



<b>Staffordshire County Council</b>			<b>HR Policy Handbook</b>				
Reference Number	<b>HR 35</b>	Approved By	<b>Officers/ Unions</b>	Issue	<b>01</b>	Date	<b>18/03/04</b>
Policy Title	<b>Probationary Periods</b>						

### **Legislative Framework**

No specific legislation applies to the subject of Probationary Periods.

### **Policy Statement**

Appropriate Probationary Periods will be applied to all eligible employees under the National Joint Council Terms and Conditions and those negotiated and agreed through local arrangements.

### **Trade Union**

There are many trade unions working within Staffordshire County Council who can assist with this process. It is recommended that the employee be advised to contact their trade union representative at the earliest stage so that the union can offer them appropriate advice, guidance and support.

### **HR Units**

Directorate HR units can assist with the interpretation and application of this process. It is recommended that a HR representative be contacted at the earliest stage so that appropriate advice, guidance and support can be offered to both the manager and employee.

### **Guidance On How to Apply the Policy**

#### **Levels of Authority**

Throughout this policy document, there are many references to 'manager'. For the purposes of this policy, 'manager' is the person delegated by the Director to perform the task. The manager could vary according to

Directorate staffing structures, but it is likely to be the employees line manager or business unit manager. For further clarification please check with your Directorate HR Unit.

### **Eligibility**

This policy applies to all new entrants to Staffordshire County Council.

### **New Entrants**

New entrants are defined as individuals who are joining the County Council from

- (a) school/college, or
- (b) university, or
- (c) a period of redundancy/unemployment/sickness/ill health, or
- (d) a private sector employer, or
- (e) a public sector employer whose service is not accepted by Staffordshire County Council.

**Note:** Public Sector service which is accepted by Staffordshire County Council is listed within the Redundancy Modification Order. Details are available from Pension Services within the Resources Directorate or via [www.lg-employers.gov.uk](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk).

### **Provisions**

When a new employee enters a post within Staffordshire County Council, they will be subject to a probationary period. The purpose of this probationary period is for the employee and manager to review the individuals' performance in their new role and discuss any training needs that they may have. Following the successful completion of the probationary period the employee will be officially confirmed in post.

Prior to the employee commencing with Staffordshire County Council, they will receive a Written Statement of Particulars that will state whether or not their contract is subject to a probationary period. If the employee is subject to a probationary period it will be for a 6 month period.

## **Initial Induction Meeting and Discussion**

The manager, as part of the employees' induction, should meet with the employee during the first week of employment. This meeting should cover

- the manager's expectations of the employee in the new role
- the job requirements linked to the competency framework and performance systems detailing what is expected on a day to day basis and over the forthcoming year
- attitudes and behaviours expected
- the identification of realistic targets and actions arising from the general requirements of the role as well as special objectives arising from the business plan
- immediate training and development needs in order to deliver the day to day role
- longer term training and development needs in order to deliver and support strategic objectives

in order to agree a plan of action. In addition, the manager and employee will also agree future meetings in order to review the employees' performance and training needs during the probationary period.

The manager will record the targets and training needs on the appropriate documentation and it will be agreed and signed by the employee and manager.

## **Ongoing Meetings**

The manager will review, with the employee, their performance and training needs on a regular basis throughout their probationary period as agreed in the initial induction meeting. This will ideally be done on a monthly basis or more often if problems are encountered.

The meetings will be done through one to one meetings and should cover

- the employees' progress against tasks/targets,
- discuss any training received during the period and its effectiveness,
- address any issues or concerns that may have arisen,
- revise or identify new targets in line with performance
- identify any additional training or support required.

The detail of the meeting will be recorded fully on the appropriate documentation and signed by the employee and manager. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that the employee completes their probationary period satisfactorily.

### **End of Probationary Period**

The manager, after the specified probationary period, should complete a final review with the employee. At this point the manager has three options:

- (i) Confirmation of the employee in post
  - this should be where the employee has successfully completed and achieved all their probationary targets and milestones. The manager should be fully confident that the employee is competent to deliver the role
- (ii) Extension of the probationary period
  - this should be where the employee has had some difficulty in meeting their probationary targets and milestones. The manager should have begun to address the relevant issues during the probationary period and be offering additional support and training. The extension period should be realistic whereby the employee can ideally achieve the expected targets and competencies.
  - Following the extension period, the manager has two options
    - (a) Confirmation of the employee in post
      - this should be where the employee is has successfully completed and achieved all their probationary targets and milestones. The manager should now be fully confident that the employee is competent to deliver the role
    - (b) Terminate the employees' contract of employment

- this should be where the employee still has not achieved their probationary targets and milestones. The manager should be confident that the individual would not be able to perform the role competently and to the required standards.
- (iii) Terminate the employees' contract of employment.
- this should be where the employee has not achieved their probationary targets and milestones. The manager should have addressed the relevant issues during the probationary period and offered a lot of training, support and guidance. The manager should be confident that the individual would not be able to perform the role competently and perform to the required standards.

### **Annual Leave during Probationary Period**

The employee will be allowed to take annual leave during their probationary period. However, during this time they will be required to complete and sign the appropriate documentation and have this authorised by their manager.

If the employee fails to satisfactorily complete the probationary period, and as a result, have their contract of employment terminated, they will be required to pay back any over claimed holiday payments received. These payments will be calculated according to the Employment Rights Act 1996.

### **Other considerations**

Please also see other policies listed below:

- Workforce Development Plan
- Capability
- Investors in People

### **Accountabilities**

#### **Employee Accountabilities**

- To be available to discuss their role and identify appropriate targets and milestones

- To actively participate in any training and development programmes identified in order to assist them deliver against targets and milestones
- To effectively and efficiently work towards identified targets and milestones and seek assistance and guidance as and when required

### **Manager Accountabilities**

- To arrange to meet all new employees within the first week of employment to discuss their new role and identify appropriate targets, milestones and training courses
- To arrange future review meetings throughout the probationary period in order to discuss performance and training issues and offer additional support and guidance as and when required
- To set realistic and achievable targets and milestones
- To be fair, equitable, open and honest in the treatment of all employees
- To either confirm, extend or terminate the employees' contract of employment after a final discussion with the employee in a timely manner

### **Further Advice and Information**

If you need any further advice on how to apply this policy please contact your Directorate HR Manager.

Further background information on this topic is available on the following Websites:

[www.dti.gov.uk](http://www.dti.gov.uk)

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

[www.lg-employers.gov.uk](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk)

See also national conditions of service and local agreements before determining or issuing advice.

### **Standard Documents**

- Immediate Training Needs Form
- Probationary Review Form

- Standard letter – Successful Probationary Period
- Standard Letter – Extension of Probationary Period

This information can be made available in a range of formats and languages, including Braille and large print. If this would be useful to you or someone you know, please contact your Directorate HR Manager.