- How they are being managed.*
- The running of the Division.*
- How the PMDS is organised within their Division,*

in order to:

- Raise awareness of personal strengths and development needs to enable the improvement of individual performance.*
- Enhance the effectiveness of the PMDS process.*
- Contribute to a more participatory climate / culture locally and in the Civil Service as a whole.*
- Enhance the achievement and furthering of strategic and organisational goals."*

4. Agreed approach

The Working Group has identified the key elements of best practice which it believes are fundamental to the introduction of an effective system of upward feedback. These key elements are:

- (a) a supportive framework within which feedback should be introduced as a developmental process, designed to enhance personal and organisational performance and resourced accordingly.
- (b) a phased implementation.

(a) Framework for implementation

The goal of the PMDS, as agreed in General Council Report No. 1368, is to contribute to continuous improvement in performance by aligning individual and team performance with Departmental goals, through greater clarity in setting objectives and related performance targets, and monitoring progress in their achievement. It provides also a systematic means of identifying and addressing the development needs of job holders.

Upward feedback should therefore be seen as a logical extension of, the PMDS designed to enhance both personal and organisational performance. It is an integral part of the PMDS and should not be seen as an addition. It is also meant to build on the existing levels of formal and informal feedback given through the PMDS and the associated business planning process.

It is critically important that the learning points which emerge from feedback systems, as with the overall PMDS, are supported by the types of developmental measures set out in General Council Report No. 1368. These include:

- Organisational and Human Resources Strategy context
- Creating an open and supportive climate for managing in the Civil Service.
- Training for the implementation of PMDS.
- Training in behavioural competencies.
- A Communications Strategy for PMDS.

(b) Phased Implementation

The full integration of the PMDS process within the working culture of the civil service is likely to take a number of years. Upward feedback represents an important and necessary stage in the evolution of PMDS, and it is important that it be introduced gradually so that people can become familiar with it and how it operates. The gradual introduction of upward feedback is also designed to take into account the stage of development of the PMDS in each Department and Office.

The Working Group recommends the following phased approach:

- **In year one**, three developments should be undertaken.

Firstly, a "**staff attitudinal/climate**" survey will be conducted in each Department and Office. This type of survey will assess the environment which is being created to support the PMDS process and enable it to be effective. It will help also to identify management development needs which require to be addressed before individualised upward feedback is introduced. The organisational survey will complement feedback on how the PMDS is working at individual jobholder level which is already provided for in the PMDS process itself. While organisation-wide in scope, the survey results should be capable of being broken down into data at divisional and business unit level. A template for such a staff attitudinal / climate type survey is set out at *appendix one*. This does not represent an exhaustive list but rather a generic list which Departments may wish to customise further to take account of their specific needs.

Secondly, Departments and Offices will incorporate into the PMDS individualised feedback based on the generic template which has been agreed centrally, as set out at **appendix 2**. The template includes the headings under which feedback will be sought. [e.g. How people are being managed, the running of the Division, and how PMDS is operating within their Division].

Thirdly, a Code of Practice will be put in place to ensure that the interests of all parties involved in the upward feedback process are safeguarded and promoted and that feedback is used in developmental and constructive ways. The Working Group considers it essential that feedback is not used in inappropriate ways. In this regard, the process must not be allowed to be used by individuals to air, in a destructive way, long held grievances about their managers or about the Department/Office. A Code of Practice is attached at *Appendix 3*.

- **In year two**, individualised feedback will be introduced in Departments and Offices based on the detailed design work which has been undertaken **centrally** and its use will be governed by the Code of Practice. In its first year of operation the data will remain the property of the recipient of the

feedback without any requirement of onward disclosure. The single most difficult point of transition in the introduction of feedback processes is the transition from generalised to individualised feedback. A legitimate concern on the part of the recipient of feedback is whether or not it will be seen by a third party. For this reason the recipient will be encouraged in the first year to assimilate and act on the feedback in a developmental way, in the knowledge that there is no third party involvement.

- In **subsequent years** (year three onwards), individualised feedback will continue to be sought and given as in *year two* but the upward feedback will be discussed between the recipient and his/her immediate manager, as part of the normal PMDS process. The purpose of this discussion will be to incorporate the results of the feedback into the recipient's own performance objectives and personal development plan under the guidance of his/her manager. At this stage upward feedback should be fully integrated into the PMDS cycle.

The principal thrust of upward feedback should be developmental and positive in tone. Research indicates that such feedback, effectively given and received, has a very powerful influence on behaviour. In this regard, the receipt of upward feedback, which the recipient can understand in a work context and respond to in a positive way, is an essential first step.

Hence, the phased approach set out above which allows for early identification of management development needs through the organisational climate survey and through the gradual introduction of individualised feedback. The Working Group stresses that the approach proposed must be underpinned by appropriate training and development to ensure that all involved in the upward feedback process learn to use it effectively and in the way intended.

5. Existing promotion procedures

The existing agreements on promotion procedures will not be affected in any way by the system of individualised feedback proposed in this report. Save for the PSEU grades, upward feedback will parallel the treatment of downward feedback in the current PMDS. The existing links between the performance management system for PSEU grades and promotion and assignments to higher scales have continued and will not be affected by the proposed system of upward feedback.

6. Addressing issues during implementation

Report No. 1368 on the introduction of PMDS provides that primary responsibility for managing the PMDS cycle rests with the manager and jobholder at all levels of the process, and that in the event of differing views arising the matter should be referred to the reviewer for consideration and resolution. The implementation and further development of upward feedback is designed to support this process and to create the right environment for constructive dialogue.

However, because of the present organisational culture within which feedback is being gradually introduced in Departments/Offices, both the MAC and the Partnership Committee will have a key role to play in ensuring consistency, and the correct application and embedding of upward feedback within the PMDS in their Department/Office.

The MAC, in consultation with the Partnership Committee, will agree on the content of the staff attitudinal/climate type surveys, based on the template set out in this report, and within the framework of the Code of Practice.

7. Resources

The implementation process will need to be fully supported locally and centrally in the context of further revisions to the existing implementation and training plans for PMDS, already drawn up in each Department and Office. In this context the Change Management Fund will act as a continuing source of financial assistance.

8. Evaluation

The integration of feedback in the PMDS will need to be monitored, as part of the overall monitoring of the PMDS. The subcommittee of General Council is engaging outside expertise to help in developing a framework for such ongoing monitoring and evaluation of PMDS.

Sets out a generic template for *Staff attitudinal* climate surveys
that may be supplemented by agreement through the Departmental Partnership Committee

The survey process may use a three or five point scale as follows

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
Agree Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree Strongly

Template for Departmental Staff attitudinal climate surveys

ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

- There is a friendly atmosphere among staff in the organisation, and people are willing to co-operate with each other.
- There is a climate of trust in the organisation, and people treat each other with respect.
- Internal promotion procedures and outcomes are perceived as being open, transparent and fair.
- The organisation uses the PMDS effectively as a performance management tool.
- The organisation passes on information that staff need to know.
- The organisation acts effectively to resolve conflicts.
- The organisation deals fairly and consistently with staff at all times.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION

- The organisation communicates effectively and consistently with staff.
- The reasons behind business decisions and what is happening in Divisions/Units are clearly explained to staff.
- The organisation ensures that staff are consulted on important decisions affecting their work.

- The organisation sets out the rationale for introducing change and how it will impact on people.
- Staff are encouraged to put forward their views, and these are listened to by senior management.
- The organisation ensures that new ideas are considered in the Department/Office.
- Team briefings by my managers and open fora with senior managers are regularly held in the Department.

CLARITY AND DIRECTION

- People understand the organisation's goals and their own divisional goals and objectives.
- Staff are clear on the outcomes or deliverables expected of them.
- Staff are clear about how their role fits into the Department/Office as a whole.
- The organisation makes clear through the PMDS the standards by which performance will be evaluated.
- The organisation ensures that my performance is evaluated fairly.
- The policies and procedures in the organisation are clear to staff.
- The organisation ensures that staff realise the importance of serving the customer effectively.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE

- The organisation sets high performance standards for staff.
- The organisation ensures that performance standards are consistent across the Department.
- The PMDS is operating effectively in the organisation.
- The organisation uses the PMDS to provide clear and timely feedback to staff about their strengths and weaknesses.
- The organisation acts to resolve performance issues and concentrates on improving staff performance.

MOTIVATING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

- The organisation values staff as individuals and is sensitive to their needs.
- Staff in the organisation are usually praised when they do good work and encouraged to produce high quality work at all times.
- The organisation ensures that staff have the opportunity for personal development and growth and gives them a chance to develop new skills.
- Training and development needs identified within the PMDS are acted upon by the organisation.
- There are sufficient opportunities for staff to receive training and

improve their job skills.

- The organisation makes people feel part of a group in achieving a shared goal.
- The organisation involves people in decisions that affect them and encourages them to take the initiative in resolving problems.

MANAGEMENT STYLE

- The organisation ensures that staff are treated with fairness, consistency and impartiality in respect of decisions that concern them.
- The organisation ensures that problems and complaints are acted on promptly and fairly by managers.
- The organisation ensures that there is a fair system for evaluating performance.
- The organisation ensures that staff are encouraged to make suggestions for improvements.
- The organisation ensures that I receive enough support from my immediate manager/supervisor to carry out my job effectively.
- My manager and I agree on what my job responsibilities/work objectives are.

Appendix 2

Sets out a generic template for individualised feedback that may be supplemented by agreement through the Departmental Partnership Committee process

Appendix 2

Template for individualised feedback Beginning in year 2 onwards

[Includes a range of possible questions for consideration (by Departmental Partnership Committees) for selection across each of the three thematic areas; *Running of the Division, How PMDS is organised within the Division, and How Staff are being managed*].

THE RUNNING OF THE DIVISION.

Note: This item includes communication/consultation, clarity on roles and goals and management of resources.

- The business planning process and the PMDS are operating effectively in my Division.
- My manager plans the work of the section effectively
- My manager explains the reasons behind business decisions and what is happening in the division.
- My manager ensures that new ideas are considered.
- My manager gives me enough support to carry out my job effectively.
- My manager acts on problems and complaints promptly and resolves issues.
- My manager actively involves me in agreeing my work objectives.

HOW THE PMDS IS ORGANISED WITHIN THE DIVISION.

Note: This item includes, organisation climate, support for individual development.

- My manager makes clear through the PMDS the standards by which performance will be evaluated.
 - The training and development needs identified in my role profile form are acted upon.
 - My personal training and development plan has been implemented satisfactorily.
- My manager makes it clear to me how my role fits into the department/office as a whole.
- My Divisional manager ensures that consistent performance standards are set across the division.

HOW STAFF ARE BEING MANAGED.

Note: This item includes management style, fairness consistency, valuing of individuals.

- My manager deals fairly and consistently with staff at all times
- I am encouraged to put forward my views, and these are listened to by my manager.
- I am clear about the outcomes and deliverables expected of me.
- I am consulted by my manager on important decisions affecting my work.

- My manager values me for the individual contribution I make to the Department.
- My manager (in so far as he/she can) ensures that I have opportunities for personal growth and development in my job.
- I am satisfied that the participatory style of management action items set out in the PMDS is operating effectively within our division.

Appendix 3

Code of Practice to support the implementation of Upward Feedback within the PMDS

Introduction

Having an effective Performance Management and Development System in place in the civil service is central to achieving the business goals of Departments/Offices. The development of an effective upward feedback system is an integral part of the PMDS. Upward feedback provides an opportunity for all staff within Departments and Offices to engage in a discussion on work performance. By giving and receiving feedback in an appropriate manner, individuals and their managers will enhance the value of the PMDS process and make it more effective to the benefit of all involved.

This Code of Practice sets out the principles which should govern the giving and receiving of upward feedback within the PMDS. It acknowledges that many staff may not be accustomed to giving in-depth constructive feedback, and that their skills will develop over time with practice and appropriate training.

The Code reinforces the importance of creating a positive work environment and participative management style which supports and encourages feedback. To this end, it sets out a number of safeguards to ensure that all of the parties' interests are protected and promoted.

Code of Practice for upward feedback

1. Definition and purpose of Upward Feedback

Upward Feedback provides an opportunity for the jobholder to constructively comment on

- How they are being managed.
- the running of the Division.
- How the PMDS is organised within their Division
in order to:
 - Raise awareness of personal strengths and development needs to enable the improvement of individual performance.
 - Enhance the effectiveness of the PMDS process.
 - Contribute to a more participatory climate and culture locally and in the Civil Service as a whole.
 - Enhance the achievement and furthering of strategic and organisational goals.

2. Best Practice Principles

Best practice principles to inform and support the introduction and gradual integration of Upward Feedback within the PMDS are:

- Upward feedback **begins at the top of each Department and Office** with the most senior managers and is then **extended throughout the Department on a phased basis** to all other levels.
- Upward feedback is an **integral part of the PMDS process**; In this regard, Upward Feedback complements the downward feedback already provided for in the PMDS, to promote constructive two-way dialogue with the PMDS process.
- The content of Upward Feedback includes both **personal data** such as management and leadership styles and Department/business unit data such as organisational climate and performance.
- A necessary first step in developing an understanding of Upward Feedback is to seek data about the Department/Business Unit. This enables **both organisational wide and business unit level data to be presented and considered in terms of its impact on performance.**
- **A positive, proactive policy on management development and training,** is essential to creating and maintaining the management organisational climate conducive to an effective upward feedback process.
- The giving and receiving of upward feedback is **governed by appropriate standards of behaviour** which promote a constructive two-way dialogue and safeguard those involved.

3. Behavioural Guidelines

Giving and receiving upward feedback is a form of communication. In order to communicate Upward Feedback as a developmental process, the language used and the messages conveyed should be non-judgmental and be constructive in nature. Apportioning blame and recrimination should be

avoided. Behavioural Guidelines for the giving and receiving of Feedback are set out at **annex 1**. Using behavioural examples within the competency framework in the PMDS can also help by providing appropriate and safe examples of behavioural indicators.

4. Safeguards

The developmental and constructive nature of upward feedback is of primary importance and will be safeguarded throughout the PMDS process. The following safe guards will apply:

- In the initial years, the arrangements for the phased implementation of upward feedback, for moving from organisational level to individualised feedback, will allow staff at all levels to build up their skills and experience in a progressive manner.
- During the initial implementation phase, individual feedback, in its first year of operation will remain a matter between the donor and the recipient only. At all times subsequently, upward feedback will relate to personal performance and development only, and must not be released to unauthorised persons beyond the scope of the PMDS.
- The recipient of Upward Feedback will not be subject to feedback which is inappropriate to the working context. Problems should be raised in a spirit of mutual support and respect and must not be the subject of blame and recrimination. Any breach in this regard should be reported by the recipient to the Reviewer who should take action to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of those concerned.
 - The donor of upward feedback given in accordance with this Code of Practice will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times, *and must not suffer any adverse consequences*. Any breach in this regard should be reported to the *Reviewer* who will take action to resolve the situation to the mutual satisfaction of those concerned.

5. Managing the implementation of Upward Feedback and dealing with problem situations

There is a primary onus on all staff to ensure that Upward Feedback is given and received within the spirit of the process and that the terms of this Code of Practice are adhered to.

It is the responsibility of the **Reviewer** (usually the 2nd report) to ensure consistency and the correct application of Upward Feedback within the PMDS in his/her area of responsibility. This means

- ensuring and encouraging the provision of coaching for managers to develop their feedback skills.
- ensuring that this Code of Practice is applied consistently and evenly in his /her area of responsibility.
- having a key role to play in the event of either differing views arising in relation to the PMDS on the application of Upward Feedback within this process.
- taking immediate remedial steps if the provision of Upward Feedback is being abused in any way (e.g. to settle personal differences etc.).
- making sure that recipients and donors of Upward Feedback are not discriminated against in any way.
- Providing assistance to managers on how to interpret feedback results.

The **Head of Division** (who may also be a reviewer) also has a key role to play in ensuring the effective integration of Upward Feedback within PMDS.

This entails:

- Facilitating the development of a participatory style of management within the Division;
- Ensuring the successful integration of Upward Feedback within PMDS within the Division.
- Ensuring that training and management development issues are identified and addressed.

Where problems arise, i.e. if any party to the process feels that there has been a breach of trust or wrongful application of individualised feedback, they should bring the matter to the attention of the Reviewer. If the matter cannot be resolved through discussion within the Division to the satisfaction of the aggrieved party it should be referred to the Head of Division or a more senior officer as appropriate.

6. Separate nature of promotion agreements

The Code of Practice does not affect existing promotion agreements, including the PSEU linkage to promotion assessment and higher scale assimilations within PMDS.

Annex 1

Behavioural Guidelines for Giving & Receiving Effective Feedback

In order to communicate Upward Feedback as a developmental process, the languages used and the messages conveyed should be non-judgemental and constructive in nature. Behavioural guidelines for the giving and receiving

of effective feedback are set out as follows:

Giving Feedback

- Prepare carefully beforehand
- Be helpful and direct
(In order to communicate Feedback as a developmental process, the language used should be non-judgemental and constructive in nature).
- Own your message
(use only "I" statements; don't generalise; take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, actions).
- Ensure that there is balance in the feedback being given
- Support your comments with evidence
(give clear examples to describe the behaviour).
- Focus on the issues or behaviour, not on the person
(don't threaten the person, but focus on their behaviour and your reaction to it).
- Pose the situation as a mutual problem
(remember: your personal feelings and thoughts are reactions to an interpersonal issue).
- Give the recipient an opportunity to clarify what you have said
(make sure you are understood properly; don't start new misunderstandings).
- Above all, show respect for the other person.

Receiving Feedback

- Prepare carefully beforehand
- Accept the feedback given, in a spirit of co-operativeness.
- Listen actively and with an open mind
(try to hear the message, rather than react defensively).
- Ask for clarification if you do not fully understand the feedback.
- To avoid the possibility of arguing, denying or justifying look for the

developmental aspect (ask "what can I learn from this?").

- Thank the giver, and say that you intend to reflect on the information you have received.

Agreed Report

This report was adopted on 30 January 2002