**March 2014**

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Probation**

**Procedure**



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1. **Introduction**
   1. The aim of the Probation Procedure is to ensure all employees are fully supported in achieving an appropriate level of work performance, attendance and behaviour during their probation period, to assist them in demonstrating their suitability to undertake the full duties of their new post. The Probation Procedure provides a process to decide whether an employee is suitable for the job to which they have been appointed.
2. **Scope**
   1. The Probation Procedure applies to all new employees appointed to a permanent contract, or temporary contract of 6 months or more, with Royal Greenwich including those with previous local government employment. It does not apply to schools, casuals, agency staff or contractors.
   2. For newly qualified social workers subject to the Assessed & Supported Year in Employment Programme, all new starters will automatically be subject to a probation period.
   3. Existing employees who voluntary obtain a new post within the Royal Borough are not subject to this procedure but will be expected to meet the full performance requirements within 6 months of taking up the post. Any performance issues relating to these appointments should dealt with in accordance with the Royal Borough’s Disciplinary, Capability or Managing Absence procedures as appropriate.

2.3 This policy does not apply to employees who have been assimilated or redeployed into a post within the Royal Borough which are subject to the processes outlined in the Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy and the [Redeployment](http://gcint-share-001.gcint.gc.gov.uk/sites/hrintranet/change/Documents/Redeployment/redeployment%20procedure%20FINAL.doc) Procedures**.**

1. **Induction**
   1. The importance of good induction for a new starter in assisting them to complete their probationary period satisfactorily cannot be underestimated. The purpose of induction is to support employees during this period and to help them to become fully integrated into the Royal Borough and to assist them to carry out the duties of the post as soon as possible.
2. **Probation periods**

4.1 The standard probationary period is 6 months with formal review meetings after 1, 3 and 5 months. This may be extended by normally up to 3 months, if performance, conduct or attendance issues cause concern during the initial probationary period. For newly qualified social workers subject to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Programme, all new starters will automatically be subject to a 12 month probation period.

* + 1. Every effort should be made to help employees to settle into their new role and support provided. Employees must be advised of any issues as soon as they arise and given the opportunity to discuss them. Regular review meetings will ensure that managers assess and evaluate performance of new employees on a more formal and consistent basis.

**5. Assessing employees during the probation period**

* 1. The manager should meet with the new employee within their first few days to:
* set out the standards and assessment criteria to evaluate their performance during the probationary period
* outline the probationary process and agree 1,3 and 5 month review meeting dates
* clarify responsibilities and priorities
* identify any initial training needs and make arrangements for these to take place

5.2 By the end of the probationary period, the employee must demonstrate capability to work to an acceptable standard without requiring an undue level of supervision. Whilst the job description and person specification are the starting point for identifying assessment criteria, the purpose of the probationary period is to assess performance in the job rather than confirm judgements made at selection about whether the new employee meets the selection criteria.

5.3 Managers are recommended to use the following headings to assess employees during the probation period using the job description and person specification to ensure objective assessment

**Quality and Quantity of work**

For example:

* Standards achieved in comparison to expected standards or being achieved by other employees doing similar jobs;
* Number and regularity of errors
* Level of supervision required
* Ability to plan and organise.
* Meeting targets and deadlines

**Attitude and motivation**

For example:

* Ability and interest to learn and understand job requirements
* Flexibility, reliability and adaptability to changing situations;
* Ability to work with other employees and without close supervision

**Conduct and attendance**

For example:

* Behaviour at work has not resulted in any management intervention and is compatible with employee duties
* Understanding and observance of organisational rules and procedures e.g. flexitime recording and dress style is client appropriate
* Attendance levels
* Punctuality and timekeeping

**Management standards (supervisors and managers only)**

Meeting the appropriate level of Corporate Management Standards (communication, performance, leadership) as outlined in the Standards framework and used for recruitment and selection for management roles.

* 1. Where there are any type of conduct issues involving probationers, investigations need to be carried out as quickly as possible to then enable a final probation review meeting to take place. Where this is not possible, an extension to the probation period may need to be considered. Following any investigation, a final Probation review meeting will need to consider the extent that any proven misconduct has had on the employee’s overall performance and whether they remain suitable to be permanently employed. Should a decision be made that the conduct issue has brought trust and confidence into question this may result in a decision to dismiss depending upon the circumstances of the case.

**6. The review process**

6.1 Whilst the 1,3 and 5 month review meetings provide the basis for assessing probationers, if at any stage during the probationary period significant issues arise, managers should deal with these at the time rather than wait for the next formal review meeting. If at any time during the probationary period, it becomes apparent that the employee is falling significantly short of required standards despite measures to support the employee to meet these standards, managers may in appropriate circumstances move straight to recommending termination to their senior manager at a final review meeting (see paragraph 9).

**1 month review**

6.2 The first formal review should take place as soon as the employee has completed 1months service. The manager should conduct the review meeting. Prior to the review, the manager should have continuously assessed the employee against required standards which would have been discussed within the first few days of their employment and within the context of the requirements of their job description and person specification.

6.3 At this review meeting, the manager should assess the employee’s performance and progress using the headings provided with the 1/3 month Probation review form, (and discuss any key issues with the employee. In particular, the manager should consider whether any improvements in the employee’s performance are required and what measures are required to improve performance recommending additional training, where relevant.

6.4 If an employee has not met the required standards or made sufficient progress, the employee must be informed that they may be dismissed if substantial or significant improvement is not made during the remainder of the probationary period. This should be recorded on the 1/3 month Probation review form

6.5 The manager should complete the 1/3 month Probation review form which the employee and the manager should sign and return a copy of the completed form to HR Coaching & Advice team for placing on their personal file.

6.6 In some cases where performance is so poor as to have a serious impact on service delivery, the manager can decide at this stage to recommend early termination. A final review meeting would then be arranged in line with paragraph 9 of this procedure.

**7. 3 month review**

7.1 The second review should take place as soon as the employee has completed 3 months service in the same format as the 1 month meeting.

7.2 The purpose of the second review is to review the employee’s performance over the 3 month period. Where the 1 month review indicated that improvements in the employee’s performance were required, the second review will also consider the extent to which the employee has made these improvements.

7.3 If the employee has not met the required standards for the role or if the employee has not made sufficient progress, the employee must be informed that they may be dismissed at the end of the probationary period if improvement is not made but will be given further support and guidance as required. It is important to check whether the employee feels that the role or post is right for them as the probation period should be a two way process. If following an honest discussion, the employee is not content in their role, then alternatives should be considered for the remaining 3 months such as voluntary resignation or looking for other vacancies both internally and externally.

7.4 Where performance is so poor as to have a serious impact on service delivery, the manager can decide to recommend early termination. A final review meeting will then be arranged in line with paragraph 9 of this procedure

7.5 Once the performance review has been completed, the manager should complete the 1/3 month Probation review form. The employee and the manager should then sign the form. A copy of the form should be sent to HR Coaching & Advice team.

**8. Final review meeting (where satisfactory performance)**

8.1 Within the 5th month, the manager should meet with the employee and review their performance against the standards required to effectively carry out the duties of the post. If there are minor performance concerns these must be discussed and recorded.

8.2 Following this meeting a decision can be taken that the probationary service has been successfully completed and employment can be confirmed using Final Probation Report to senior manager form to HR Coaching and Advice team who will then write to the employee to confirm their appointment *(see standard* [*letter confirming employment*](http://gcint-share-001.gcint.gc.gov.uk/sites/hrintranet/newtolbg/Documents/Probation/Letter%20Confirming%20Employment.doc)*).*

**9. Final review meeting (where employee performance or progress is not satisfactory)**

9.1 If performance requirements are still not being met the employee by the 5th month

or if there are serious performance or conduct issues identified earlier in the probationary period which could lead to dismissal, the employee must be invited, in writing to a final review meeting. Where dismissal is a possible outcome, the employee must be advised of their right to be accompanied to this formal review meeting by a trade union representative or work colleague of their choice

9.2 The employee will be advised that a final review meeting will be scheduled which will be chaired by a manager who has the authority to dismiss the probationer and that they have a right of appeal against the proposed management decision. The manager chairing a dismissal hearing must be at grade PO4 and above. This will be a manger from the Directorate. Note: the manager making the formal decision must be senior to the employee subject to the formal action and at least equal in seniority to the person who presents the management case.

9.3 The letter to the employee inviting them to this meeting must state:

* the time, date and location of the meeting and their right to be accompanied
* details of how their performance has fallen short of requirements and
* clearly state that the one outcome of the meeting could be termination of their employment

*(See Standard letter* [*Invite Final Review Meeting Unsatisfactory Performance*](http://gcint-share-001.gcint.gc.gov.uk/sites/hrintranet/newtolbg/Documents/Probation/Letter%20invite%20Final%20Review%20Meeting%20(unsatisfactory%20performance).doc)*)*

To allow the employee sufficient time to prepare for the meeting and consider a response, this letter must be sent at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting date.

9.4 See ‘Guidance note on process for managing final review meetings and appeals where performance or conduct is not satisfactory.’ If the decision is to dismiss *See Standard* [*Letter of dismissal for failed probation period*](http://gcint-share-001.gcint.gc.gov.uk/sites/hrintranet/newtolbg/Documents/Probation/Letter%20of%20Dismissal%20failed%20probationary%20period.doc)*.*

9.5 The employee will have a right to appeal against the decision within 10 working days of written notification that they have been dismissed. See Guidance note above regarding the process which will then be the final decision of the Royal Borough. The Appeal Officer will be a manager from outside the Directorate.

**10 Extension of Probation Period**

10.1 If the employee’s manager considers that the probation period should be extended, this matter must be discussed with the relevant Chief Officer whose decision about the extension of the probation period will be final. Extensions are normally considered where the employee’s performance has recently deteriorated or has been variable over the six month period and a further period may help to establish whether a suitable level of performance can be maintained. Extensions are not normally considered where the manager believes performance is not likely to improve further or where performance is having a serious impact on service delivery or other team members.

10.2 Where the Chief Officer concludes that the probation period will be extended, the employee must be informed of this in writing and that the reason for the extension (normally under-performance). The letter will state what standards of performance are required, when the performance will be reviewed and that, if standards are not met, then a recommendation to dismiss will be made. See *Standard* [*Letter extension of Probationary Period*](http://gcint-share-001.gcint.gc.gov.uk/sites/hrintranet/newtolbg/Documents/Probation/Letter%20Extension%20of%20Probationary%20Period.doc)

### 10.3 Should an extension be agreed, the manager should complete the Final Probation report to senior manager, copy of the form should be sent to HR Coaching & Advice Team.

10.4 At the end of the extended probation period, if the performance has proved satisfactory, the employee should be informed verbally of the decision at a reconvened Final Review meeting and this will be followed by written confirmation that their appointment is being confirmed.

**11. Further information**

11.1 If you have any queries regarding this procedure, please contact the HR Coaching & Advice Team.

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