

THE VOICE

Speaking up for MHCLG members

4th April 2018

As moderation and End Year PMR markings loom, this PCS bulletin highlights certain key issues for Job Holders (JHs) and Reporting Officers (ROs) and anybody concerned about equal treatment in MHCLG.

RO determines the box mark, moderation meetings advise

HR has confirmed that it is ROs who determine box markings, not the moderation meetings:

“You [the RO] should **take account** of the points raised and feedback provided during moderation (whether general or specific to a member of your team) when **deciding on the final rating**” (<https://intranet.dclg.gov.uk/news/get-ready-for-your-end-year-review/>).

This reiterates the position adopted by HR in June 2015 (and again in February 2017) during an exchange initiated by PCS: the RO “...is responsible for **deciding the job holders rating**...” while moderation meetings provide “...**feedback** on standards and performance assessments and in some instances specific **advice** and **recommendations** on individual ratings”. ROs are therefore directly responsible and accountable for EY assessments.

An assessment should not come as a surprise

The Department’s guidance on ‘**How to undertake a mid or end year assessment**’ (<https://intranet.dclg.gov.uk/task/undertake-a-performance-review/>). indicates that the End Year assessment should build on all elements of the performance cycle during the year, including quarterly reviews. HR and PCS have therefore agreed that End Year assessments should not come as a surprise. If, however, your assessment does come as an unpleasant surprise you should seek early advice from a PCS representative.

“Under-performers” should be given opportunity to “come up to speed”

PCS is pressing HR to explicitly agree that staff who were told in good time during the PMR year that they were “underperforming” should nevertheless be awarded Good if their performance has reached that level by year end, consistent with management’s wish to see ROs place much greater emphasis on the coaching of staff in the PMR system.

Some staff benefit from this approach already. However some members have reported that they have been told that being assessed as “underperforming” earlier in the year means that they will be assessed as Development Needed at End Year, no matter how well they have subsequently performed, because staff must be judged on their performance against the whole 12 months. We are awaiting HR’s response, which is also a matter of consistent

treatment between staff, but the bottom line is that anybody receiving a Development Needed should consult a PCS representative.

The 2017-18 Mid year outcomes were again dreadful

As we head for the EY assessments it is important to note that the Mid Year PMR outcomes were once again marred by dreadful inequalities in the award of box marks. For example:

- White staff were more than twice as likely as Black staff to receive an exceptional marking (24% to 11%);
- Black staff were eight times more likely than White staff to receive a development needed marking (16% to 2%);
- Non-disabled staff were more than twice as likely as disabled staff to receive an exceptional marking (24% to 9%).

We could add other disturbing figures, for example around older staff.

No doubt departmental representatives wish to see these inequalities reduced at Year End and will work towards that aim. PCS assumes that the inequalities will in fact reduce to one degree or another but that will be beside the point.

In each year since the launch of the current system there have been dreadful inequalities in the award of the Exceeded and the Development Needed markings and the system has proved to be worse than the previous PMR system for inequalities of outcome. PCS warned pre-launch that the design of the current system carried a greater risk of bias and unfairness but our warnings were dismissed.

Whatever the final 2017/18 EY outcomes the current backward looking, judgemental and discriminatory PMR system should be abandoned. HR and the Unions should engage on the design of a forward looking, developmental, replacement. PCS is in dialogue with HR over the PMR system and will report back to members.

If you have views on this bulletin please e-mail Chris.HickeyTUS@communities.gsi.gov.uk, David.Jones@communities.gsi.gov.uk & Lisa.Marie@communities.gsi.gov.uk

If you work with colleagues who are not in a trade union please pass this bulletin to them and encourage them to join PCS. Application details can be obtained from Karen.Johnson@communities.gsi.gov.uk and James.Hawthorne@communities.gsi.gov.uk