

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES AND KNOWLEDGE OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS WITHIN NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) is a local authority in South Wales serving approximately 140,000 residents (NPTC, 2024b). It has 5 directorates, 16 service areas and over 6,500 employees (NPTC, 2024c).

THE BUSINESS CASE

Despite having a performance appraisal policy, data collected from employee surveys and exit interviews report inconsistent implementation across the organisation, with under half of staff receiving regular performance appraisals (NPTC, n.d.)

LITERATURE

Performance reviews are formal evaluations of employee performance, often used to inform decisions on development, pay, and organisational strategy (Ebert and Griffin, 2022; CIPD, 2025). Typically conducted by line managers, they influence employee perceptions and workplace outcomes (Woodhams and Taylor, 2022; Hutchinson, 2013). Reviews can enhance morale, clarify expectations, and align goals (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022), but may also be biased or subjective (Murphy, 2019; CIPD, 2025). While some studies show productivity gains (Bloom et al., 2012), others question their reliability and impact (Redman and Wilkinson, 2009). Effectiveness often depends on employee autonomy and managerial execution (Kuvaas, 2007; Howe, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Aim and Objectives

This report critically evaluates managerial perspectives and understanding of performance appraisals within NPTC. It's objectives include reviewing relevant literature, conducting primary research via questionnaires, analysing findings, and recommending improvements for consistent appraisal practices across the authority.

Research Philosophy and Approach

Guided by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2023) research onion model, the study adopts an interpretivist and pragmatic philosophy to explore varied managerial experiences (Crotty, 1998; Ryan, 2018; Creswell and Creswell, 2023). An inductive approach supports theory development based on collected data (Saunders et al., 2023).

Methodology and Strategy

A mixed-methods strategy was employed using Microsoft Forms to gather quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously (Bell et al., 2022; Taylor and Woodhams, 2022b). Surveys were chosen for their cost-effectiveness, anonymity, and ease of distribution, enhancing honest responses (Anderson and Fontinha, 2024). Interviews were excluded due to time and bias concerns.

Procedures and Techniques

The survey ran for 14 days, targeting 364 line managers via email. It included consent statements and piloting feedback, which led to the inclusion of a question on delivering negative feedback.

Limitations and Ethics

Potential bias was mitigated through anonymised data handling and clear consent procedures (McGrath et al., 2010; UKRI, 2024). Only the researcher accessed raw data, ensuring confidentiality.

RESULTS

Survey data revealed that 22% of respondents did not know where they could access NPTC's performance appraisal policy, suggesting inconsistent implementation (**Figure 1**). Comments indicated difficulty locating the policy on the intranet, with some unaware of its existence. Clear communication and accessibility of HR policies are essential for consistency and compliance (CIPD, 2025a). Line managers must be supported by both senior leadership and the people management team to effectively carry out their responsibilities (CIPD, 2025b; Whitehouse, 2019). Without proper guidance and visibility of key documents, performance management practices risk becoming fragmented and ineffective across the organisation.

Trullen et al. (2016) argue that policies are only effective when implemented by well-supported line managers. At NPTC, only 20 of 86 respondents had attended performance management training, with just 34% feeling adequately trained (**Figure 2**). Over half expressed interest in further training (**Figure 3**). Nationally, 82% of new managers lack formal training (CMI, 2023; Mayne, 2023), and 53% feel under-supported (CIPD, 2023). One NPTC respondent admitted to never receiving appraisal training or knowing it was required. Time constraints and usability issues were cited as barriers, echoing broader dissatisfaction with appraisal processes (Cespedes, 2022; Brown, 2024; CIPD, 2023).

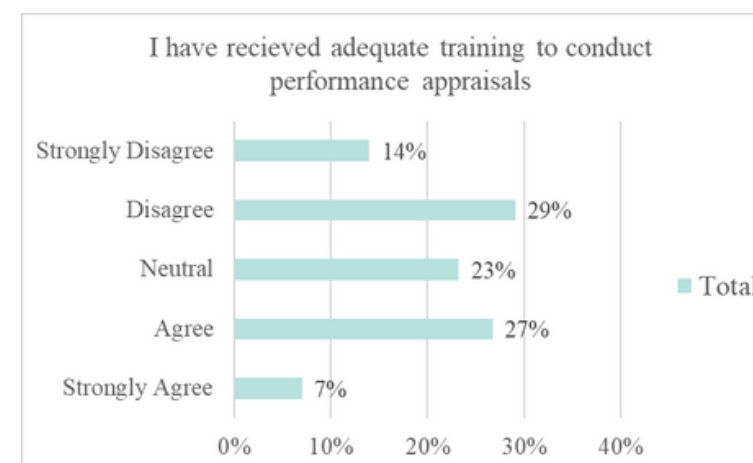


Figure 2

Survey responses revealed concerns about NPTC's performance appraisal process being overly time-consuming, lengthy, and inconsistent, with only 29% finding it user-friendly (**Figure 4**). Barends et al. (2022) argue that effective appraisals require multiple rater's and diverse performance measures.

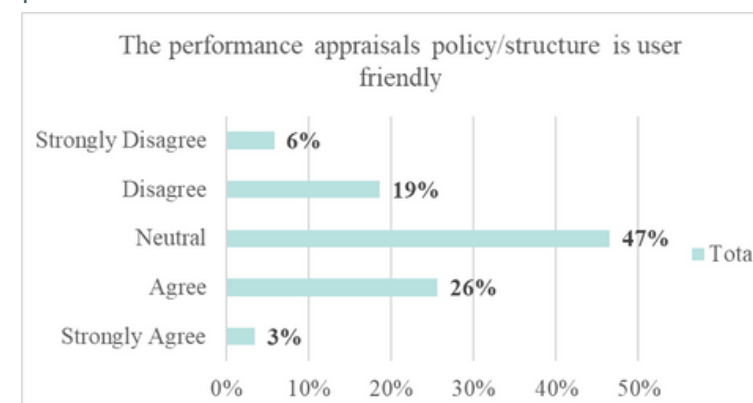


Figure 4

CONCLUSION

Research at NPTC revealed key issues in the performance appraisal process, including inadequate training and poor policy awareness among managers. Only a minority felt confident in conducting appraisals, despite training being available (Bosley and Gifford, 2023; CIPD, 2025c). The Chartered Management Institute (2023) found that trained managers reported greater confidence and effectiveness. Many managers were unaware of how to access appraisal policies, suggesting wider communication gaps (CIPD, 2025a). Appraisals were often viewed as time-consuming and ineffective, described as a "box ticking exercise." These findings indicate the need for clearer communication, improved training, and a review of appraisal practices to ensure organisational alignment.

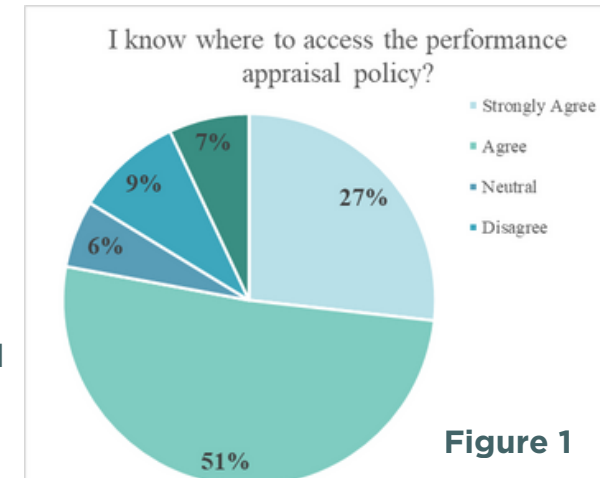


Figure 1

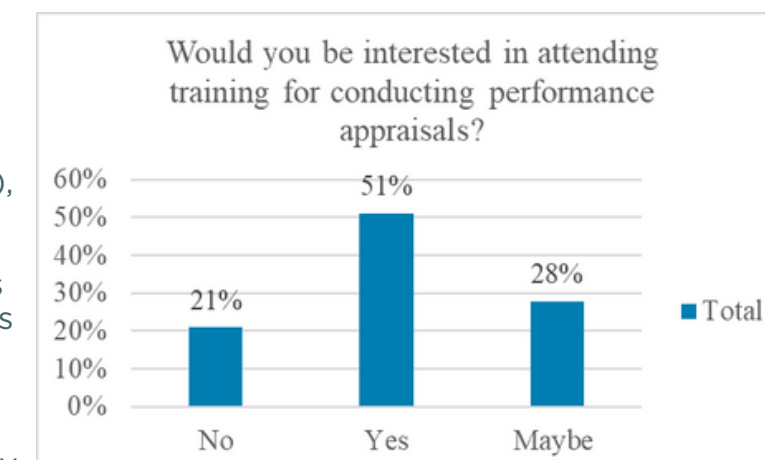


Figure 3

