

Probation Procedure on the intranet

Probation Procedure

All employees new to the council are subject to a 6 month probation period. New employees on fixed term contracts of 1 year or less will be subject to a 3 month probation period.

Managers should read the council's [Recruitment, Induction and Probation Policy](#) to familiarise themselves with their responsibilities with regard to induction and probation.

In order to give an employee a full opportunity to meet the required standards, the manager will usually wait until the end of the probationary period before taking a decision to terminate. However, if there is clear evidence to suggest that the employee is wholly unsuitable for the role, the manager should consult HR with a view to early termination.

Structured procedure

During the probationary period, the manager should follow a formal structured procedure that is aimed at assessing and reviewing the employee's performance, capability and suitability for the role. Both parties need to be clear about what to expect.

Managers should be prepared to provide all possible support to their new employees in order to give them a fair opportunity to become fully integrated and productive employees in the longer term.

The programme should include:

- setting objectives through the [Performance Development Review \(PDR\)](#) process;
- regular monitoring of the new employee's performance through progress meetings (121s);
- clear job outputs, i.e. what the new employee is expected to achieve during, or by the end of, the probationary period;
- the standards of performance and behaviour that are required in respect of the job duties and how this will be assessed;

- the provision of regular constructive feedback;
- identification and discussion of any problem areas at the earliest possible time;
- support and guidance including the provision of any necessary training and coaching.

The HR team are available to provide support and guidance where required throughout the programme.

Progress meetings

A key part of the probation procedure is for managers to hold regular progress meetings with the employee (121s). These should be a two-way process and provide both with the opportunity to discuss progress on a one-to-one and confidential basis. These meetings should be held at least once a month and should be planned and scheduled at the outset of the employee's employment.

At each meeting, the manager should aim to:

- highlight areas where the employee is doing well;
- explain clearly and in precise terms any areas in which the employee is falling below the required levels;
- explore the possible reasons for any failure to meet the required standards;
- discuss and agree whether or not any specific training or coaching is required;
- discuss any other relevant matters such as timekeeping, attendance, general conduct or attitude;
- invite the employee to comment on issues such as the extent to which he or she has integrated into the service and how well he or she is getting on with colleagues; and
- give the employee an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns about any aspect of his or her employment.

The content of progress meetings should be fully and clearly documented on a [probation review form](#).

If there are any areas of disagreement over what should be recorded on the form, the manager should try to resolve these with the employee prior to the document being signed by both parties.

Concerns

Where any concerns have arisen about the employee's performance, the manager should discuss these fully and openly with the employee and an action plan to remedy the problem should be agreed. The manager should always adopt a supportive attitude.

Where necessary, the manager should clearly explain the consequences of underperforming to the employee. The employee should be helped to understand that a continued failure to achieve the required standards could ultimately lead to his or her employment being terminated.

At the end of each progress meeting, the manager should agree an action plan with the employee so that his or her progress can be monitored during the next few weeks.

The action plan should be documented in detail, stating what should be done, by whom, how and by when. This should include any support such as training and coaching that might be required. In this way, the employee will be aware of what is expected of him or her by the time of the next review.

Final review meeting

At the end of the probationary period, the manager should conduct a final review of the employee's performance and suitability for the job.

It is extremely important that the final review meeting is held on or before the end of the agreed probationary period. If the meeting does not take place by this date, technically the employee's appointment will be confirmed by default and any issues will need to be managed under the council's Managing Performance Policy.

The final review will allow both the manager and the employee to:

- identify and discuss any areas in which the employee requires further training or development;

- check how the employee feels about his or her employment in general; and
- explain how performance will be managed in the future – i.e. through the PDR scheme.

If the employee's performance is satisfactory, the manager should inform HR who will issue a letter of confirmation of appointment to the employee.

If the employee's performance has not been up to the standards required, please see section below on Termination of Employment.

Extending probationary periods

If, at the end of the set probationary period, the employee's performance is unsatisfactory - or in cases where the employee or the manager has been absent from the workplace for an extended period during probation - an extension of the probationary period may be appropriate.

An extension should normally be sought only where there are special circumstances justifying it. The manager should consult with HR prior to any decision to extend an employee's probationary period.

As an employee will gain the right to claim unfair dismissal after completion of the usual qualifying period of continuous service to bring a complaint of unfair dismissal, any extension of a probationary period should normally be for no more than three months.

Where it is agreed that an employee's period of probation will be extended, it will be important for the manager to set out the terms of the extension in writing. It will be important to state clearly:

- the length of the extension and the date on which the extended period of probation will end;
- the reason for the extension - for example that the employee's performance has fallen short of certain standards, but the manager reasonably believes that an extension of time will be effective in allowing him or her to achieve these standards;
- how and why performance has fallen short of the required standards;
- the performance standards or objectives that the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended period of probation;

- any support - such as further training - that will be provided during the extension; and
- that if the employee does not meet fully the required standards by the end of the extended period of probation, his or her employment will be terminated.

It is not advisable to extend an employee's period of probation more than once. It is equally inadvisable to make extending probationary periods the norm. An extension should be agreed only if there are special factors that justify it.

Termination of employment

If the employee's performance is not up to the standards required, the manager should discuss the matter with the Head of Service and HR before any decision is made not to confirm the employee's appointment.

If the decision is to terminate the employment, a meeting will be set up with the Head of Service and HR to inform the employee of this and the reasons why. Employees have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a trade union representative or work colleague and should be given at least 5 working days' notice. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing and the employee will be given 1 months' notice irrespective of their grade.

The employee will have the right of appeal against the termination of their employment in line with the [Appeal's policy](#).