

Probation policy

1. Probation period

- 1.1. New employees to North Halifax Partnership (NHP) undertake a probationary period of six months before a permanent appointment to the post is confirmed. This also applies to new employees who were previously employed by NHP and who have had a break in service since their previous employment.
- 1.2. During this period, new entrants will be expected to demonstrate their suitability for the post in which they are employed. To this end, it is important that line managers provide new entrants with high quality on-the-job training, support and guidance so that they may carry out the entire range of duties and responsibilities of that post. Employees have a duty to discuss any issues they are facing and any additional support which they might need throughout the probationary period. During this time, attendance at work will be closely monitored.
- 1.3. Any offer of employment is made in the belief and expectation that the individual is capable of carrying out the duties of the post to the standards required, and that they are committed to fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of the role. During the probationary period (through performance reviews) performance, conduct, attendance, timekeeping, training and support are assessed fairly and consistently across the Partnership.
- 1.4. The purpose of this policy is to provide line managers with clear and consistent policy and procedures for managing the probationary period for staff.
- 1.5. During the 26 week probationary period, the line manager will be expected to inform their manager whether the new entrant is:
 - 1.5.1. Suitable for employment
 - 1.5.2. Unsuitable for employment - in which case the contract of employment may be terminated
 - 1.5.3. Giving cause for concern; one option in this case will be to extend the probationary period.
- 1.6. The probation period also provides the probationer with an opportunity to assess whether the job role is suitable for them. Through the probationary period both the

employer and employee have an opportunity to raise any concerns as soon as they arise.

- 1.7. The probationary period is a key time as the employee learns about their role and how they, as an individual, can contribute to the aims and ethos of the Partnership. The probationary period would normally run concurrently with the employee's induction programme.
- 1.8. The probationary period applies to all staff appointments, with the exception of:
 - sessional staff
 - TUPE transfers
- 1.9. A probationary period does not apply to staff who move roles and have already completed a probationary period. However, the ethos and principles of this policy, in relation to training, support and regular meetings, should apply to all staff who move to a new role. Similarly, the ethos and principles of this policy, in relation to training, support and regular meetings apply to those employed as Apprentices. Please see Apprenticeship Guidance.

2. Setting and monitoring probation objectives

- 2.1. Line managers are responsible for monitoring probationary periods within their teams. **(The reviewer)**.
- 2.2. Throughout the probationary period the reviewer will closely monitor performance, timekeeping, attendance and conduct, and provide the necessary levels of feedback and support. During regular reviews the reviewer will inform the employee of the expected standards required, initial work objectives and timescales as to when these should be achieved. Additionally, any further training or support may be offered and provided to the employee.
- 2.3. Initial Planning Meeting – to be held within the first four weeks of employment
 - 2.3.1. A good induction programme can contribute to a successful probationary period. Within the first four weeks of employment the reviewer should meet with the new employee to discuss and agree the following:
 - an induction programme that meets the needs of the role, the Partnership and any training requirements (particularly safeguarding and statutory training);
 - ensure that the employee understands the tasks and responsibilities of the job, as documented in the job description;
 - the standards of performance, behaviour and conduct that is expected

- where appropriate, establish targets or goals, and dates when these need to be achieved. It is also useful to agree how these will be monitored, and how success will be measured.
 - any actions that need to be undertaken to assist the employee to support achieving success during the probationary period. This would include training, supervision or mentoring.
 - is aware of the procedures that should be followed;
 - dates during the probationary period when the reviewer and employee will meet formally to discuss the employee's progress
- 2.3.2. In addition to the formal reviews outlined below reviews of the probationer's progress should form part of the normal supervisory processes.

2.4. Formal reviews

- 2.4.1. Formal review should take place at the end of 12 weeks and a final review meeting should be held between 20th and 26th week of probation.
- 2.4.2. It is advisable to plan a date and time for each review to give the employee as much notice as possible. The formal meetings are a review of the employee's work performance and a summary of progress to date. The meeting should include discussion around:
- progress of induction
 - areas of progress in meeting performance objectives
 - standards required
 - conduct and working relationships
 - attendance and timekeeping
 - training needs
- 2.4.3. The meeting should also include information on goals and objectives and should give an early indication of whether the targets set for the employee are likely to be obtained.
- 2.4.4. Examples of unsatisfactory performance should be drawn to the employee's attention as soon as possible. Issues should not be avoided.
- 2.4.5. Each formal review should be recorded on the Probationary Record. This should be signed by both the reviewer and the employee, to confirm the employee is aware of its contents. The Probationary Record gives the employee an opportunity to write a short statement, should they wish to do so, explaining any points of clarity or other notes the employee wishes to record
- 2.4.6. In addition to the completed report form, any notes of significant discussions with the employee should be kept.
- 2.4.7. Reviewers should seek advice from their senior manager or Human Resources at the earliest opportunity where a probationer's performance, attendance or conduct is not satisfactory. A formal written probationary

warning may be issued, outlining what improvements are required and advising the employee their employment could be terminated if the expected improvements are not demonstrated.

- 2.4.8. Any probationary warning will be confirmed in writing and will state clearly the unacceptable performance, attendance or conduct issue, and the standards/improvement required to reach an 'acceptable' level. A timeframe should be set in which the unacceptable issue should improve/reach the required standard.

3. Probationary period outcomes

3.1. After the final Review Meeting three outcomes are possible:

- a. The employee's performance has met the standard expected and the employee will be confirmed in post. This will be confirmed in writing – see below.
- b. The employee's performance has been unsatisfactory, but there is a prospect of an improvement to an acceptable standard and the probationary period is extended. (See Section 3.4).
- c. The employee's performance has been unsatisfactory and, despite additional guidance and training the employee has not improved, or has failed to improve sufficiently for there to be a prospect of the employee reaching the required standards in the near future. (See section 3.5).

3.2. The employee should be fully aware of the likely outcome of the final review meeting and the outcome of this meeting should not unexpected, having had regular review meetings up to this point (through formal review meetings and regular supervision).

3.3. The line manager will confirm the outcome of probation in writing. The employee will not be deemed to have passed their probationary period until they have received a letter confirming as such.

3.4. Extending the probationary period

3.4.1. If the probationer's performance has not reached an acceptable standard, consideration may be given to extending the probationary period. This may be appropriate if the employee has been affected by circumstances outside their control such as:

- significant change to the requirements of the role;
- exceptional personal circumstances such as bereavement or prolonged sickness absence;
- maternity or other statutory leave.

- 3.4.2. The probation period can be extended, usually for 4-6 weeks in the first instance, and up to a maximum of 12 months (from their employment start date). Further regular reviews (at least fortnightly) should take place during the extended period. These reviews should be recorded on the Probation Record and made available to both parties.
- 3.4.3. Employees should be made aware of the areas where improvement is required, together with targets and objectives and agreed remedial action that should be achieved for the appointment to be confirmed.
- 3.4.4. The extension period must be confirmed in writing and this must make clear:
 - the reasons for extension
 - the improvement required and how this will be monitored/reviewed
 - any training or support that will be given during the extension
 - the consequences (normally termination of employment) if the improvement is not made and the employee fails to meet the standards expected
- 3.4.5. The final review meeting must be held at the end of the extended probationary period.
- 3.4.6. If at the end of the extended period the employee's performance reaches an acceptable standard, employment should be confirmed. If the probationer fails to reach the required standards, refer to section 3.4.

3.5. Failure to complete the probation period

- 3.5.1. If the probationer falls clearly below the required standards of probation, (performance, conduct, timekeeping or attendance) and insufficient improvement is demonstrated then the employee's appointment will normally be terminated. The employee's appointment can be terminated at the end of the probation period or at any time during probation.
- 3.5.2. If, despite the best efforts of all parties, the employee has failed to meet the required standards, a formal, final, probationary review meeting, chaired by a senior manager shall be held with the employee and the probationary reviewer. At the meeting the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.
- 3.5.3. Advice should be sought from HR prior to holding this meeting.
- 3.5.4. The employee will be given at least three working days' notice of the meeting, and the letter inviting the employee will contain:
 - the purpose of the meeting
 - the time, date and location of the meeting
 - the names of those present
 - the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague
 - a statement that dismissal may be an outcome

- the right to produce information and the date by which this should be received (no later than three days in advance of the meeting)
 - copies of any documents that will be produced at the meeting
- 3.5.5. The meeting should consider submissions from both the reviewer and the employee and will include the records from all formal reviews.
- 3.5.6. The usual process for the formal Final Review meeting should be:
- Reviewer talks through probationary period, referencing documents as appropriate;
 - Employee talks through their perspective;
 - Questions, e.g. points of clarification, may be asked by all parties present;
 - Chair confirms the outcome verbally and in writing
- 3.5.7. If dismissal is the outcome, the employee should be advised in writing of the reasons for termination and given the appropriate notice of termination of employment. This written confirmation of the outcome should be sent to the employee within five days of the meeting and will also outline the employee's right to appeal.

4. Appeals

- 4.1. The employee will be given the right to appeal against a decision to terminate their employment. Appeals must be made in writing to the CEO within five working days of receipt of the letter confirming termination of employment. Where no appeal is lodged in the timescale the matter will be closed. The submission of an appeal does not in itself extend the period of employment.
- 4.2. When an appeal is lodged, this will be heard by a senior manager, not previously involved in the decision, advised by HR, if appropriate. The letter inviting the employee will contain:
- the time, date and location of the meeting
 - the names of those present
 - the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague
 - the right to produce information and the date by which this should be received (no later than three days in advance of the meeting)
 - copies of any documents that will be produced at the meeting. This will usually be a record of the Final Review meeting, the letter confirming the dismissal and the appeal request.
- 4.3. The appeal meeting should be arranged within ten working days of receipt of the notice to appeal, giving at least three working days' notice of the date of the hearing. The appeal will be conducted as follows:

- The appeal hearing Chair confirms any new information that has been provided
- The employee presents their points of appeal
- Questions from the chair and the reviewer
- The reviewer responds to those points
- Questions from the chair and the employee

4.4. The appeal hearing may decide:

- to uphold the appeal. In this case the employee will be re-instated. In this case it is expected clear advice will be provided to the reviewer and the employee to ensure that the required standards of probation are achieved.
- to confirm the original decision.
- to consider redeployment to another post within the Partnership.

5. Attendance or conduct issues during probation

- 5.1. Poor attendance during the probationary period may constitute a failure to perform to the required standards and could prompt the calling of a formal review meeting earlier than the final review.
- 5.2. Poor attendance will be managed through this process and not the absence management process. However, the Absence Management policy should be referred to for good advice on duty of care. Senior Manager or HR advice should also be sought at the earliest opportunity if it is likely that poor attendance may result in a failure to complete the probationary period. This is particularly important if the absence is likely to be considered a disability.
- 5.3. Although probationers won't enter the formal stages of the managing attendance process, all absences should be discussed and documented.
- 5.4. Any minor issues relating to the probationer's conduct should be discussed with the employee as part of the monitoring period and raised at the appropriate formal review meeting.
- 5.5. Where conduct is considered to be beyond a minor issue and of an unacceptable standard an independent investigation may be undertaken into the alleged misconduct. To ensure fairness, any investigation should be undertaken by someone other than the reviewer. The disciplinary process and procedures should be referred to for guidance and issues dealt with at the earliest opportunity.

- 5.6. If the disciplinary issue warrants consideration of terminating the individual's employment, a formal meeting, chaired by a senior manager must be held, as described in 3.5. Any information gathered as part of an investigation should be available to all parties prior to the meeting. An outcome of this meeting could be that the employment contract may be terminated, with or without notice. The employee will have a right of appeal to the outcome of this meeting, as described above.
- 5.7. A formal Final Review meeting can be called at any point during the probation, when conduct, performance and attendance issues are running concurrently.

6. Applying for other vacancies during probation

- 6.1. During the probation period new entrants usually wish to focus on learning the new job and demonstrating an ability to perform at the required level in the substantive post. For this reason probationers are not able to apply for internal vacancies and will not be offered temporary promotion during the probationary period.