



# **East Herts Council**

## **Probationary Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

**Policy Statement No 41 (Issue No 1)  
April 2011**

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## **PROBATIONARY POLICY**

### **Policy Statement No 41 (Issue No 1) April 2011**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy outlines the probationary procedure for all employees commencing employment at East Herts Council including those with previous local government service.
- 1.2 The policy includes employees who are employed on a temporary, fixed term contracts, secondments (with or without continuous local government service).
- 1.3 An employee's performance, attendance and conduct will be monitored throughout the probationary period to ensure that the employee meets the required standards. The Line Manager will ensure that the member of staff is properly supported and trained to enable them to become an effective member of the team.
- 1.4 New employees will be subject to a 6 months probationary period. The probationary period would be reduced to 3 months for a secondment or fixed term contract.

#### **2.0 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council employees except for Chief Officer level and above, where it should be used in conjunction with procedures set out in the Constitution.
- 2.2 All new members of staff are subject to a probationary period and should follow the review process as a good practice guide.
- 2.3 If a member of staff changes role during their employment with East Herts Council any issues arising from the probationary reviews must be dealt with through the councils other policies for example managing performance, absence management or disciplinary at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.4 The probationary period may be extended in exceptional circumstance.

#### **3.0 Principles**

- 3.1 Managers should assess the employee's capabilities, reliability and suitability for the role.
- 3.2 Employees should work to their set objectives, attend work as contracted to do so and ensure their personal conduct is acceptable at all times.
- 3.3 Appropriate training will be available to the employee, including corporate induction if new to the Council.
- 3.4 Open communication between managers and employee.
- 3.5 Human Resources will provide advice and support to managers when dealing with probation issues.
- 3.6 Employees will be able to contact Human Resources for advice.

#### **4.0 Review Timeline**

- 4.1 The initial review meeting will be held in the first week between the manager and the employee. Then regular working 1-2-1 meetings should be diarised.
- 4.2 The manager will then hold review meetings at 6 weeks, 12 weeks and 20 weeks. The outcome of these reviews should be recorded on the appropriate progress review form and sent to HR. Appendix A.
- 4.3 If the contract is a secondment or a fix term contract with review meetings would be a 3 weeks, 6 weeks and 10 weeks and recorded on the appropriate progress review form.
- 4.4 For the probationary period to be effective, it must have the active and positive involvement of both the manager and employee. This will allow any areas of concern to be raised and appropriate action to be taken before the end of the probationary period.

#### **5.0 Initial Review Meeting**

5.1 This meeting will be arranged in the employee's first week of employment as part of their induction. The purpose of this meeting is to set out the employees objectives, complete the induction check list and discuss the priorities of the Service and Council. In line with the Councils Performance Development Review Scheme the objectives must be sent to HR once finalised.

## **6.0 Regular Review Meetings**

6.1 It is recommended that these meetings are booked in advance and should be held at 6, 12 and 20 weeks.

6.2 The manager should use the standard progress review form for each meeting and send the completed form to Human Resources signed by both the manager and employee.

6.3 At the review meeting the manager should consider the progress the employee has made and check the employee's performance against the set objectives. Attendance and personal conduct should also be discussed.

6.4 The employee should demonstrate they have been capable of undertaking the full range of their set duties and objectives.

6.5 Any issues identified by either party should be discussed at the review meetings. Human Resources should be informed if the probation is not going well and provide support if required.

## **7.0 Completion of Satisfactory Probation**

7.1 Human Resources write to the manager one month before the probation period is due to end. If the employee has satisfactorily completed the probation period the manager should sign off the probation at this point and Human Resources will write to the employee confirming their employment.

## **8.0 Unsatisfactory Probation - First Formal Review Meeting**

8.1 The first formal meeting will only be required if the performance is deemed as unsatisfactory and would be in addition to the set review meetings. If the employee has continuous local government service; the appropriate council policy should be implemented at this stage.

8.2 If the manager has identified that there are issues relating to the employee's performance, attendance or conduct these issues should

be discussed with the employee at the earliest possible opportunity and a First Formal Review Meeting should be arranged.

- 8.3 The manager must inform the employee, giving at least 5 working days notice, that they are required to attend a formal meeting. The employee must be informed of the date, time and location of the meeting. A reason for the meeting must be given, an outline of the issue. The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. Human Resources will attend this meeting.
- 8.4 The formal review meeting will consider:
- The performance, conduct/behaviour or absence that is below the standard required.
  - Details of management action taken to assist and support the employee to reach the required standards, including any identified training.
  - The employee's response/explanation to all issues raised by the manager.
- 8.5 If the outcome of the meeting finds that the employee is working at a satisfactory level the manager should inform the employee no further action will be taken. This will be confirmed in writing within 5 days and a copy will be placed on the employee's personal file.
- 8.6 If the meeting finds the employee is not working to a satisfactory level the manager will issue a written warning within 5 days of the meeting which will include a clear set of targets for the employee to work to within a given time frame and details of the training and support that was discussed. The improvement targets should be concise and clear and giving the member of staff a realistic time scale to show improvement e.g. 1 month. The probationary period may have to be reviewed at this point to enable the employee to improve within the target deadlines set. A copy of the outcome will be placed on the employee's personal file. The written warning will be kept on the employee's file for six months.
- 9.0 Second Formal Review Meeting – Unsatisfactory Probation**

- 9.1 In the event that the employee's performance has not improved within the set time period agreed a Second Formal Review Meeting should be held and chaired by the Head of Service.
- 9.2 The manager must inform the employee, giving at least 5 working days notice, that they are required to attend a formal meeting. The employee must be informed of the date, time and location of the meeting. The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. Human Resources will attend this meeting, which would be chaired by the Head of Service.
- 9.3 The manager should summarise to the Head of Service the position to date including details of any action taken to assist the employee to achieve their objectives and the employee should then comment on their progress since the last meeting.
- 9.4 The Head of Service should then decide if the employee has reached the required level of performance expected for their role and set objectives.
- 9.5 If it is deemed that the employee is working at the expected level, the Head of Service should send a letter within 5 working days to confirm they have now reached a satisfactory level and the written warning will remain on their personal file for 6 months.
- 9.6 If the employee is still not working at the expected level or performance diminishes the Head of Service should write to the employee within 5 working days issuing a final written warning with a clear set of targets for the employee to work to within a given time frame for improvement including any training or support discussed. The employee should also be informed that if their performance does not improve they will be dismissed from the Council.
- 9.7 Human Resources will continue to support the manager and employee and additional training and support should be investigated and implemented as appropriate.

#### **10.0 Final Review Meeting**

- 10.1 If the employee's performance does not improve within the agreed timeframe a final review meeting will be arranged, chaired by the Director.
- 10.2 The manager must inform the employee, giving at least 5 working days notice, that they are required to attend a formal meeting. The

employee must be informed of the date, time and location of the meeting. The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. Human Resources will attend this meeting, which would be chaired by the Director.

- 10.3 The manager should summarise the position and explain the actions taken to support the employee in achieving their objectives. The employee should then comment on their progression.
- 10.4 The Director should decide if the employee has been able to achieve the objectives set for their post and their performance meets the required level.
- 10.5 If it is deemed that the employee has reached a satisfactory level, the Director will write to the employee to confirm they have achieved the expected level and the final warning will be remain on their personal file for 12 months.
- 10.6 If the employee hasn't reached the appropriate level of performance to meet their set objectives. The Director will dismiss the employee from the council after consultation with the Head of Human Resources. The employee will be given their contractual notice period. This will be confirmed in writing.

## **11.0 Extension to Probationary Period**

- 11.1 Only in exceptional circumstances will the probationary period be extended, good practice would state that the probationary period should only be extended up to a maximum of 12 weeks. The extension should reflect the appropriate training need or timeframe of the targets set at the formal review.
- 11.2 Extensions should only be for the purpose of dealing with performance issues, e.g. extended form training purposes.
- 11.3 Managers will seek advice from Human Resources prior to extending the probationary period

## **12.0 Appeal**

- 12.1 All employees have the right to appeal against any formal action of this procedure in accordance with the Council's Appeals Policy.



**13.0 Policy Review and Amendment**

- 13.1 This Policy shall be reviewed after two years or sooner in line with legislation and best practice to reflect the best possible level of support and management.