Probation policy

Policy overview

We are committed to introducing new employees in a structured and supportive manner. It is essential to plan for the integration of new employees, so they can:

- understand and fulfil the requirements of their role
- make a valued contribution
- achieve the required standards promptly

These goals will ensure that new employees feel part of the organisation. It will make sure they understand the value they bring and the importance of the contribution they make.

The probationary period helps the employee and us to assess if the new role is suitable.

It will provide the employees with the opportunity to:

- understand the requirements of the role
- to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and experience
- achieve the necessary standard of performance

Principles

Employees who commenced employment prior to 1 July 2026 will remain subject to the probationary arrangements in place at the time of their appointment, as set out in their contract of employment.

During the probation period, managers will provide training, support and tools to help employees to perform in their roles to the required standard.

Managers will monitor performance and conduct. They will often meet with the employee to provide feedback and guidance.

Existing employees who have completed a probation period will not have another. We will manage any performance or conduct issues under the relevant policies.

The general probation period is four months. We can end this early or extend it by a maximum of one month.

The policy applies to all new employees, irrespective of working hours. It includes temporary or fixed-term contracts of four months or more.

If a contract is shorter than the length of the probation period, the probation period will be for the length of time they are employed.

- This policy applies to all employees newly appointed to the council and schools. Following successful completion of the probationary period and confirmation of appointment, requirements relating to training, development and progress towards, and, or

maintenance of, any relevant professional qualifications will continue to apply. These will inform decisions regarding suitability, in line with our policies and procedures.

- This policy also applies where managers appoint new employees one point below the grade for the post, see our recruitment policy for more information.

Managing the probation period

New employees will have an initial probation meeting shortly after starting their employment. Managers will set objectives and targets to assist in reaching the performance level we expect.

All employees, **excluding school-based employees and development firefighters**, are required to complete all mandatory learning excluding role specific learning during their probationary period. Successful completion of mandatory learning forms part of the assessment of satisfactory performance and conduct, and may be taken into account when confirming the employee's appointment.

During the probation period, managers will monitor:

- employee's performance
- conduct
- timekeeping
- sickness absence
- attendance

In the first month of probationary employment, managers will set time aside each week to discuss with the employee any issues such as:

- how the job is going
- any training needs
- any concerns
- how the employee is feeling

Managers will:

- hold monthly probation review meetings throughout the probation period
- deal with any concerns about work performance or conduct as they arise. Managers must not wait until the probation review meetings. Dealing with problems at an early stage means they are more likely to be dealt with successfully
- assess employee performance, capability and suitability for the role. Managers will hold monthly probation review meetings throughout the probation period.
- get feedback from supervisors, colleagues or other managers involved in the probation period of the new employee
- provide regular feedback to employees about their performance and progress. They will discuss any problems as soon as possible

Terms of employment during the probationary period

During the probationary period, employees are subject to all the terms and conditions of their contract, excluding the notice period requirements.

Either party may end the contract of employment. Both parties must give a notice period of one month. The length of notice is regardless of grade, as detailed in the local terms of conditions of employment.

Once the probationary period finishes, notice periods will be specified in the employee's contract.

Pay progression

We apply incremental pay progression on 1 April each year, unless an employee is already at the maximum of the grade. This may also be withheld if an individual is subject to our capability and disciplinary procedures.

New employees appointed after 1 October (up to 31 March) will need to be confirmed in post following a successful final probation review to be eligible for an increment.

Anyone appointed between 1 April and 1 October who successfully completes their final probation review and are confirmed in post will be eligible for an increment the following April.

Early termination during the probation period

We will invite employees to a probation hearing to consider possible termination of employment when:

- we can demonstrate that, during the appointment process, the employee purposely misled or provided false information. An example may be concerning their qualifications, skills or experience
- we consider that an employee's performance, conduct, or attendance is unsatisfactory despite being given appropriate support
- we consider an employee's conduct to be a concern of a more serious nature

End of probation

Near the end of the probationary period, the manager will undertake a final probation review as a desktop exercise, considering all available information relating to the employee's performance, conduct and attendance.

Following this review, there are three possible outcomes, which are to:

- confirm the appointment
- extend the probationary period by up to one month
- invite the employee to a probation hearing with the possibility of dismissal

Managers should seek advice from HR where an extension or probation hearing is being considered.

Confirming the appointment

The manager will confirm the end of the probation period with the employee. All aspects of the performance review must be satisfactory.

Extending the probation period

In some circumstances we may extend the probation period beyond four months, by up to one month. A meeting will be arranged with the employee where the manager is considering extending the probation period for reasons including, but not limited to:

- we have not been able to fully assess performance due to the employee's sickness or other authorised absence
- there have been concerns regarding performance. However, the manager has evidence to suggest that performance is likely to improve with an extension to the probation period

Managers will confirm an extension to a probation period in writing. We will advise employees that their employment may be terminated if they fail to meet the required standard for:

- performance
- conduct
- attendance

Probation hearing

Employees will be invited to attend a probation hearing if:

- their performance, conduct or attendance is unsatisfactory, and
- the manager does not consider an extension to the probation period would sufficiently improve the situation
- or, an extension has taken place and their performance, conduct or attendance remains unsatisfactory

The hearing may take place:

- near the end of the probation period
- at the end of the extended period of probation
- earlier where the conduct of the employee requires early consideration of termination

The employee will be invited in writing to attend a probation hearing, and will be provided with five calendar days' notice of the hearing.

The probation hearing will be with the employee's senior manager (sometimes referred to as 'grandparent' manager). If the head of service determines, then for the purposes of a probationary hearing a 'grandparent' manager can be given delegated responsibility for dismissals. For school staff, the probation hearing will be with the headteacher.

Employees may be accompanied by:

- colleague
- trade union official
- trade union representative

An HR representative will also be present at this meeting.

Where a manager decides to terminate employment, the employee is usually dismissed with notice or payment in lieu of notice (PILON), where applicable.

Probation dismissal appeals

Employees may appeal against a decision to dismiss within five calendar days of receipt of the dismissal letter. Appeals will not be in person (sometimes known as a 'desktop' appeal). The circumstances will be reviewed by the head of service or higher on the basis of information submitted from the employee and manager.

For school staff, the probation appeal will be with the chair of governor.

The probation appeal hearing decision is final with no further internal right of appeal.

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