

# How to do a great 1-2-1 meeting

A 1-2-1 meeting takes place outside of the formal appraisal process. There is no set rule about how often they should take place, or for how long. Managers may need to tailor this to the individual. New starters may require more regular 121s than established members of staff. Good practice would be to have a 121 on a monthly basis. 121s are an opportunity to discuss priorities, update on operational matters, talk about support and learning requirements or just to check in and maintain a strong relationship. 121s are a time commitment but they are an effective communication method and will help to build staff engagement.

To ensure that 121s are effective and beneficial to both parties, managers should:

- Keep 121 meetings fairly informal.
- Make sure they don't cancel 121s – regularly cancelling 121 meetings sends a message that they are not important.
- Always given 100% attention to the individual. Turn off emails and phones!
- Make sure that at least some 121s cover learning and development and the future – not just operation, day to day priorities.
- Schedule meetings in advance for at least six months to make sure that they happen.
- Let the member of staff go first – treat this as their time with you. You can ask them to prepare a list of topics in advance if that works for you both.
- Use the 121 to provide feedback on performance, providing recognition where appropriate. You can ask for feedback too – it's always a good idea to check in with the individual if they need anything from you.
- Always give the individual time to ask any questions.
- Ask the member of staff how often they would like to meet, or how the 121s could be most helpful for them.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of your 121 meetings. Are your team energised after them?
- Don't forget wellbeing. This is a key management responsibility – ask people how they are, check in on current workloads.

If your team is remote, it is okay to have 121s over the phone, but make sure that at least some take place face to face. Remember you don't have to do your 121 in the office – you can go for coffee or even a walk.