

Skills for CHC Chairs

Unit 9: Individual performance review

HOW TO
USE THIS
UNIT

You will need:
* the Chair's Resource Pack
* pen and paper

You should set aside about an hour to work through this unit.
[If it takes you more or less than that, it doesn't matter, as long as you feel you've given enough thought to the ideas].

Like Unit 7, Recruitment & Selection, this Unit deals with a set procedure, where there are right and wrong ways of responding. The exercises give you an opportunity to understand this procedure better, and to practise the skills. If you find that your answers are very different from the ones we suggest, you may find it helpful to talk them through, with another Chair, or your contact in the Health Authority.

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1. The CHC Chair and the IPR Process

Individual Performance Review, or IPR, is a systematic process for considering how well a member of staff is doing her/his job. It can be used on its own; or linked to pay levels [Performance Related Pay]. IPR is used widely in the Health Service.

CHC Chief Officers are health service employees. Where they are paid on Senior Manager pay scales, they are generally expected to go through the same IPR procedures as NHS managers.

The IPR procedure involves the employee and the line manager, working closely together. In a large organisation, this is fairly straightforward. In CHCs the situation is much more complex. The Chief Officer's official line manager works elsewhere, in a different organisation with separate aims and objectives.

Because of this, in most regions the CHC Chair fulfils the manager's role in IPR. [In the jargon this is called the 'parent' role; the person who has to make sure this is done fairly is called the 'grandparent']. CHC Chairs are in a better position to understand the Chief Officer's work and to observe her/his performance.

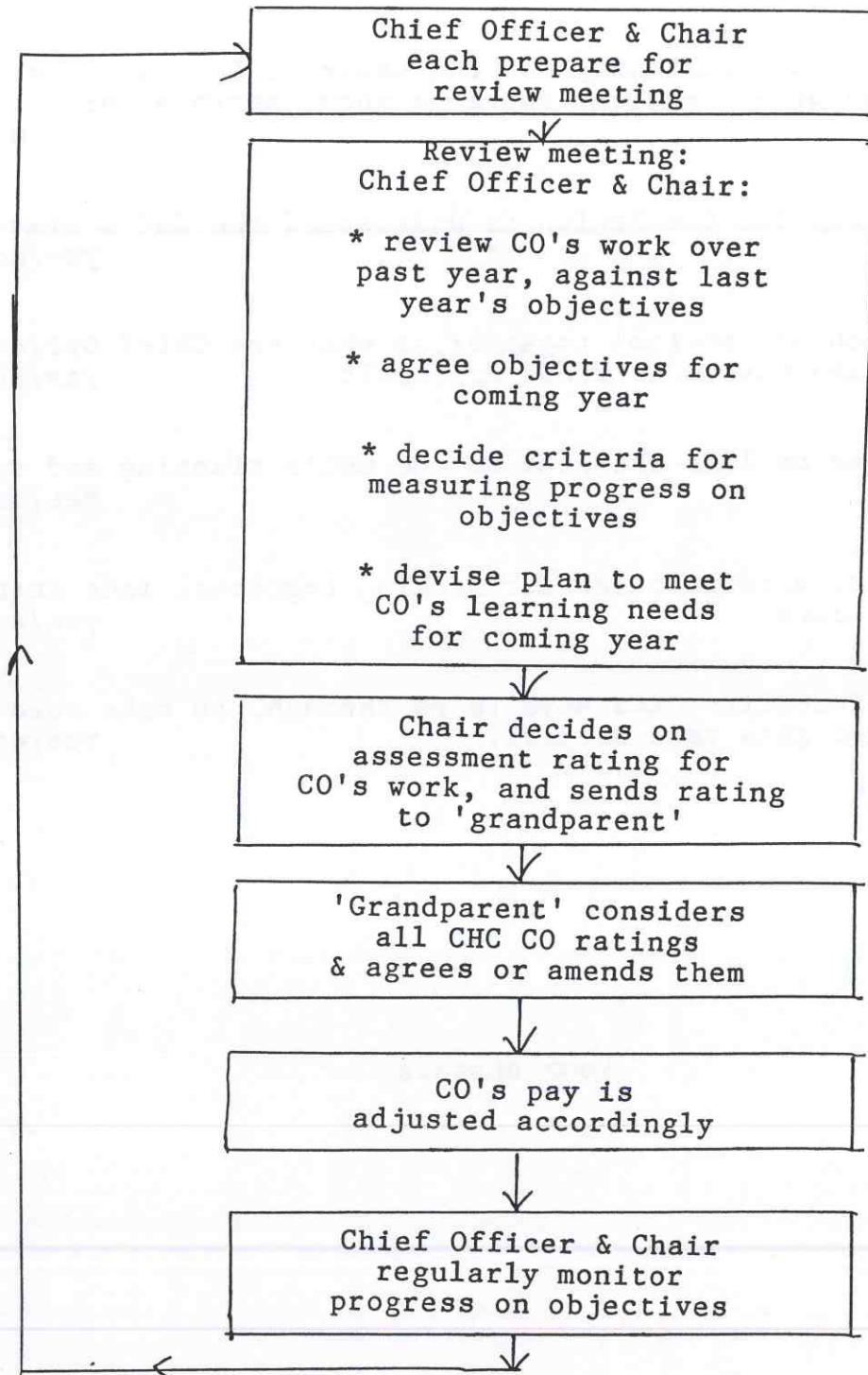
The IPR process uses many of the same skills and qualities that as Chair you have to use already: clear thinking, listening and supporting skills, and sound judgment. However, most Chairs find that they need time to think through the procedures and practise the skills. This Unit offers a brief introduction, but it isn't enough on its own. No-one should be expected to start on the process without proper training. This is widely recognised, and CHC Chairs are trained in the IPR system along with other managers.

FIND
OUT

what arrangements there are for
training you in the IPR process

Like the CHC's own planning and review system, the IPR process works on an annual cycle:

April:



September:

During year:

What IPR is for

TEST

your understanding

- _____
1. It's a good opportunity for the Chair to let the Chief Officer know of any serious concerns about her/his work
yes/no
2. It's a way for the Region to understand the CHC's aims and objectives
yes/no
3. It's a chance to look together at what the Chief Officer does well, and what s/he finds difficult
yes/no
4. It's more or less the same as the CHC's planning and review system
yes/no
5. It's just good practice for working together, made into a formal procedure
yes/no
6. It's a formality CHCs have to go through, to make sure the Chief Officer gets paid properly
yes/no

NOW
CHECK

your answers

ANSWERS

1. NO. If you have serious doubts about the Chief Officer's work, you should deal with them at the time. IPR isn't the place to raise major new concerns.
2. NO. IPR is about the Chief Officer's performance in her/his job, not about the whole CHC. There are other ways of keeping the Region informed.
3. YES. It allows you both to be honest about the Chief Officer's strengths and limitations, and to plan accordingly.
4. NO. The Chief Officer's objectives need to be linked to those of the CHC, but they won't be the same: eg the Chief Officer has to manage staff.
5. YES. Even without a compulsory process, it's good practice to review and plan together like this.
6. NO. If you treat it as a formality, and simply give the Chief Officer the highest rating, it may well get overturned by the 'grandparent'.

2. Preparing for the Review

READ

the Personal Preparation Form
[in your Resource Pack]

It's not essential for the Chief Officer to complete a form like this, but it can be useful as a way of focussing.

The form also gives you, in your 'parent' role, some prompts as you prepare for the meeting. The important thing is to use it flexibly, as a loose structure for discussion, rather than working mechanistically through it.

PRACTICE

Try using the form to think about your own role as Chair. Consider these questions, and fill in your answers:

1. Which aspects of your present job give you greatest satisfaction?

2. Are there additional skills developed elsewhere which give you satisfaction, but which are not used in your job?

5. Under what conditions do you work most effectively [deadlines, working alone or with others, etc]?

You don't need to have worked through the form yourself, to do an IPR. However, thinking about it in terms of your own role can give you some insight into the Chief Officer's position.

The review meeting is a discussion where you learn from each other, clarify perceptions and negotiate differences. It's important for you to have worked out your own views before the meeting: at the same time, you need to be ready to listen, and if necessary revise your opinion. The more time you put into considering the Chief Officer's work beforehand, the easier you'll find it.

THINK
THROUGH

what you've seen of the Chief Officer's work in the past year. Now make notes for yourself on these questions.

1. Think of an occasion when you felt s/he performed well.
2. What specifically did s/he do that impressed you?
3. Were there any circumstances that made it particularly impressive [eg delicate negotiations; angry people]?

4. Now think of a time when you were less impressed: disappointed, or concerned about what s/he was doing.

5. What specifically was your concern?

6. What would you have liked her/him to do?

7. Can you think of any reasons why it might have been hard for her/him?

Obviously there aren't any answers to this exercise. It's designed to get you thinking in specific, practical terms about the work you're assessing. A crucial part of this is to be clear about your own assumptions: are your expectations based on the reality of CHC work, rather than your work experience elsewhere? Are you the kind of person who expects too much [or too little] of yourself and other people?

3. Reviewing work

CASE STUDY

Parvin Azima is the Chair of Hambledon CHC, and Harriet Burns is the Chief Officer. They've worked together for two years. Last year was their first IPR, and they're about to start the second.

This is one part of their plan for Harriet's work last year:

Objective:

Help the CHC to achieve its objective of better networking within the community, by establishing contact with local voluntary and community organisations involved in health issues.

Actions to implement objective:

- * make contact with main voluntary organisations
- * research range of community organisations and identify those with health interest
- * set up joint meetings with community and CHC members

Success criteria

- * constructive working relationships with main vol orgs
- * four joint CHC/community meetings held in different parts of the district

Parvin and Harriet both think about this before the review meeting. These are the activities they identify as relevant to this objective:

- * established mutual referral systems with the local Scope, MIND and Women's Health groups
- * set up discussion groups between CHC members and six smaller disability or health groups
- * held joint activities with two other community groups: eg editorial assistance with new CHC leaflets for Asian women; shared stalls at exhibitions
- * had meetings with officers of four other voluntary organisations, and outlined possibilities for future co-operation with two of them

Parvin's view is that Harriet has more than met the objective. She knows that historically the CHC hasn't been popular with voluntary organisations, and that Harriet had to work hard to get this far. Harriet feels she's failed to meet it: two organisations wanted nothing to do with the CHC; and there are many more groups out there that she's had no contact with.

Why do you think Parvin and Harriet are in disagreement? What should they do about it?

WRITE
DOWN

all your thoughts on this question

ANSWERS

1. The main problem is with the plan itself. It's not specific enough, and the success criteria aren't measurable. How many organisations does Harriet have to contact: three? ten? every single one? And what makes a constructive working relationship: having spoken once on the phone? having representatives on each other's committees? Parvin and Harriet aren't likely to agree if they're each bringing their own, unspoken, assumptions.

2. Both when they set out the objectives, and when they review, Parvin and Harriet need to take account of the real-life constraints. If there's a general hostility towards the CHC, making lasting links with just three organisations is an excellent result. If they weren't aware of the constraints last year, they can still take account of them in the review: it's not 'failure' to come up against real obstacles. They need to consider how Harriet handled the resistance she met: did she try different approaches? Did anything in her manner set up more hostility? They might want a new objective for the coming year, to do with overcoming hostility and resistance.

CASE STUDY part 2

During the past year, Harriet was involved with a case that attracted a great deal of publicity. A couple came to the CHC after their baby died being transferred from one intensive care unit to another twenty miles away. The case got into the national media, and became a hot political issue. Harriet had to do numerous TV, radio and newspaper interviews.

Both Parvin and Harriet are pleased with the results of this work. It brought very positive publicity for the CHC; it highlighted problems about intensive care provision, which the CHC was already concerned about; and it enabled Harriet to develop her skills and confidence in media work.

Their problem in terms of the review is that the case took up a disproportionate amount of Harriet's time over a period of two months, so that her work on some of the other objectives suffered. In particular, the review of office admin procedures didn't take place. How can they deal with this in the review?

ANSWER

They couldn't have predicted this case and the time it would take; but they should have an objective covering complaints work, since this is a large part of the Chief Officer's workload. It also ties in to an objective the CHC should have, of providing advice and assistance to people who want to make a complaint.

A suitable objective for Harriet might be:

- * manage the provision of advice and information to people who want to make a complaint about the health service, through written information, interviews with complainants, representation at hearings, etc

They can include this case as one of those she's handled. Similarly, if they had an objective about using the media, she can include all the work she did on this case.

When they consider her performance against the other objectives, they can of course take account of this case. If she hasn't met the objective about admin systems because there was something more important to do, that isn't a failure [as long as her decision about priorities was reasonable].

The main focus of the review is on the objectives agreed last year, and how well they've been achieved. Objectives are essentially about what can be predicted and planned for. However, it's in the nature of CHC work [and most other kinds] that events come up which couldn't have been predicted, and which are important enough to be given priority. It's important to review these unplanned pieces of work too. After all, a Chief Officer who couldn't deal with the unpredictable would have problems doing the job satisfactorily.

4. Performance rating

This is the element of the IPR system, that links the review to the Chief Officer's pay [Performance Related Pay, or PRP]. There is a five-band rating scale. After the review meeting, you need to decide which band best describes the Chief Officer's overall performance.

READ

the Performance Rating Guidelines
[in your Resource Pack]

PRACTICE

Decide how you would rate the Chief Officer in this example:

Eleanor Hutchins

Chief Officer for eight years. Last year's plan:

Objective 1:

Contribute to the CHC's objective of raising its profile within the community, by setting up opportunities for contact with new sections of the community

Activities:

* three CHC stalls in public places [supermarkets, fairs etc]

* at least 20% of consultation meetings in new venues and most deprived parts of district

Success criterion:

spot survey showing 1 in 10 respondents aware of CHC

Objective 2:

Develop CHC's Equal Opportunities work, by organising awareness-raising events for members

Activities:

- * one-day course with outside trainer
- * agenda item at each CHC meeting, with speakers from range of disadvantaged groups in community

Success criterion:

one-third of members willing to take active role in equal opps work

Objective 3:

Maintain effective management of CHC staff

Activities:

- * fortnightly staff meetings
- * monthly individual supervision with all staff
- * appropriate support and supervision for new staff member/s

This is what Eleanor has achieved over the year:

Objective 1:

- * one stand at county fair and two at Tesco's, both in last two months
- * four consultation meetings in deprived areas and one in 'borderling' area: exactly 20% of total
- * spot survey yet to take place

Objective 2:

- * one-day course held. 14 of 25 members attended
- * regular equal opps agenda items, with constructive discussion
- * five members actively engaged in equal opps activities; other more aware but not active

Objective 3:

- * staff meetings held regularly every fortnight and well attended
- * monthly supervision and annual appraisal system in place and appreciated by staff
- * planned induction and support programme implemented for new admin worker
- * dealt swiftly and effectively with conflict between two staff members
- * good atmosphere in office and work completed more efficiently

Other:

- * CHC members say they feel well supported and informed by office
- * turned down opportunity for collaborative work with new mental health campaigning group, as not priority in this year's plans

How would you rate Eleanor's performance?

BAND 1 2 3 4 5

CHECK

your answer against ours

ANSWER

Our rating for Eleanor was: 4

She exceeded the staff management objective, and deserves credit for that; and members obviously appreciate her support. However, she only just met the first objective, and hasn't carried out the spot survey to test reactions. She had some success on the equal opps objective, but seems not to have followed up on the badly-attended course. We would need to explore why and how she turned down the chance for collaboration: was there some more limited activity that would have kept the CHC involved?

Of course, if there were other events that had legitimately taken up her time, the rating might be less harsh.

If your rating was very different, read the Guidelines and the case again, and see where the difference arises. If you're still not clear, discuss the answers with your Chief Officer or another Chair.

In real life you would have much more specific information to go on.

The impact on pay

The rating you give influences the size of increase above basic pay that the Chief Officer will get that year. If the 'grandparent' agreed our rating, Eleanor would get only the annual rise, and no extra percentage. [If she were rated 3 she would have the annual rise and up to 2%].

The calculations are made more complex, because there's a ceiling on the total amount that can be paid out in PRP increases. If everyone in the scheme, including Eleanor, were rated at 3, they would get less than the maximum 2%.

5. Getting support

This Unit has looked only at some aspects of IPR: it's not sufficient training in itself. If you don't have previous experience of IPR, you will need to follow it up with a course, where you can practise the skills in more depth.

Even when you're trained, IPR is a demanding process. For two people who work closely together, it can feel difficult and divisive. Most Chairs find that the solution to this is openness: to acknowledge the difficulty, be candid and specific in carrying out the review, and make it clear that you still value the working relationship.

At the same time, you may want support from elsewhere. Make sure that the officer at Region in charge of the process gives you all the information you need. S/he probably has considerable experience of IPR and CHCs, and may be an ally. Other Chairs can also provide you with valuable hints, share their experience of the system, and offer support.

This is the last Unit of Basic Skills for CHC Chairs. We hope you have found the units useful and thought-provoking.

This pack, with two others, **Basic Skills for CHC Members** and **Further Skills for CHC Members**, is a new venture for CHCs. They were produced for ACHCEW by Ruth Valentine, a freelance consultant. Please let us have your comments: both what was helpful, and what you would have liked to be different. You can send your comments direct to ACHCEW, or through the Chief Officer.

