

Probationary Period Policy

This document is relevant to:	
Staff	✓

Purpose

The purpose of a probationary period is to provide a framework for both line manager and employee to discuss progress and performance and identify any difficulties which may arise. The probationary period written records, including supervision notes, may be used to provide evidence to support termination of employment if such difficulties are not resolvable during the probationary period.

The policy aims to ensure fair, equal and consistent treatment of employees during their probationary period.

Policy

The Probationary Period

Employees should be informed of the probationary requirements both at interview and on commencement of employment as part of the induction process.

Unless specified otherwise in the contract of employment, the probationary period is effective for six months from date of commencement as an employee. The probationary period may be shorter when the appointment is for a short fixed-term period of less than one year.

During the probationary period the line manager is responsible for ensuring that the following process and steps take place:

- the new employee receives a full **induction**
- any appropriate **training**, as identified from interview, probationary and supervision meetings, takes place at the earliest opportunity
- management **expectations and performance targets** are made explicit by the line manager and are understood by the new employee
- regular **supervision** meetings take place on a monthly basis (and more frequently if necessary). These should be held in accordance with the requirements for supervision meetings as described in the Performance Management Policy.
- a **first** probationary **review** takes place at three months
- a **final** probationary **review** takes place shortly before the end of the six months period
- in exceptional circumstances, the probationary period is **extended** (for example, because of the employee's sickness or other absence).

Probationary Reviews

The line manager is responsible for ensuring that the probationary reviews take place. In the case of the Chief Executive's probation, reviews will be carried out by the Chair of Trustees who may choose to include other Board of Trustees members in the review meetings.

The reviews will cover work performance and expectations and will provide the basis for deciding whether to confirm employment at the end of the six-month period. Management expectations and performance targets should therefore be explicit.

The criteria by which a probationary period will be assessed at both the three-month and six-month review, fall into three areas and are as follows:

1. **Work Targets** (or assigned duties and responsibilities, taking account of the job description)
2. **Person Specification Criteria** (taking account of any training that is needed to improve performance or to gain new skills)
3. **General**
 - 3.i. **Induction**
 - understanding and promotion of the organisation's work, role and post holder's role within
 - knowledge of organisation's policies and procedures (in particular the Equality and Diversity policy, Health and Safety policy and Absence Management policy)
 - understanding of voluntary sector and mental health issues necessary for the post
 - knowledge and contact with other organisations
 - 3.ii **Relations**
 - effective working with colleagues in the organisation
 - sharing in organisation/service/team tasks and involvement in organisation/service/team planning
 - asking for and offering support
 - following management instructions and office procedures
 - 3.iii **Work Practice**
 - hours worked including time keeping
 - promoting positive image of the organisation
 - handling enquiries, external liaison
 - working collaboratively.

The two reviews are separate and distinct from the regular supervision received during this period.

The three months' review

The three months' review should take place at the end of the first three months probation period. It is a meeting between the line manager and the employee to cover work performance to date, and is supported by the notes of the prior supervision meetings. The aim is to review progress and expectations and set clear targets for the next three months. If there are concerns about the employee's performance, he/she should be warned that their job is at risk if he/she does not meet the standards required. The employee should be encouraged to contribute views and ideas.

The recording of the three month review is the responsibility of the line manager. The record should be detailed enough so that it is auditable at a later date. It should include an outline of decisions or action points with reasons, and of any warnings given. The record should be signed and dated by the line manager and the employee. Any disagreements about content should be recorded. Records should be typed rather than handwritten if possible. A copy will be given to the employee and a copy will be held in their personnel records.

The six months' review

The six months' review must take place before the end of the six months' probation period. It is a meeting between the line manager and the employee.

The meeting will cover work performance over the full six months' period. It will take account of the three months' review and any progress or problems following the last review, and is supported by the notes of all prior supervision meetings.

The manager will make a record of this meeting and provide a copy to the employee within five working days, together with written confirmation of the outcome of the probationary review - whether the employment is confirmed or not.

If the employee's performance, including conduct, has failed to reach the requirements of the post, the action will normally be to dismiss.

If the decision is not to confirm employment, the employee will be entitled to one week's notice. The organisation will provide a reference having regard to the facts and circumstances under which the employment was terminated.

Extension of Probationary Period

Only in very exceptional circumstances will the probationary period be extended for a further period of up to three months. Such extension cannot be for the purpose of dealing with poor performance. It is only acceptable where unavoidable circumstances have occurred. For example, where the employee's approved absence during the preceding months has prevented her/him from achieving the standard of work performance required.

Dismissal

The organisation's full disciplinary procedure does not apply to probationary employees. However, in all cases the requirements as outlined in the Acas Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures must be followed.

The line-manager of a probationary employee will assess the employee's performance through the probationary supervision and review process. Warnings will be given to employees prior to any final action being taken should there be concerns about performance or conduct. A written record of all warnings must be made on probationary and/or supervision notes as relevant.

Where the probationary employee is to be dismissed due to unsatisfactory performance or conduct, or in cases of gross misconduct, the employee will be notified:

- in writing of the problem
- the potential of a dismissal outcome
- of their right to appeal
- of the time and venue for the probationary review meeting
- of their right to be accompanied by a union representative or work colleague.

A meeting will be held and the employee will be entitled to appeal.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the dismissal, he/she must do so in writing to the Chair of Trustees within five working days of receiving written notification of the dismissal, stating the reasons for the appeal. Any documents submitted in support of the appeal must be attached.

Arrangements for the appeal hearing will be made by the Chair of Trustees who will ensure that a note-taker is present. Where possible, at least two members of the Board will constitute an Appeals Panel, one of whom will be the panel's Chair. It will exclude any who line-manage the employee and who made the decision which is the subject of the appeal. The employee may be accompanied by a union representative or a work colleague of his/her choice at any appeal hearing.

Other

During the probationary period the period of notice will be one week on either side.

If across the board increases are paid following an annual salary review, any increase will be paid during the probationary period. Salary increments (if applicable) will be paid after successful completion of the probationary period and will be back-dated to the appropriate date.

Annual leave is accrued from the first day of employment. During the probationary period employees are expected to take leave equivalent only to the amount of leave they accrued. Public holidays are provided as they occur.

Responsibilities

The Chief Executive is responsible for managing this policy and overseeing its implementation. Line managers are responsible for implementing the policy within their areas of work, and for overseeing adherence by staff. Every member of staff should take personal responsibility for conforming to it.

Associated Policies and Procedures

- Performance Management Policy
- Capability Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Procedure
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Training and Development Policy

The equality impact of this policy has been considered and Dorset Mind believes that it complies with its commitment to equality as stated in its Equality Policy

Policy Ownership

Policy Name	Version	Doc ref
Probationary Period Policy	1.0	Probationary Period Policy

Policy Owner	Chair of Trustees
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Approval Status

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Consult the Dorset Mind website for the latest version of this policy.

Document Control

Reviewers

Name	Position
Chris Price	Chair of Trustees
Gary Corderoy	Trustee
Anna Stevens	Trustee

Change History

Issue	Date	Author	Reason
1.0	Dec 15	Chris Price	New Policy