

# Probationary Period

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## 1 Introduction

The purpose of the probationary period is to ensure that managers are satisfied that new starters to South Tyneside Council can meet the requirements of their role. New employees will be carefully monitored and supported during their probationary period.

The Council's Induction Strategy is a key factor within the probationary period. New starters must have been through the appropriate induction programme as part of their probationary period.

## 2 Our Values

Our Values are the things we most care about. In applying every policy and process, we must consider and uphold our PROUD Values. These define what we stand for as an organisation, how we work and how we act.

Professional – we uphold high standards.  
Respectful – we value people.  
Open and honest – we trust each other.  
Understanding and engaging – we care about people.  
Deliver what we say we will - we provide great services.

Under each Value is a set of guiding behaviours. These apply to every person who works for or represents South Tyneside Council. They are our promise to residents, each other and to all who interact with the Council.

## 3 Scope

This Policy applies to all employees new to South Tyneside Council, including those joining from other Local Authorities and public service organisations. This includes school-based employees where the governing bodies of individual schools have adopted the Policy.

This Policy does not apply to Teachers employed under the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

A probationary period does not apply to internal transfers/promotions, or to those transferred within TUPE regulations.

## 4 Length of Probationary Period

New entrants to South Tyneside Council are required to successfully complete a probationary period of six months. The probationary period can be extended in certain circumstances, which will be covered below.

## **5 Roles and Responsibilities**

Employees must be given the opportunity and support where necessary to enable them to successfully complete their probationary period. It is the managers responsibility to ensure that the procedure in section 5 is followed.

## **6 Procedure**

1. Induction - all new employees must receive an induction from their manager to outline Council/School expectations and identify any support which they may need to perform effectively in their role.
2. Monthly Review Meetings – during the probationary period, managers must review performance and progress each month. These reviews can include the monthly catchup meetings. Managers are responsible for conducting structured and planned sessions, and they should include the following:
  - Discussion and progress check on completion of the Induction Programme
  - Clarification of duties and responsibilities
  - Identification of any training needs
  - Clarification of standards of conduct, performance and attendance
  - Agreement of targets, success criteria and required outcomes
  - Discussion and agreement of expectation for future review meetings
  - Early identification of problems, concerns and issues including clarification of expectations going forward
  - Completion of the Monthly Review Form (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix A – Monthly Review Form).
3. Final Probationary Period Review Meeting – this will be the final meeting to discuss whether or not the employee has successfully completed their probationary period (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix B – Final Review Form). Refer to section 7 below regarding the timing of the final meeting. A letter must be sent to the employee to invite them to the final meeting as it could end in termination of their employment (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents – Appendix C – Invite to Final Review Meeting)
  - If their employment is terminated it must be confirmed in writing following the meeting (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix D – Termination Letter).
  - If the manager is satisfied that the employee's performance is of the required standard, they will confirm the employee's appointment and a follow up letter must be sent (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix E – Confirmation into Role Letter).
4. Monthly Supervision Sessions – following confirmation of the appointment, employees will revert to usual practice of monthly supervision sessions with their manager.

## **7 Dealing with Issues, Concerns and Poor Performance**

Concerns may be in relation to performance, conduct and/or attendance. They must be dealt with at the earliest opportunity and not saved until the Final Review Meeting. Concerns can be discussed during the Monthly Review Meetings but depending on the issue/concern, it may not be appropriate to wait until the next meeting. If a specific meeting needs to be held to discuss a particular concern/concerns the employee must be sent to an invite letter particularly if the

meeting may end in termination of their employment (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix F – Invite to Meeting to Discuss Concerns).

Clear information, examples and evidence should be given of any issues. Wherever possible, actions needed to rectify the situation should be identified and clearly discussed and agreed with the employee. This may include identification of any support which the Council/School may need to provide. All discussions and actions must be recorded using the Monthly Review Form if appropriate, which will be used to continue discussions and review progress at subsequent Review Meetings.

The manager must be clear and make the employee aware that they will not be confirmed into post at the end of their probationary unless an acceptable level of improvement is made.

HR Services should be contacted at the earliest opportunity when there appears to be a problem.

If the employment is terminated it must be confirmed in writing following the meeting (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix D – Termination Letter).

## **8 Extension of Probationary Period**

Where it is felt that an extension of the probationary period is required, it should be discussed with HR Services, and agreed with the relevant Head of Service. For school-based employees the Head Teacher would agree the extension, following discussions with HR Services.

The maximum length of the probationary period is nine months; therefore the probationary period can be extended by a maximum of three months. The requirement for an extension should be clear by no later than the end of the fourth month of the probationary period.

Extensions to the probationary period may also be granted for long term sickness absence, compassionate leave, maternity leave and adoption leave. For those staff employed on term time only contracts, this could also include school holidays.

It should not be used to simply give the employee additional time, unless there is a clear plan or further training and support.

A letter must be sent to the employee to confirm the extension (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix G – Probationary Period Extension).

## **9 Termination of Employment**

If all reasonable steps have been taken to support the employee within their probationary period and their performance/conduct/attendance is not at the required level, the employee will not be confirmed into post and their employment will be terminated. It should not come as a shock to the employee, as discussions during Monthly Review Meetings will ensure that they are aware of any issues and concerns.

Any intention to terminate the employment at the end of the probationary period should be taken in advance of the minimum notice period requirement e.g. by month 5 to allow a notice period of 1 month. However, if the employee has continuous service, the required notice period may be longer than one month (refer to Leavers Policy).

A letter must be sent to the employee to invite them to a meeting to terminate their employment as they have the right to be represented at the meeting (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix C – Invite to Final Review Meeting). The decision to terminate their

employment must be confirmed in writing following the meeting (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix D – Termination Letter).

Probationary periods may be terminated at any time during the probationary period under exceptional circumstances e.g. persistent lack of improvement, deterioration of performance from an already inadequate level, or a serious conduct issue (following an investigation). Managers must seek advice from HR Services. The process outlined in Section 6 above must be used to deal with termination in those circumstances.

## **10 Appeal Against Termination**

If an employee wishes to appeal against the termination of their probationary period, they must do so in writing, to the appropriate Head of Service within 10 working days upon receipt of the letter confirming the dismissal. The appeal letter must also state the grounds of appeal.

The Head of Service will invite the employee to a meeting to discuss their appeal (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix H – Invite to Probationary Period Dismissal Appeal). The decision reached is final.

For school employees, the appeal must be in writing and forwarded to the Clerk of the Governing Board, requesting that the appropriate Governing Board Committee consider the matter.

## **11 Confirmation of Employment**

Where the manager is satisfied that the employee's performance is of the required standard at the Final Probationary Period Review Meeting or following an extension of the probationary period, they will confirm the employee's appointment and a follow up letter will be sent (Probationary Period Policy – Template Documents - Appendix E – Confirmation into Role Letter).

## **12 Equality and Diversity Statement**

South Tyneside is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity. An equality check for this policy was carried out in 2023. No equality implications were identified in this policy.

Policy approved by Governors: May 2026

Date of next review by Governors: May 2027