

## Probationary Policy

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## **Scope of Policy**

This policy has and procedure has been agreed following consultation with the Staff Representative Council, and applies to all staff during their probationary period. This policy applies to new employees joining PSOW, not employees who are changing role within the organisation. (Annual leave arrangements for staff during their probationary period are set out in the Attendance and Absence Policy.)

This policy does not form part of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. PSOW may also vary this procedure, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case. Substantial changes to this policy will be made only following consultation with the Staff Representative Council.

## **Definitions:**

**'Probation'** is 'the action or process of testing or putting to the proof'.

**'Line Manager'**: Where reference is made to 'Line Manager' in this policy, staff are expected to substitute the following, in order, where their own 'line manager' is not available;

- A) Acting line manager,
- B) Other line manager,
- C) Line manager of their line manager.

## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of a probation period is to allow an employer to monitor the probationary employee's conduct and performance during that period, to ensure that they meet the required standards of the business (ACAS definition).
- 1.2 PSOW utilises a 6 month probation period for new employees.
- 1.3 The probation period allows both the employee and the organisation (particularly the line manager) the opportunity to assess objectively whether the new employee is suitable for the role, taking into account the individual's overall capability, skills, performance and general conduct in relation to the role in question.
- 1.4 This policy aims to ensure fair, equal and consistent treatment of employees with regard to the probation period.
- 1.5 This policy will work alongside the induction process for new employees at PSOW.

## **2 PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1 Issues of performance, misconduct or with attendance for an employee on probation will normally be dealt with under this policy.
- 2.2 This policy is separate to the disciplinary and capability policies which apply to employees once they have successfully completed their probation period. Employees who are in a probation period will not normally be subject to those PSOW policies. New employees will be made aware by their line manager of the performance standards required and will be given relevant induction, training, support and feedback to achieve these standards.
- 2.3 Clear and accurate records of the probation period (formal review meetings) must be made and retained. The forms completed (see probation review forms) should ideally be signed by both parties. Once completed and returned they will be retained on the employee's personal file for one year after employment is confirmed.

- 2.4 If problems or issues arise during the probation period, the line manager must clearly explain this to the employee (concerns/issues and the actions required). This must be done in a timely fashion. The employee should be given the chance to respond/explain.
- 2.5 Confidentiality should be maintained of any issues being dealt with under the probation policy.
- 2.6 The employee has the right to be accompanied (by a trade union rep. or work colleague) at any meeting as part of the probation process where dismissal is a potential outcome.

### **3 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1 The new employee is to:
  - demonstrate their suitability for the role appointed to.
  - ensure they understand the duties of the role and all of the standards required of them.
  - ensure they follow PSOW policies and procedures.
  - ensure good attendance.
  - as per the Staff Standard of Conduct policy, ensure they comply with reasonable instructions or contractual requirements.
  - participate and engage in induction, any training and one to one meetings with their line manager.
  - identify any issues or problems to their line manager as soon as is possible.
- 3.2 The line manager is to:
  - clearly explain all of the standards required to the employee (starting with discussions in the first 2 weeks of employment).
  - clearly communicate objectives and timescales to be met.

- ensure the new employee completes his/her induction and any required training.
- meet with the new employee regularly and hold probation review meetings at the requisite times.
- provide feedback, coaching, guidance and supervision as required.
- monitor performance and attendance.
- complete and maintain records (e.g. of probation review meetings).

## **4 PROBATION REVIEW MEETINGS**

4.1 As well as more frequent one to one meetings and discussions which would normally take place between the employee and their line manager, the following formal review meetings must take place in the 6 month probation period:

- Initial probation review meeting to take place within first 2 weeks of employment (to set objectives and confirm standards required).
- First formal probation review meeting at the end of month 1 of employment.
- Second formal probation review meeting at the end of month 3 of employment.
- Third formal probation review meeting at the end of month 6 of employment.

4.2 The dates of all formal probation review meetings should be set in advance (with the employee aware of the date(s) in advance).

4.3 A form should be completed to document every formal probation review meeting (see template forms at Appendix A).

4.4 Successful completion of probation is not confirmed until the final formal probation review meeting has taken place, has been written up and the completed form confidentially submitted to the Corporate Services Manager. This will generate a letter to the employee, from the Ombudsman, to thank them and confirm their probation is completed.

- 4.5 There may be the need to add in additional probation review meetings during the probation period for example if the employee requires more frequent feedback.
- 4.6 Probation review meetings may be held alongside the annual PMDR process at PSOW if it falls within that timeline.

## **5 EXTENSION OF PROBATION**

- 5.1 As per the PSOW contract of employment, the period of probation can be extended. This is usually the case where there have been concerns or issues identified about the employee's performance in their role (including conduct or attendance), but where it is considered likely that these can be addressed satisfactorily within a short extension to the probationary period. Records must be kept of the decision to extend and of what the employee needs to achieve, by when, to meet the standards required.
- 5.2 A probationary period may not be extended beyond 12 months from initial appointment. If an employee's performance (including attendance) is not satisfactory at that stage, employment will be terminated (see section 7 below).

## **6 CONCERNS ABOUT SUITABILITY**

- 6.1 If at any stage the employee's performance, conduct or attendance is not considered to meet the standards required the employee must be informed of this and how to improve/to what standard. SMART objectives need to be set. This would usually be for the next 4 week period, when a further probation review meeting would be scheduled to take place. A written action plan should be put in place.
- 6.2 Views from the employee on the issues and how they might be resolved should be sought and considered. For example the employee may have circumstances which they feel are mitigating. Support, supervision and any relevant additional training should be offered.

## **7 DISMISSAL**

- 7.1 The employer may consider dismissal at any point during the probationary period. There is no requirement to wait until the end of the probation

period to consider dismissal, which may occur at any time during the probation period, if circumstances justify this. HR advice should be sought. A dismissal may only take place after a formal meeting where the situation is considered by a senior manager at PSOW (for example the line manager's line manager). The employee will be advised of the date of the meeting in advance and will be formally invited to it (by letter). They will be advised that a potential outcome of the meeting is the ending of their employment, also of their right to be accompanied at the meeting.

7.2 At the meeting the senior manager will consider the issues with performance (usually set out by the line manager). The employee will have the opportunity to state their case and make any representations before any decision is made. The senior manager will consider whether the employee has failed to meet objectives and the standards required and what is the appropriate action to take. Following consideration, the senior manager will make their decision and confirm this in writing to the employee as soon as possible.

7.3 If the decision is to dismiss the employee following this meeting, the employee has a right of appeal. To appeal the formal outcome the individual needs to write to the Ombudsman stating their grounds of appeal to arrive within 10 working days of the date of the notice to dismiss (letter).

## 8. NOTICE PERIOD

8.1 In the event of a dismissal **under this policy** the termination of employment will be with notice (notice period as stated in their contract of employment).

## 9. APPENDICES

Formal Probation Review Forms

Policy Owner	John Young
Policy & EIA approved by Management Team	12 May 2015
<b>Due date of next Review</b>	<b>Qtr 1 2017/2018</b>
<b>For publication to :</b>	<b>Intranet (Yes)</b> <b>PSOW website (Yes)</b>

## PROBATION REVIEW FORMS

### First probation review form (review to take place in first 2 weeks)

Employee name:

Start date:

Job title:

Line manager name:

Date of this meeting:

Date set for the **next** probation review meeting:

Please be reminded of the responsibilities of the line manager and the new employee in the probation period (see text at the end of this form, from the PSOW policy).

1. Set out here the standard of work outlined to the new employee:
2. Set out here (or on a separate sheet) the objectives set for the new employee (these should be as SMART as possible):
3. Set out here the induction, training, support and supervision to be provided:
4. Any other points of discussion at this meeting?

Employee signature:

Date:

Manager signature:

Date:

**Please now return this completed form to the Corporate Services Manager**

## Responsibilities during the probation period:

The new employee is to:

- demonstrate their suitability for the role appointed to.
- ensure they understand the duties of the role and all of the standards required of them.
- ensure they follow PSOW policies and procedures.
- ensure good attendance.
- as per the Staff Standard of Conduct policy, ensure they comply with reasonable instructions or contractual requirements.
- participate and engage in induction, any training and one to one meetings with their line manager.
- identify any issues or problems to their line manager as soon as is possible.

The line manager is to:

- clearly explain all of the standards required to the employee (starting with discussions in the first 2 weeks of employment).
- clearly communicate objectives and timescales to be met.
- ensure the new employee completes his/her induction and any required training.
- meet with the new employee regularly and hold probation review meetings at the requisite times.
- provide feedback, coaching, guidance and supervision as required.
- monitor performance and attendance.
- complete and maintain records (e.g. of probation review meetings).

**Probation review form:**

**End of month 1\***

**OR**

**End of month 3\***

\*circle appropriate one – same template form for both meetings

Employee name:

Start date:

Job title:

Line manager name:

Date of this meeting:

Date set for the **next** probation review meeting:

1. Set out here how work is going to standard.
2. Set out here progress against set objectives.
3. If there have been any absences, detail these here.
4. If any areas of performance, conduct or attendance require improvement please set out the details here.
5. Set out here the training, support and supervision that is planned to be provided in the next period.
6. Any other points of discussion at this meeting?

Employee signature:

Date:

Manager signature:

Date:

**Please now return this completed form to the Corporate Services Manager**

## Probation review form - end of month 6

Employee name:

Start date:

Job title:

Line manager name:

Date of this meeting:

1. Set out here how work is going to standard.
2. Set out here progress against set objectives.
3. Summarise the employee's performance and progress to date.
4. Summarise the details of any absences in the probation period here.
5. Summarise here the training, support and supervision provided to date. Also whether anything else is needed.
6. Are there any areas of performance, conduct or attendance that require improvement? If YES set out the details here, and proposed actions.
7. Any other points of discussion at this meeting?
8. The employee may provide any comments about their experience of the probationary process here.

Employee signature:

Date:

Manager signature:

Date:

### Manager to complete:

Is the employee's appointment to be confirmed? **Yes / No**

If NO, please provide any additional reasons or information here (this should have been discussed with the new employee).

AND set out here proposed action(s) here:

Note: if the manager's recommendation is to extend the probation, state here the length of the suggested extension and include with this form a completed action plan for what the employee needs to achieve (SMART objectives) and how this will be monitored and supported.

**Please now return this completed form to the Corporate Services Manager (for final decision and outcome letter).**