

Progressive employer

Probation Policy Draft - 2007



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Salisbury District Council recognises the need for all new employees to undergo a period of planned induction, training and integration into the workforce. This will enable employees to feel valued; to gain an appropriate insight in to the workings of the Council and into the role they are expected to play in order to make an effective contribution to the provision of quality services.
- 1.2 The Council, therefore, requires that all new employees to Salisbury District Council serve a probationary period.

2. Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 This policy will apply to all new employees of Salisbury District Council and to existing employees who are appointed to a new role within the Council. This policy does not apply to casual workers. Casual workers who transfer to a temporary or permanent position will, however, be required to complete a probationary period at that point.

3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The Council's recognised Trade Unions have been consulted and the procedure agreed by them and approved by the Joint Consultative Forum.
- 3.2 The procedure has been designed to deal consistently and fairly with probation issues and to ensure that matters are dealt with without undue delay.
- 3.3 The procedure will be applied in a non-discriminatory way, irrespective of an employee's age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religion and sexual orientation.
- 3.4 Some employees such as those with learning difficulties may need help in understanding this procedure and in exceptional circumstances can be accompanied to meetings. Other employees may need a translator, a signer, an interpreter, an induction loop system or help with reading or writing and they should contact People and Organisational Development to make the necessary arrangements.
- 3.5 People and Organisational Development should be contacted at the earliest opportunity for advice and guidance where a manager believes that an employee may not be able to meet the standards required.

4. Probation Procedure – New Employees

- 4.1 The new employee's statement of terms and conditions must state that the appointment is subject to satisfactory completion of a probation period of 25 weeks.
- 4.2 As part of the induction, the probationary procedure must be explained to new employees as to how, when and why their progress will be monitored.
- 4.3 The employee should be told by their manager about the key functions of their job and that their performance and suitability for the post will be measured, by way of a review at 12 weeks and 24 weeks. The probationary period, however, should be regarded as a period of continuous review.
- 4.4 The line manager must ensure that they meet with new employees regularly during the probationary period to make sure that they are aware of their specific objectives and that they receive the training necessary for them to do their job. Managers should complete the Performance Management form with the employee. Once completed, Managers should give a copy to the employee for his/her reference. See appendix A.
- 4.5 Employees should be provided with reasonable facilities, supervision and encouragement to help them reach the standard required.

- 4.6 During the first few weeks of employment, dates must be agreed between the line manager and the new employee for the probation reviews. A formal review should take place around the 12 week stage with a final review around the 24 week stage to allow time for notice to be given, if required. The scheduling of other review meetings, are at the discretion of the manager.
- 4.7 Line managers will continually review a probationary employee's performance and should problems arise, reviews should be held more frequently than the set periods shown. Where there is any doubt about an employee's suitability, the matter must be raised immediately, so that the employee has ample opportunity to improve.

5. Programmed Reviews

- 5.1 Reviews must cover the Council's key competencies set out in appendix B as well as attitude to work, time keeping, attendance record and any other work related issues.
- 5.2 The standards required must be realistic and must include the employee's objectives. The standards must be measurable in respect of quality, time, quantity and cost.
- 5.3 Reviews must take place in private and must be free from interruptions. They must be treated as confidential.
- 5.4 The review dates are set so the new employee can prepare for the review by thinking about his/her performance and any questions that he/she may want to raise.
- 5.5 Line managers must make sure that they have clearly defined the points which they wish to raise and that these can be substantiated with examples, where appropriate, as this may be used as part of an appeal.
- 5.6 Both strengths and weaknesses should be discussed.
- 5.7 At the review around the 12 week stage a summary of the main points of the discussion must be entered on the probationary review form (see Appendix B). Any items for action, either by the employee or the line manager, must be recorded.
- 5.8 Both the line manager and the employee must sign the review form. The employee does not necessarily have to agree with the line manager's comments, but they should sign their form to say they he/she has seen it. New employees are given the opportunity to enter their own comments in the space provided on the review form.
- 5.9 At the end of the review meeting a copy of the review form must be sent to People and Organisational Development and a copy given to the new employee.
- 5.10 At the final review, ie the 24 week review, if the employee's performance is satisfactory in every way, their employment should be confirmed in writing.
- 5.11 If at any time during the probationary period it is clear that the employee is not meeting the level of performance required, a formal review meeting should be arranged.

6. Formal Review Meeting

- 6.1 When an employee is not meeting the level of performance required, the employee should be told and an explanation must be given, using examples of the area(s) of concern. In this case, a formal review meeting should be held.
- 6.2 If a scheduled review is due in the near future this may be changed to a formal review meeting. Prompt action must be taken, however, to advise the employee about work which is not meeting the required standards or about unsuitability in any respect, so in most cases, a separate meeting should be held. A trade union representative or work place colleague can accompany the employee at the meeting.

- 6.3 At this meeting the employee should be advised of their shortcomings and be set objectives and targets for improvement. Ideally these should be agreed with the employee, but if this is not possible then the manager will impose them. A time scale, offer of support and if appropriate, training to allow for improvement and to enable the employee to meet the standard required should be arranged.
- 6.4 The consequences of not meeting the necessary level of work performance must be explained to the employee.
- 6.5 Where further instruction/training is needed, the line manager must arrange this as quickly as possible.
- 6.6 A further formal meeting should be arranged by the manager to feedback on any progress and inform the employee of his/her decision. The outcomes are as follows:
- The standard of performance has been achieved and maintained; therefore, the employee will continue on their probationary period until the 24 week stage and is confirmed in post.
 - The standard of performance has not been achieved and it is necessary to dismiss the employee.
- 6.7 If at this stage the new employee has not reached and is clearly not going to meet the standard needed, he/she must be told this and given formal notice (one week during probationary period) of the termination of his/her employment. The employee should be advised of his/her right of appeal.
- 6.8 Where, following a review at an earlier stage, it is clear that an employee will not be able to reach the standard required even after further instruction and/or training, then their employment may be terminated earlier than at the 24 week review.

7. Extending the probationary period

- 7.1 On rare occasions it may be necessary to extend a new employee's probationary period. This should only be done in exceptional circumstances, eg, where a significant period of absence from work occurred and it has, therefore, not been possible to review performance.
- If after careful consideration and consultation with People and Organisational Development, the line manager considers it appropriate, the probationary period can be extended for up to a maximum of three months.
- 7.2 If the probation period is interrupted by maternity, adoption or other extended period of leave, it should be extended by an equivalent amount to ensure completion of a full 25 weeks probation, this is to enable a fair assessment to be made.
- 7.3 In all cases where probation is extended the following must be discussed between the manager and employee and confirmed in writing:
- The reasons for the extension
 - Any assistance/ training that will be given in the extension period
 - The period of the extension, the performance standards expected and the way in which performance will be monitored
 - That if performance fails to meet expectations at the end of the period of extension, employment will be terminated.

8. Link with Disciplinary and Capability Procedures

- 8.1 The procedure outlined above related to the suitability of a probationary employee. This includes general conduct and capability, therefore, SDC's Disciplinary and Capability procedures only apply to staff who have successfully completed their probationary period.

9. Temporary Staff

9.1 Temporary staff are required to serve a probationary period in a temporary post as follows:

Length of temporary contract	Probation to be served	Transferred to different post on permanent basis during probationary period	Transferred to same or similar post on permanent basis during probationary period
Less than 3 months	No	25 week probation should be served in new post	25 week probation should be served in post
More than 18 weeks and up to 24 weeks	Probation should be length of contract	25 week probation should be served in new post	Original probation period should continue*
25 weeks or more	25 weeks	A further 25 week probation should be served in new post	Original probation period should continue*

9.2 * If an employee is serving a probationary period and transfers to a different line manager and the posts are the same or similar, details of the employee's performance up until the date of transfer, should be passed to the new manager.

9.3 If they have already served the full probationary period in a temporary post, they do not need to serve a second probationary period when appointed to a permanent post, provided that the service is continuous. The procedure for employees transferring to another post will apply.

9.4 It is essential, therefore, that managers follow this procedure for temporary staff and do not offer permanent posts to unsatisfactory temporary staff.

10. Right of Appeal

10.1 Where a probationary employee is dismissed as result of unsuitability under this procedure, he/she will have a right of appeal against the decision.

10.2 Any appeal must be made in writing, to the Line Manager within five working days of the date of the letter confirming the decision. Such an appeal will not delay the date of the dismissal.

10.3 The officer hearing the appeal will be more senior than the officer who made the original decision.

10.4 Appeal will be arranged in accordance with the council's appeals procedure.

11. Supported period of employment for an employee who transfers to another post within the organisation

a. As with new employees, it is important for the line manager of the transferred employee to ensure that they meet with the employee to make sure that they are aware of their specific objectives and that they receive the training necessary for them to do their job.

b. Employees should be provided with reasonable facilities, supervision and encouragement to help them reach the standard required. As for new employees, objectives should be set and reviews should be scheduled as detailed above. Satisfactory completion of the supported period of employment should be completed at the end of 25 weeks in the new post.

11.3 Where it becomes clear that the transferred employee is not meeting the standard required, the manager should refer to the capability procedure. The capability procedure should be entered at the formal stage.

Performance Management

List the Service objectives for 200_ - 200_ relevant to the role:

Individual's Objectives (SMART)	Link to Corporate/Service Objectives	Agreed Review Dates	Additional training and development required to meet objectives

The Competencies

(Please refer to Competency sheet for further information)

Name of employee:

Complete at 12 week stage				Complete at 24 week stage
The Progressive employee	Comments on performance and examples of how this has been demonstrated	Areas for development – these must be discussed with the employee	12 Weeks Meets Standard (Yes/No)	24 Weeks Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Communicates effectively				
Is customer focused				
Is a team player				
Technical knowledge and understanding relevant to role				
Attendance and timekeeping				
Attitude to work				

Complete at 12 week stage				Complete at 24 week stage
The Progressive employee	Comments on performance and examples of how this has been demonstrated	Areas for development	12 Week Stage Meets Standard (Yes/No)	24 Week Stage Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Provides Leadership (Managers only)				
Other areas not covered by the above				

Employee Comments – 12 week stage:

Signature: Date:

Manager's signature – 12 week stage: Date:

Manager's signature – 24 week stage: Date: