



Probation Policy

This policy details the probationary period at South Kesteven District Council which ensures a fair and supportive process with consistent application.

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Relevant forms and letters:

- [Probation Assessment Form](#)
- [New Starter Guidance](#)
- [Probation Letter Templates](#)

Related policies:

- [Recruitment Policy](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing hr@southkesteven.gov.uk

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

1.0 Policy Statement

The Council recognises that a supportive and developmental probation process is important.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that new employees are supported and assessed during their probationary period and that any issues or concerns are addressed in a timely and constructive manner. The policy also aims to reinforce our culture of continuous learning and development within the council.

2.0 Scope

Newly appointed employees to the Council will have a probationary period which will usually last 3 months. This policy applies to all new employees including full and part time colleagues, those on permanent and fixed term contracts and regardless of seniority within the Council.

This policy does not apply to employees who are new to the Council as a result of a TUPE transfer or those on casual contracts.

3.0 Guiding Principles

- The probationary period is a two-way process that involves regular communication, feedback and support between the manager and the employee.
- The Council is committed to ensuring newly hired employees undergo a thorough, informative and meaningful induction which is tailored to their specific role. This probation policy operates in conjunction with the induction process.
- Line managers will conduct regular 'check-ins' or 'one-to-one' meetings with new starters as an important support mechanism.
- The probation period ensures newly appointed colleagues work with their manager so all reasonable development needs are identified and addressed. It also ensures the new employee is capable of carrying out the role to which they have been appointed.
- Line managers are encouraged to address any concerns with a new employee promptly, without waiting for a scheduled one-to-one or probation review meeting.
- The Council emphasise fairness and transparency throughout the probation period.

4.0 Probation Review Meetings

Line Managers will hold regular meetings with new employees – depending on the role, these could be 'check-ins' or more formal one-to-one meetings. These are an opportunity for line managers to provide feedback and check new employees are receiving sufficient support and guidance.

Line Managers will also hold a formal review around the 6 week service mark and three months' service.

In cases where employees have a disability or when a disability becomes apparent, the line manager will consider reasonable adjustments with the employee and implement where appropriate. It may also be useful to refer to Occupational Health for guidance and/or complete a wellbeing plan.

4.1 Six Week Review Meeting

During the probationary period, employees at the Council will undergo a review to assess their performance, adaptability and alignment with the Council's values and objectives. This review serves as an important checkpoint for both the employee and the Council to evaluate mutual expectations and contributions.

Managers will conduct an assessment, considering factors such as job proficiency, work behaviours and adherence to the Council's policies. Feedback from both parties will be sought to ensure a transparent and constructive dialogue, facilitating adjustments if necessary. This process aims to support employees in their professional growth while allowing the council to make informed decisions regarding the continuation of employment beyond the probationary period.

4.2 Three Month Review Meeting

Before the end of a new starters probationary period, the line manager will meet with the employee to conduct a review of performance, progress and suitability for the role. This meeting is a two-way discussion between the employee and their manager and is an opportunity to ensure clarity regarding the role, provide constructive feedback and discuss developmental plans.

The outcome of this meeting will be a decision to:

- Confirm the employee's permanent appointment or;
- Extend the probationary period (please see section 4.3), or;
- Invite the employee to a probationary hearing if the line manager considers that further support or training is unlikely to lead to a satisfactory standard of performance.

5.0 Extending the Probation Period

Under certain circumstances, the probation period may be extended beyond the three months. An extension would usually be for an additional four weeks. This could be (but is not limited to) the following reasons:

- Inability to assess performance due to the employee's absence from the workplace for an extended period.
- Concerns about performance along with evidence to suggest performance is likely to improve with an extension to the probation period.

Shortly before the end of any agreed period of extension, the line manager will meet with the employee to conduct a final review of performance. The outcome of this meeting will be a decision to:

- Confirm the employee's permanent appointment, or;
- Invite the employee to a probation hearing

By exceptional circumstances, the probation period may be further extended where there is strong justification to do so.

6.0 Probation Hearing

A probation hearing is most likely to occur following a three-month review or a review after an extension to the probation period. However, they can be held at any time within the probation period where there is justification to do so.

Employees invited to a probation hearing will be given at least 48 hours written notice and may be accompanied to the probation meeting if they wish (usually by a Trade Union representative or work colleague). An HR representative will also be present at this meeting.

The hearing serves as a platform for open communication and consideration of alternatives to dismissal.

If the employee does not attend the probation hearing, the hearing may either proceed in their absence or be adjourned taking into consideration the reasons for their non-attendance.

Where a manager decides to terminate employment, the employee would usually be dismissed with notice, unless an allegation of gross misconduct is upheld where dismissal without notice may occur. The employee will be informed of the outcome either at the probation hearing, or within 5 working days after the meeting.

Confirmation of the termination will be provided in writing to the employee, with the reasons explained, along with details of their right to appeal.

7.0 Dismissal Appeal

Employees who are dismissed during their probationary period have the right to appeal against the decision. To do this, employees can lodge an appeal within 5 working days of being notified of a decision by emailing HR (hr@southkesteven.gov.uk).

An appropriate Appeals Manager will be appointed, usually either the relevant Head of Service, Assistant Director or the Second Line Manager. The Appeals Manager will arrange an appeal meeting to consider the matter which would normally be held within 14 days from receipt of the appeal. Employees may, if they wish, be accompanied to the appeal meeting and this would usually be a work colleague or Trade Union representative.

The employee will be informed of the outcome of the appeal no later than 10 working days after the appeal meeting.

This is the final part of the process and there are no further rights to appeal.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at hr@southkesteven.gov.uk.

- This policy applies to all employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
- The Council reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.