



## Probationary Policy & Procedure

### Policy History

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Summary of Change</b> | <b>Contact Team</b> | <b>Implementation Date</b>   | <b>Review Date</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1              | Updated policy           | HR Policy Team      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2005 | January 2007       |
| 2              | Amendment to procedure   | HR Policy Team      | 7 <sup>th</sup> April 2006   | January 2007       |

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## **SECTION A**

### **Probation Policy**

#### **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 This policy informs employees and managers of what is required during the probationary period where an employee has no previous Local Government (or relevant) service.
- 1.2 Employees who have transferred from other Local Authorities, or who have related service (i.e. LEA support staff, together with civilian employees from the Police and Fire Services) are not subject to a probationary period, provided they have over six months' continuous service with their previous employer.
- 1.3 A full list of relevant organisations is available from Department HR staff.

#### **2. Scope**

- 2.1 The Probationary Policy and Procedure applies to all new council employees (except those that have completed the full six month probation period with a relevant body, that is a body listed under the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc) (Modification) Order 1999) employed under the provisions of the following negotiating bodies as amended locally;

JNC for Chief Executives

JNC for Chief Officers

JNC for Local Authority Craft and Associated Employees

JNC for Youth and Community Workers

NJC for Local Government Services

Soulbury Committee

- 2.2 They also apply to those employed under the terms and conditions of the School Teachers Review body where adopted by the individual Governing Body.

#### **3. Temporary Employees**

- 3.1 Employees on temporary contracts of 6 months or longer will be required to complete the full probation period.
- 3.2 Where an employee is on a temporary contract of less than six months the probation period will span the whole of the employment. If the temporary contract were to be extended, the probation period would continue until six month's service was complete.

## **SECTION B**

### **Probation Procedure**

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.2 The probation period provides managers with the opportunity to clarify what is expected of a new employee, set objectives and standards and assess performance. It also gives new employees the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their new role and to assess their suitability to a post/organisation.
- 1.3 The aim of this procedure is to inform employees and managers of what is expected during the probationary period.

#### 2. Induction

- 2.1 For the probationary period to be successful a comprehensive induction programme must support it. This will assist the employee in understanding their role within Plymouth City Council and the standards expected.

#### 3. Procedure

##### **3.1 Undertaking Assessments**

- 3.1.1 The job description and person specification are key documents and should be used during the probationary assessment process.
- 3.1.2 Employees must be informed that they will be assessed during their probationary period at two, four and six months. The final assessment, which takes place during the last month of the probation period, must be completed before employment can be confirmed.
- 3.1.3 Managers must complete the relevant Probationary Report Form - there is one form for each of the assessment periods ([Appendices 1, 2 & 3](#)). A copy of the completed form should be retained by the manager in preparation for the next assessment, and the employee must also receive a copy.
- 3.1.4 All reports must be discussed with the employee and comments given before they are submitted to the appropriate admin section for processing.
- 3.1.5 When an unsatisfactory two/four month assessment report is submitted the following requirements must be met:-
  - i. The employee must have been made aware of any performance shortcomings at the earliest opportunity (see [section 3.2](#) below 'Dealing with Performance Issues'), in consultation with Departmental HR Advisers where appropriate.

- ii. The employee must be offered suitable instruction, training or guidance in order to overcome these difficulties.
- iii. The employee must be allowed reasonable time for improvement before further action is taken. For example to complete any training that has been identified.
- iv. The employee must be given this information in writing as well as having it discussed with them personally.

### **3.2 Dealing with Performance Issues**

- 3.2.1 The manager must deal with any unsatisfactory performance as it arises, and not wait until the two/four month assessments are undertaken. The assessment meetings will then offer an opportunity to review performance.
- 3.2.2 Line managers are responsible for taking action to deal with unsatisfactory performance promptly – dealing with problems at an early stage means that they are more likely to be dealt with successfully.
- 3.2.3 If you have to deal with performance issues you should
  - discuss your concerns with your Departmental HR Adviser, if required.
  - arrange a meeting as soon as possible with the employee to discuss their performance.
- 3.2.4 The purpose of the meeting is to
  - discuss your concerns with the employee
  - let the employee discuss /explain the areas of concern
  - offer instruction or training where appropriate
  - explain that if there is no improvement within a specified timescale further action may be taken, which may include disciplinary action which may result in dismissal
  - agree a timescale within which the improvements should be achieved, and arrange a date to review the employee's progress
  - Ensure that any training that has been agreed is organised quickly.
- 3.2.5 Managers will confirm the outcome of the meeting in writing, clearly setting out the concerns discussed, the action to be taken and possibility of disciplinary action should there be no improvements.
- 3.2.6 Where performance does not improve within the time allowed refer to the procedure in [section 6](#) and seek advice/support from Departmental HR.

## **4. Employee Probationary Feedback Form**

- 4.1 The Employee Probationary Feedback Form ([Appendix 4](#)) gives employees the opportunity to provide feedback on their probation

period, and will assist the Council in evaluating the probation procedure.

- 4.2 Employees are required to complete this form at the end of their probation period.
- 4.3 The completed forms must be filed on the employee's personal file.

## 5. Extending the Probationary Period

- 5.1 The probation period is for 6 months. During this time managers must ensure that feedback is given to employees on a regular basis and that any performance or conduct issues are resolved within this period.
- 5.2 In exceptional circumstances the probationary period may be extended for a further specified period of not more than 6 months. The justifiable reasons for extending a probationary period are
  - i. Where there is a good reason why it has not been possible to assess an employee's performance during the initial probation period of 6 months, for example the employee has been absent for a significant proportion of this period, or
  - ii. Where the required improvement has not been made, but where further time, for example to attend appropriate training courses, will allow such improvement to happen.
- 5.3 If the probationary period is extended the employee should be informed, normally no later than at the four-month probationary assessment. During this meeting the employee must be informed of the reasons for the extension and the period of extension should be specified. This must then be confirmed in writing and a copy placed on the employee's personal file.
- 5.4 Managers must ensure that any extension to the probationary period is for reasonable and justified reasons. Advice from your departmental HR Adviser must be sought if there is any doubt about the reasonableness of the extension.
- 5.5 Where a probation period is extended the manager will hold regular, for example weekly or fortnightly review meetings with the employee to continue to assess their performance. Notes must be made of discussions had at these meetings and retained on the employee's personal file.

## 6. Continued Poor Performance

- 6.1 Where an employee's performance continues to be poor despite additional training, coaching and an extended probation period, it may be necessary for employment to end.

## **6.1 Procedure for Ending Employment in the Probation Period**

- i. The employee must be asked to attend a meeting to discuss their performance. This should be followed up in writing and should set out the grounds for this action.
- ii. The meeting should take place in private, and the manager should have fully prepared for the meeting. For example have records of performance appraisals, training courses etc to hand.
- iii. The manager should clearly state the reason for the meeting taking place, and outline their concerns about the employee's performance.
- iv. The employee should then be given the opportunity to respond. If the employee is not able to give a reasonable explanation for their continued poor performance, the manager may take the decision to dismiss.
- v. The employee should be informed of any decision at the meeting, and this should be followed up in writing.
- vi. Where the employee is dismissed Plymouth City Council's standard notice periods apply. Therefore an employee dismissed during their probationary period would be entitled to one week's notice.

6.1.1 At these meetings an HR Adviser should accompany the manager, and a colleague or trade union representative may represent the employee.

6.1.2 Employees have the right of appeal against dismissal and appeals should be sent, in writing, within 10 working days to the Head of HR, Floor 4, Civic Centre.

## **7. Notice periods for employees**

7.1 Employees who wish to end their employment within their six-month probationary period must give a minimum of one months' notice.

## **8. Confirming Permanent Employment**

8.1 Following successful completion of a probationary period it is the manager's responsibility to confirm permanent employment status in writing.

8.2 Any concerns about conduct or capability must be resolved before permanent employment is confirmed.

## **9. Sickness Absence During the Probation Period**

9.1 Sickness absence during the probationary period will be dealt with in line with Plymouth City Council's Managing Attendance policy and procedures.

9.2 Where an employee has a substantial amount of absence due to sickness during the probationary period, the manager may extend the duration of the probation period or terminate employment as appropriate.

Appendix 1 Two Month Probationary Report



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

**TWO MONTH PROBATIONARY REPORT**

**Employee's Name:** .....

**Job Title:** .....

**Date Employment Commenced:** .....

**Manager's Name:** .....

**Date of 1<sup>st</sup> Review:** .....

**Date of 2<sup>nd</sup> Review:** .....

**Date of Final Review:** .....

**Guidance Notes**

1. Complete all sections in full.
2. This contents of this report must be discussed in full with the employee.
3. Your comments must be objective and based on fact.
4. Once completed a copy of this form should be filed on the employee's Personal File.
5. The date of the next review should be agreed at the meeting.
6. A copy of this form should be retained by you to refer to at the next review.

**1. Assess the employee's performance in relation to the duties for the post (use the job description & person specification to compare).**

**2. Give details of the employee's approach to their work, including motivation, commitment, and their relationships within the work setting and with other agencies.**

**3. Give details of timekeeping, attendance and sickness.**

**4. Give details of training already undertaken.**

**5. What further learning & development needs have been identified? Give full details.**

**6. Please make any further comments**

|  |
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Appendix 2 Four Month Probationary Report



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**FOUR MONTH PROBATIONARY REPORT**

**Employee's Name:** .....

**Manager's Name:** .....

**Date of 1<sup>st</sup> Review:** .....

**Date of 2<sup>nd</sup> Review:** .....

**Date of Final Review:** .....

**Guidance Notes**

1. The key points from the last assessment must be identified in section 1 of this form.
2. Complete all sections in full.
2. This contents of this report must be discussed in full with the employee.
3. Your comments must be objective and based on fact.
4. Once completed a copy of this form should be filed on the employee's Personal File.
5. The date of the next review should be agreed at the meeting.
6. A copy of this form should be retained by you to refer to at the next review.

**Section 1.**

**This section gives you the opportunity to review any key points or issues identified at the last assessment.**

| Key Points/Issues | Comments |
|-------------------|----------|
| 1.                |          |
| 2.                |          |
| 3.                |          |
| 4.                |          |
| 5.                |          |
| 6.                |          |

**Section 2. Using the Two Month Probationary Report for reference, this section gives you the opportunity to assess the comments you made at the last assessment.**

|   |
|---|
| <b>1. How does the employee's performance compare - in relation to the duties of the post - to your comments at the two-month assessment?</b>                               |
|   |
| <b>2. Give details of the employee's approach to their work, including motivation, commitment, and their relationships within the work setting and with other agencies.</b> |
|   |
| <b>3. Review details of timekeeping, attendance and sickness.</b>   |
|   |
| <b>4. Detail any training that has taken place in the last two months.</b>  |
|   |
| <b>5. What further learning &amp; development needs have been identified? Give full details.</b>  |
|   |

**6. Please make any further comments**

|  |
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Appendix 3 Final Probationary Report



**CONFIDENTIAL**

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**FINAL PROBATIONARY REPORT**

**Employee's Name:** .....

**Manager's Name:** .....

**Date of 1<sup>st</sup> Review:** .....

**Date of 2<sup>nd</sup> Review:** .....

**Date of Final Review:** .....

**Guidance Notes**

1. Any outstanding issues should be outlined in section 1.
2. Complete relevant sections in full.
2. This contents of this report must be discussed in full with the employee.
3. Your comments must be objective and based on fact and information gained from previous assessments.
4. Once completed a copy of this form should be filed on the employee's Personal File.

**Section 1.**

**This section gives you the opportunity to identify any outstanding performance issues and detail what action you will take to deal with them. If there are no outstanding issues leave section 1 blank.**

| ISSUE | ACTION |
|-------|--------|
| 1.    |        |
| 2.    |        |
| 3.    |        |
| 4.    |        |
| 5.    |        |
| 6.    |        |

## Section 2 Overall Assessment

This section gives you the opportunity to provide an assessment of the employee's overall performance during their probation period.

|  |                          |           |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. How well has the employee performed in relation to the duties of the post? (Tick the relevant box)</b>   |                          |           |
| <b>Very well</b><br><br>Demonstrated that they are fully competent to undertake the duties   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Comments: |
| <b>Well</b><br><br>Demonstrated that they have most of the skills and require minimal training   | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| <b>Average</b><br><br>Require further learning & development to be able to undertake the full duties   | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| <b>2. Assess the employee's overall approach to their work, including motivation, commitment, and their relationships within the work setting and with other agencies.</b> |                          |           |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>   |                          |           |
| <b>3. Review details of timekeeping, attendance and sickness.</b>  |                          |           |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>   |                          |           |
| <b>4. Detail any outstanding learning &amp; development needs including actions taken.</b>   |                          |           |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>   |                          |           |

**Ask what further support the employee requires.**

**Please make any further comments about the employee's suitability to the post.**

Has the employee successfully completed their probation period?

YES  NO

If **No**, you must follow the procedure as set out in section 6.1 of this document.

If **Yes**, you must arrange for the appropriate letter to be sent to employee confirming their employment status.

If **No**, have you extended the probation period?

YES  NO

If **Yes**, for how long? .....Month(s)

## Appendix 4 Employee Probation Feedback Form

The purpose of this form is to ensure that the probation period is an opportunity for two way feedback. This form gives you, as a new Plymouth City Council employee the opportunity to provide feedback on your first six months of employment.

The information you give is **CONFIDENTIAL**, so please be honest in your responses, as they will be used to evaluate corporate policies and procedures.

Please return your completed form to **Policy Team, Floor 4, Civic Centre.**

---

**Please tell us which Department you work in.....**

**Please tick the relevant box.**

1. Were you given a departmental induction?                      Yes                       No

2. What did the induction consist of (please tick the boxes below)

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Tour of department   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Introduction to colleagues                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health & Safety (including fire alarms, evacuation procedures) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Meeting with your line manager                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Overview of local policies & procedures                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Did you receive all the information you needed to be able to do your job?

Yes                       No

If **No** to question 3,

3a. What other information do you feel you needed?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. Were any learning & development needs identified during your probation assessments?

Yes                       No

**If Yes to question 4,**

4a. Were relevant courses identified and booked for you?

Yes  No

**If Yes to question 4a,**

4b. Please list the courses and dates

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**If No to question 4a,**

4c. Please briefly outline why not.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. On your first day of employment were all your work arrangements in place for you i.e. desk, computer, safety equipment as necessary?

Yes  No

6. Were you given information about using the Council's Intranet? (If applicable).

Yes  No

7. Did your probation assessment take place on time – at two, four and six months after you joined Plymouth City Council?

Yes  No

8. What could we do to improve the probation process?

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