

## Safety netting

Starting a new job can be both exciting and a bit daunting, regardless of how experienced you are. Adapting to new environments and unfamiliar routines can take a while, as does settling into a new team. However, sometimes the first time we know they're unhappy is when they submit their notice or their resignation.

In the early weeks of a new role, it's good practice to have regular honest conversations, even if the new member of staff seems to have settled well and is getting on with both the role and their new colleagues.

A safety net conversation is just another way to describe having a meaningful conversation with your new team member, focusing on them and their wellbeing. The new member of staff could also be a line manager themselves, so by having these regular check-ins it's possible to model in turn the right kind of support.

By making this type of conversation an integral part of any induction it supports open two-way conversations so any issues can be identified and discussed before they become big enough for the new starter to consider leaving.

Understanding why people stay and are happy at work is just as important as why they are not. Understanding what works well focusses on the positive and can lead to intentional and proactive work to support retention. In the first few days, weeks and months in a new job, we know people can feel more vulnerable or have a lot of questions or observations they want to share and explore. If we get into the habit of regular honest conversations from the start this creates a great foundation for a long-term career in health and social and care and role-models the culture, we want them to set for others in the future.

Safety net conversations need to include the personal side as well. So many employees have a wide range of skills that can help in the work environment, but these aren't discovered because we fail to ask about aspirations, inspiration and transferable skills.

There are no hard and fast rules or set questions to have in a safety net conversation but try to use open questions that will give a dialogue response rather than one word.

Firstly, set some ground rules to introduce the check-in: e.g. 'I just wanted to check in with you to see how things are going for a few minutes? Are you OK to have this conversation now?'

Here are some prompts if you have not done this before.

- How has your first day/week/month been for you?
- Are you clear on what's expected of you?
- What can I do to help you?

Maybe also think about:

- What has stood out or surprised you today/this week/ this month?
- Has anything come up that you did not know the answer to or where to go to find out?
- Who have you found useful to connect with?
- Are there any barriers I can help remove?
- How can we help tomorrow/next week/next month be just as or even more positive for you?

After the meeting, agree and state any actions that you are taking away.

Ask them to recap anything that they are going to do as a result of that conversation. It's really important that you follow up on anything agreed, in a timely way. Some discussions won't require actions, they're just about listening and reassurance.

The key thing here is to make it part of business as usual. It's not a one-off event, there are days when we feel energised and days when we struggle. Nor should this be something that feels intrusive. We suggest check-ins at the end of day one, week one, week two, then 30, 60 and 90 days as a structure, then this becomes part of regular 1-2-1 discussions you have with your team.