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## Probation Policy

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## 1 Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 This policy 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 members of staff joining PSOW, not those who are changing role within the organisation.
- 1.2 Annual leave arrangements for staff during their probationary period are set out in the Attendance and Absence Policy.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of contracts 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.
- 1.4 The purpose of a probation period is to allow an employer to monitor the conduct and performance of probationary members of staff during that period, to ensure that they meet the required standards of the business (ACAS definition).
- 1.5 PSOW operates nine- and six-month probation periods, depending on the role, for new member of staff. The nine-month probation period applies to Investigation Officers, Investigation & Improvement Officers, Assistant Investigation Managers, and Investigation Managers, and reflects the longer timescales involved in completing investigative work.
- 1.6 The probation period allows both the member of staff and the organisation (particularly the line manager) the opportunity to assess objectively whether the new member of staff is suitable for the role, taking into account the values of the organisation, the need for high quality work and the need for an acceptable level of output.
- 1.7 This policy will work alongside the induction process for new members of staff at PSOW.

## 2 Principles

- 2.1 Issues of performance, misconduct or attendance for a member of staff on probation will normally be dealt with under this policy.
- 2.2 This policy is separate to the disciplinary and performance management policies, and the Performance Review and Development Process, which apply to staff once they have successfully completed their probation period. Members of staff who are in a probation period will not normally be subject to those PSOW policies. New members of staff will be made aware, by their line managers, of the conduct and performance standards required and will be given relevant induction, training, support and feedback to help achieve these standards.
- 2.3 Clear and accurate records of the probation period (formal review meetings) must be made by the line manager. The completed forms (see Probation Review forms) should be signed by both parties and passed, by the line manager, to Human Resources for retention on the appropriate personal file.
- 2.4 If problems or issues arise during the probation period, the line manager must clearly explain this to the member of staff. This must be done in a timely fashion. The member of staff should be given the chance to respond/explain. Any actions or improvements required should then be recorded on the Probation Review forms.
- 2.5 Confidentiality should be maintained of any issues being dealt with under the probation policy.
- 2.6 The member of staff has the right to be accompanied (by a trade union representative or work colleague) at any probation review meeting where dismissal is the potential outcome of that meeting.

## 3 Responsibilities

### 3.1 The new member of staff is to:

- demonstrate their suitability for the role appointed to (refer to section 2);
- ensure they understand the duties of the role and all of the standards required of them;
- ensure that their conduct and behaviour reflects PSOW's values;
- ensure they follow PSOW policies and procedures;
- ensure good attendance;
- ensure they comply with reasonable instructions or contractual requirements, including those in the Staff Standards of Conduct policy;
- participate and engage constructively in induction, any training and one-to-one meetings with their line manager; and
- raise any issues or problems with their line manager as soon as is possible.

### 3.2 The line manager is to:

- explain clearly all of the standards required to the member of staff;
- communicate clearly objectives and timescales to be met;
- ensure the new member of staff completes his/her induction and any required training;
- meet with the new member of staff 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); and,
- transfer all relevant records to Human Resources, and destroy any records not requiring transfer to Human Resources, in line with PSOW's retention periods.

### 3.3 Human Resources staff are to:

- add records to the appropriate personal file; send letters confirming successful completion of the probation period where applicable; and,
- destroy records in line with PSOW's retention periods.

### 4 Probation Review Meetings

4.1 As well as more frequent one to one meetings and discussions which would normally take place between the member of staff and their line manager (particularly in the first few days and weeks), the following formal review meetings must take place in the probation period:

- First probation review meeting to take place at the end of the first month of employment to check how the new member of staff is settling in.
- Probation meetings should then take place after 2, 4, 6 (and 9 months where applicable) months.

4.2 The dates of formal probation review meetings should be agreed in advance.

4.3 A form should be completed, by the line manager, to document every formal probation review meeting (see template forms at Appendices B, C and D). These should be signed and sent, by the line manager, to Human Resources.

4.4 If at any stage performance, conduct, or attendance is not considered to meet the standards required, the member of staff must be informed of this, how to improve and to what standard. Support, supervision, and any relevant additional training should be offered.

4.5 Successful completion of probation will be confirmed by letter (from Human Resources) following the final formal probation review meeting. Where the probation is likely not to be confirmed as successful, the HR adviser should be consulted before the final meeting takes place.

### 5 Extending Probation

- 5.1 The period of probation can be extended where there have been concerns or issues identified about the performance, conduct, or attendance of the member of staff. Extensions should be used only where it is considered likely that these concerns can be addressed satisfactorily within a short timescale. The line manager must record the decision to extend and identify what the member of staff needs to achieve, by when, to meet the standards required. These records are to be copied to Human Resources.
- 5.2 A probationary period may not be extended beyond 12 months from initial appointment. If the performance, conduct, or attendance of a member of staff is not satisfactory at that stage, employment will be terminated.

### 6 Absence during Probation

- 6.1 Satisfactory attendance is a factor in decisions on whether or not the probation period has been completed successfully. Where a member of staff is absent, owing to holiday, sickness or other absence, for a period of a week or more during the probation period, consideration may be given to extending the probation period by the length of the absence.

### 7 Dismissal

- 7.1 Dismissal may be considered at any point during the probationary period, if circumstances justify it. There is no requirement to wait until the end of the probation period to consider dismissal. However, HR advice should be sought prior to such a decision.
- 7.2 A dismissal may take place only after a formal meeting with the line manager. If dismissal is confirmed at that formal meeting, the member of staff will receive written notification of their dismissal. This will include details of any pay in lieu of notice and of any adjustments for annual leave and/or flexitime.