

One on one conversation guide for leaders

Purpose

Talking to your workers is important for a safe and healthy workplace. Connecting with them through one on one conversations allows you to check in on their wellbeing. By doing these regularly, you'll also be able to identify, assess and manage both risks and control measures to workplace mental health. As a leader, these conversations will also allow you to demonstrate supportive leadership and a safety mindset, as well as helping to support and set clear expectations of your workers. The supportive relationships you'll develop through having one on ones can help you create a culture that supports workplace mental health.

This guide gives you practical guidance on how to have effective one on one conversations that can achieve these goals.



This action is part of 'step 2' to a mentally healthy workplace.

Learn more about the steps on our website.

mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au

How do I use this guide?

This guide has been designed with a structure to follow and example questions you can use to support effective discussions with your workers. Read through this document before the meeting so you can be prepared. You might also like to bring a hard copy of this into your meeting so you can refer back to it.

Principles to keep in mind before you start

Approach these meetings with the goal of understanding their point of view and taking action if they raise concerns.

Always keep the core communication principles of any effective conversation in mind:

- **Listen** – stay calm and present in the moment to allow workers the opportunity to express their feelings
- **Acknowledge and reflect** back what you have heard
- **Ask open ended questions** to get more information and clarify their issues/concerns
- **Summarise** their concerns – e.g. “What I’m hearing is... is that right?”



Begin here



1. Set the scene

Set the scene by choosing a quiet place free from distractions to have your one on one meetings. This will make it easier for you both to fully engage in the conversation and comfortably discuss all topics.

The purpose of your conversation should be clearly communicated. This could include your commitment to taking practical actions to support your staff, and be linked to the broader goals of the business around workplace mental health and wellbeing.



2. Get to know your people

Take the time to build a trusting relationship and understand what is happening for them not just at work, but also at home. This will help you notice when their behaviour changes and show you genuinely care and want to support them. For example:

- “How are things going at home?”
- “How is your current workload affecting you?”
- “How did you feel during our recent busy period?”
- “There were a few errors in your last piece of work which is unusual for you. Is everything okay?”
Follow up by asking them to describe what they’ve got going on at the moment.



3. Discuss and assess risk factors

When discussing and assessing the risk factors related to the current work climate, make sure you cover any psychological risks identified by your workers. Here are some examples of questions you can ask that help address common workplace psychological risks:

Work Design	Achievement and recognition	Support and challenges	Feedback
<p>“Is your workload achievable?”</p> <p>“How is it being managed?”</p> <p>“How is it affecting you?”</p> <p>“Are there a variety of tasks and enough work-life balance?”</p>	<p>“What are your achievements since our last meeting?”</p> <p>“Do you have enough opportunities to get and give recognition?”</p> <p>“Is there someone you have been working with that you think is doing a great job?”</p> <p>“I’d like to thank you for doing a great job on...”</p> <p>“What are your key learnings from projects?”</p>	<p>“What more can we do to manage workplace hazards and risk factors?”</p> <p>“Do you need support for any work tasks?”</p> <p>“Do you need further training?”</p> <p>“Do you need further opportunities to learn new skills?”</p>	<p>“Thanks for working on... Next time we also need you to consider...”</p> <p>“What do you need from your manager?”</p> <p>“How are your workplace relationships, consultation and communication going?”</p>

Assess mental health risks

Remember, if mental health issues or risks are raised, a plan should be discussed of what actions will be taken to address these. One way to do this is through a risk assessment.

The [code of practice](#) can help you determine how severe a risk is.



4. Collaborate to develop solutions

Continue developing the risk assessment by keeping your workers informed. Work together by discussing their self-care techniques. Their on-the-ground experience can also be valuable in developing effective solutions. Examples of questions you could ask include:

- “What supports or adjustments would help you manage being at work at this time?”
- “Is there anything we need to change to help you?”
- “This is what we can do to support you, and what tools are available for practical support...”
- “This is what action I will take after the meeting to support you...”
- Are there any training/coaching needs you might have?”

Be mindful that workload and team priorities must be managed alongside the risk assessment.

Finish the meeting with 2-3 agreed goals/actions and continue to check in on these in future meetings.

Share supports resources

One on ones should happen regularly as part of a mentally healthy workplace. Sharing support resources is a good idea whether or not any issues were raised or changes in your workers are noticed.

Familiarise yourself with the additional resources available and encourage your team to access them. These could include access to training courses, HR, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), or their GP. For example:

- “You may find it useful to speak to someone else. Would you like me to give you the details of some resources I think might be helpful for you to consider?”

Discuss immediate workplace-related support they need

An example of this would be any work adjustments that could be made to support them, e.g. flexible working hours, changes to rostering, changes to work tasks (where possible), or time off.





5. Follow up and support

Be sure to follow up with your worker after the meeting to continue your conversations and provide ongoing support. Make sure they're informed of the actions you're taking to address any concerns they have raised or to mitigate any risks they have identified.

Schedule regular one on ones and follow up with your workers on actions after every meeting as it's important to continue these conversations, monitor their wellbeing and provide them with ongoing support.

Let them know you care

Offer to check in with them and arrange the next conversation. To ensure they feel supported, don't leave too much time between check-ins. For example:

- “How about we speak again when your roster allows?”
- “I'd like to give you a call by the end of the week. Does that work for you?”



This document mentions factors can impact your team's mental health at work.

Learn about what they are and how you can proactively manage them by scanning this QR code or visiting our website, below.

mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au

