

Manager guide to Development Conversations

Development conversations are a powerful way to support your team's growth, boost engagement, and build future talent.

As a manager, your role is to create a space where colleagues feel safe to reflect, explore opportunities, and take ownership of their development journey.

This guide is designed to help you lead development conversations that are forward-focused, meaningful, and driven by the colleague.

Your role is to:

Create a safe, open space for reflection and aspiration

Ask powerful questions that unlock insight and ambition

Support your colleague to take ownership of their growth

Help connect their goals with opportunities and next steps

1 Before the conversation

Encourage your colleague to:

- Use the Colleague Guide to Development Conversations to prepare
- Draft a few initial goals in their Personal Development Plan (PDP)

Take time to:

- Reflect on their recent achievements, feedback, or areas of growth
- Consider how you can support their development through stretch opportunities, coaching, or exposure



2 During the conversation

Keep the tone open, supportive, and future-focused. Use coaching-style questions to guide the conversation, such as:

- What have you been most proud of recently?
- Where do you feel you're growing most – and what's feeling stuck?
- What would the next stage in your journey look like?
- What kind of work energises you?
- What's one skill or experience you'd love to build in the next year?
- How can I best support you to move forward?

Listen actively. Let your colleague lead the conversation and give them space to reflect and explore.

3 After the conversation

- Agree on clear next steps—these might include mentoring, shadowing, project work, or targeted development
- Follow up regularly—check in on progress, offer feedback, and keep the momentum going
- Follow through on your actions—your support builds trust and shows commitment to their growth

Remember

- It's their journey – you're there to support, not direct
- Be curious and non-judgemental – ask before advising
- Respect their goals – progress looks different for everyone
- Build trust – keep the conversation going beyond one check-in

Support Colleagues to Succeed Through meaningful conversations