

How to receive feedback



Information sheet from Seven steps > Step 6 > Further tools

Why is feedback so important?

Nobody likes being told what they are doing is wrong. However, feedback helps us to stop, think and learn how to do things differently, so we remain healthy and safe at work. Feedback is therefore very important and, in industries like construction, can be the difference between going home safely and not being able to go home at all.

It is important that the process of giving/receiving feedback is handled correctly. When handled badly, it can lead to frustration, anger and ill feeling between colleagues.

What feedback can I expect as part of a worker-involvement process?

People give feedback at work as a means of helping you. In terms of safety in the workplace, feedback can show how what you are doing may be putting yourself/your co-workers at risk and how you can do things differently. Feedback should never be personal; it is simply a way of improving performance and safety at work.

Who can I expect to get feedback from?

You can receive feedback from anyone at work. It may be informal feedback from a workmate or a supervisor watching out for you, or more formal feedback from a site supervisor or manager, during planned observations or walkabouts. Remember, giving feedback is not an easy thing to do and the person doing it is likely to be just as worried about how it is received as you are about receiving it. You should therefore remember that they are doing this first and foremost to help you.

How should I respond to feedback?

It isn't easy to receive feedback; no-one wants to be told what they are doing is wrong or potentially dangerous. It is easy to get defensive, remain silent, ignore or argue but the real skill in receiving feedback is to listen properly to what is said, as there are likely to be some valid points. Give the person the chance to speak and be open to suggestions for improvement. You can then put some (or all) of these into action and show you have learned from it.

Tips for receiving feedback

- **Take a deep breath.** It is all too easy to go on the defensive when receiving feedback so take a moment for a deep breath and to think about what you've just been told. Remember that feedback is provided to help keep you safe at work.
- **Try to remain cool.** If you find this hard, just ask for a moment to compose yourself.
- **Accept it.** Even the most experienced workers can lose awareness of health and safety. Sometimes it needs someone looking in from the outside to make us aware of potentially dangerous working practices.
- **Ask questions.** The feedback should ideally include suggestions on how you can do a task more safely. If no suggestions are made, ask how it can be done more safely.
- **Learn from it.** Try to see feedback as an opportunity to learn rather than a threat. Take it in the spirit it is intended – to ensure your health and safety on site.

If you have any further questions about the feedback you are given, there should be someone on most construction projects who can provide advice (eg the employer or principal contractor). Trade union-appointed safety representatives or employee safety representatives can also be valuable sources of support and information.

The Leadership and worker involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business performance and productivity. See: www.hse.gov.uk/construction/lwit/