

MANAGERS GUIDE – Probationary Period

The probationary period is crucial in determining whether or not a new employee is suitable to fulfil the role that they were recruited for. However, not all new recruits will manage to successfully complete their probationary period, either because they feel the job is not right for them or because they do not have the right skill set and aptitude or because of issues regarding their conduct.

Nevertheless, there is still a procedure which needs to be followed. Sometimes new employees leave due to a lack of understanding of what is expected of them in their probationary period and if there are areas of concern regarding their performance, then this should be addressed as soon as is reasonably practicable. The best way to avoid this happening is to keep an open channel of communication with new employees where possible, as well as ensuring that the mid probationary meeting is held.

If an employee is not meeting the manager's expectations then it is important to sit down with them after they have been in their role for half the probationary period, or before if you have serious concerns regarding their performance, this will give you the opportunity to reiterate your expectations and to consider any training which may be necessary in order for them to meet these expectations.

The end of the probationary period

At the end of a probationary period, if a new employee continues to underperform, for whatever reason, then it is essential that the appropriate steps are followed, you may need to extend their probationary, or if this is appropriate, you may need to dismiss. Best practice suggests that we follow the standard three step approach, invite to meeting, hold meeting and offer the opportunity to appeal the decision.

Step 1 - Invite the employee to a meeting in writing.

Step 2 - Hold the meeting.

- At the meeting it is essential to be clear regarding reasons for wanting to terminate an employee's employment or extend their probationary period. It is essential to have evidence, e.g. the amount of times the individual has been late, if for example lateness was an issue or the areas which they have been underperforming in.
- Listen to what your employee has to say as they may highlight potential issues which you were not aware of or other areas which need to be explored which you had not previously considered, e.g. training

Step 3 – Meeting Outcome

Option 1 – Extension of Probationary period

You may wish to extend the employee's probationary period due to mitigating factors. If this is the case, be clear as to why the probationary period has been extended and what your expectations of the employee are. Be specific how long you want to extend the probationary period by and what measures need to be taken to have the employee at the expected level. This should be confirmed to the employee in writing.

Option 2 – Termination of Employment

There may be no mitigating factors as to why the employee has failed to meet expectations and the outcome of the meeting may be that you wish to terminate their employment. Should this be the case, please confirm this in writing to the employee and remember that they should be paid their notice pay, as per their terms and conditions of employment and any outstanding monies owed to them, for example accrued but not taken holiday. This should be confirmed to the individual in writing.