

# Managing performance - Scenarios

**Estimated reading time: 6 minutes 34 seconds**

This section illustrates how some of the guidance in this section can be applied in the workplace. The stories have been developed by Business Disability Forum and aim to show the reality of situations and, how your response as a manager, might evolve.

The scenarios below are examples only – if you think your organisation would benefit from tailored examples for training materials please contact our [Learning and Development team](#).

## Scenario 1: Jo and Sam

### Performance management and disability: Dyslexia

#### Introduction

Jo has been waiting for a report on sales and future strategy from Sam, one of the regional sales managers. When she finally receives it late, she is disappointed by its poor structure and errors in the information presented.

#### The initial discussion

Jo decides to talk to Sam about the report and books a quiet room in the office. Jo asks Sam why she wasn't able to complete the report by the deadline. Sam tells Jo she's sorry it was late and that it won't happen again. Jo accepts Sam's apology but asks again why it was late – what was it that prevented Sam from getting it done on time?

Sam then tells Jo she has dyslexia which means she can find it difficult to concentrate in the office especially when she is interrupted by colleagues asking questions. Jo asks Sam what sort of questions she was being asked and Sam tells her they were all about operational matters.

Jo asks Sam why she didn't ask her colleagues to speak to other members of the team as these were relatively simple queries. Sam says that as she knew the answers it seemed simpler to do it herself.

### **Sam's concerns**

Jo then asks Sam how she found writing the report. Sam admits answering questions from colleagues was easier than writing the report. Jo asks Sam about a particular section detailing past sales and future projections and points out the calculations are incorrect. She also asks Sam why this section is in that part of the report as it doesn't naturally seem to fit there.

Sam says she has never been particularly good with numbers and working with the noise and interruptions of notifications and calls on her work phone probably meant she became muddled. She also worked on that section separately and inserted it later but may have put it into the wrong place. Jo asks Sam to take another look at the report and this time set aside some quiet time to work on it.

### **Jo's response**

Jo suggests Sam turns her phone to 'do not disturb' and lets colleagues know she won't check notifications or emails when she is working on the report, so as to block out calls and distractions when working on the report. She also suggests using noise cancelling headphones when Sam is working from home to block out noise from other members of the house.

Jo says she would like the amended report by Friday and this time the figures must be accurate, and so Sam should check them before she submits the report. Jo would also like Sam to read the whole report again and think about where this section fits best and restructure it accordingly.

Jo also tells Sam she should not be spending her time on the low-level operational queries. She would like Sam to pass these to other members of the team to answer. Jo and Sam agree that if these adjustments don't help, they will talk about getting help from a dyslexia expert to identify further adjustments.

## **Scenario 2: Daniel and Beth**

### **Performance management and disability: Visual impairment**

#### **Introduction**

Beth works in a call centre for a large retail bank. All call centre workers have targets for the number of calls they must take and record accurately on the customer database.

The adaptive software Beth uses because of her visual impairment means she is slower than others at inputting data and so she is able to take fewer calls than her colleagues. This has had an impact on targets and her manager, Daniel, raises it with her.

### **The initial discussion**

Daniel has noticed that Beth is particularly good at dealing with customer complaints. He asks Beth about this and she agrees she likes the challenge of dealing with difficult customers because she finds she can often show them that she understands their grievance and then resolve their complaint which she finds rewarding.

However, dealing with complaints, which takes longer than other calls, and the extra time Beth needs to record the calls means she has failed to meet her targets.

### **Daniel's response**

Daniel agrees at her appraisal that in future her targets will be lower than those of her colleagues and in return they can refer customer complaints they cannot resolve quickly to Beth. Her colleagues are happy with this arrangement as they dislike dealing with customer complaints.

## **Scenario 3: Tariq and Tom**

### **Performance management and disability: Autism**

#### **Introduction**

Tom is a senior software engineer for a large company. He has excellent technical skills but likes to work alone and frequently sits at his desk with headphones on to block out the noise of the office.

#### **Tom's appraisal**

At his appraisal his manager, Tariq, says that while he would like to give him an excellent mark for his knowledge and technical skills he must mark him down because he has not met the organisation's values or behavioural requirements of working together to succeed together.

Tariq explains he has observed Tom does not contribute at meetings or volunteer to help his colleagues when they are struggling with their work or deadlines even though he has the skills to do so. Tom is distressed by this assessment of his performance but accepts the 'needs some improvement' grading.

#### **Tom's concerns**

A few weeks later Tom gives Tariq some information about autism. Tom tells Tariq it was suggested at university that he might have autism but as he was doing well in his studies this was never pursued.

Tom and Tariq agree that Tom may need adjustments to help with working relationships.

Tom explains he doesn't intend to be unhelpful but does not always notice other people are struggling with work that she finds relatively simple. Tom explains that he doesn't intend to be rude, but he needs to block out other people to be able to get on with his own work hence the headphones. He doesn't speak at meetings because he believes that, if someone wanted to know his opinion, they would ask him.

### **Tariq's response**

Tariq agrees he needs to interpret the organisation's behavioural requirements differently to accommodate the way Tom works. Tariq will fulfil his own team working objectives by telling Tom when someone else on the team needs his help and Tom will then provide the help needed.

Tariq also decides everyone at meetings will be asked for their views and input. That way both Tariq and Tom will be fulfilling the organisation's requirements of working together in order to succeed together.

## **Summary: important aspects highlighted in these scenarios**

- **Focus on identifying and removing the barriers that your staff are facing:** you have a responsibility to explore any underlying issues that you do not know about.
- **Develop a clear understanding of the context:** look at what elements of the role are being done well as well as what someone might be struggling with.
- **The importance of setting clear and realistic goals, objectives and targets:** these should take all considerations into account and make necessary adjustments.
- **Recognising and rewarding good performance.**
- **Developing action plans to improve performance where necessary:** agreeing a way forward and when to review actions taken.
- **The importance of effective conversations:** aim for open communication even if it involves potentially difficult conversations. Listen and connect with the issues so you can determine what adjustments, if any, need to be made.

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Business Disability Forum also provides a range learning and development offerings. For more information, see our [Learning and Development page](#) or contact our team at [training@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk](mailto:training@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk).



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