



## Probationary Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

At WODC, we aim to create a positive working environment where everyone can fulfil their potential and perform to the best of their ability to deliver excellent service. As a new employee, we want you to thrive in your new role and we will provide you with the support and training you need to get you up to speed in your role as quickly as possible. When you start, your manager and the team will provide you with support and induction into the organisation.

This policy is intended to allow both the employee and the line manager to assess objectively whether the employee is suitable for the role. WODC believes that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new employees will perform effectively in their employment.

The relevant line managers are responsible under this policy for ensuring that all new employees are properly monitored during their probationary period. If any problems arise, the line manager should address these promptly. This will ensure that the employee is aware that some aspect of their performance or conduct is unsatisfactory and prevent the problem from escalating.

### Length of Probation

WODC's standard period of probation is six months. During this time your manager will have regular meetings to review how you are progressing so you will know that you are on the right track. If you aren't sure about how to do something or think you need a bit more training or support, you can ask your manager at any time. Within your first week, you will be invited to a mandatory virtual welcome session.

After successful completion of your probationary period, your employment in your role will be confirmed.

### Extending Probationary Periods

WODC reserves the right to extend an employee's period of probation at its discretion. This will be limited to one extension and the total period of probation will be no longer than 9 months.

An extension may be implemented in circumstances where the employee's performance during probation has not been entirely satisfactory, but it is thought likely that an extension to the probationary period may lead to an improvement, or where the employee or line manager has been absent from the workplace for an extended period during probation.

Before extending an employee's probationary period, the line manager must consult with Human Resources. If an extension to the probationary period is agreed, WODC will confirm the terms of the extension in writing to the employee, including:

- the length of the extension and the date on which the extended period of probation will end
- the reason for the extension and, if the reason is unsatisfactory performance, details of how and why performance has fallen short of the required standards
- the performance standards or objectives that the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended period of probation
- any support, for example further training, which will be provided during the extended period of probation; and
- a statement that, if the employee does not meet fully the required standards by the end of the extended period of probation, their employment will be terminated.

## Terms of employment during the Probationary Period

During the probationary period, employees will be subject to all the terms and conditions of their contracts of employment with the exception of those terms noted below:

The amount of notice that an employee must give to WODC if they wish to resign, and the amount of notice that WODC must give to the employee of dismissal are different during probation. During probation, either party may terminate the employee's contract of employment by giving one week's notice. If WODC decides to terminate the employee's employment, their employment will come to an end immediately and the employee will receive pay in lieu of the one week's notice together with any outstanding holiday pay.

Once the probationary period has been completed, the notice periods will be as defined in the employee's contract of employment.

In the case of existing employees who have been transferred or promoted into different roles, the amount of notice that the employee must give to the organisation if they wish to resign, and the amount of notice the organisation must give to the employee of dismissal will be as defined in the employee's contract of employment.

## Line Managers' Responsibilities

Under this policy, the line manager has responsibility for monitoring a new employee's performance and progress during the probationary period. The line manager must ensure that the employee is properly informed at the start of their employment about what is expected of them during probation, for example the required job outputs or standards of performance.

## Reviews during Probation

The line manager should review and assess the employee's performance, capability, and suitability for the role on at least a monthly basis during the employee's probation, and again at the end of the probationary period. A clear record should be made of each review meeting. A copy of the record should be passed to the employee and the original forwarded to Human Resources. WODC processes any personal data collected during the probationary period in accordance with its data protection policy.

Any data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of operating the probationary period. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the WODC's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

During an employee's probation, the line manager should provide regular feedback to the employee about their performance and progress, and should there be any problem areas, raise these with the employee as soon as possible with a view to resolving them. The line manager is also responsible for providing guidance and support and for identifying and arranging any necessary training or coaching.

### Irregularities Discovered during the Probationary Period

If, during an employee's probation, it is suspected or established that the employee does not have the qualifications, experience, or knowledge that they claimed to have at the time of recruitment, the matter will be discussed with the employee to establish the facts. If the evidence suggests that the employee misrepresented their abilities in any way, WODC will terminate the employment.

### End of Probation

Shortly before the end of the probationary period, the line manager should conduct a final review of the employee's performance and suitability for the job. This will involve a meeting with the employee to discuss their performance and progress throughout the period of probation. There should be no surprises at this meeting as there have been regular reviews. If the employee's performance is satisfactory, the line manager should notify Human Resources to issue a letter of confirmation of appointment to the employee.

If the employee's performance has not met the standards required by WODC, the line manager should discuss the matter with Human Resources before any decision is made to terminate the employee's employment.

### Termination of Employment

If an employee's performance while on probation has been unsatisfactory (despite support from their line manager), and it is thought unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the employment will be terminated at the end of the period of probation.

It is WODC's policy to allow the employee to complete the designated period of probation rather than terminating employment before the probation has come to an end. This is to give the employee a full opportunity to come up to the required standards. If, however, there is clear evidence prior to the end of the period of probation that suggests the employee is wholly unsuitable for the role, the line manager should consult Human Resources with a view to terminating the employee's contract early.

Where a decision is taken to terminate the employee's employment, the employee must be interviewed and informed of the reason for the termination. WODC will write to the employee confirming the termination and the reason for it. The employee will be given an opportunity to appeal the decision.

If an employee's employment is terminated after the expiry of the probationary period, or if the employee is an existing employee who has been transferred or promoted into a different role, WODC's normal capability/dismissal procedure must be followed in full.

### Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

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