

Probation policy

Issue details	
Title:	Probation Policy
Version number:	2.0
Policy owner:	Corporate Lead – People and Information Governance
Policy sponsor:	Strategic Director - Governance
Authorisation by:	ELT
Authorisation date:	
Future review date:	July 2028
Delegated authority to make changes to the policy:	<i>[Provide job/group title rather than name(s) of those who have delegated authority. This could be a Director, an Assistant Director, a Portfolio Holder, Cabinet, a Committee, SLT, or ELT.]</i>

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 This policy supports 'People Focused', our people strategy, enabling our people to connect, grow and thrive from the commencement of their employment.

1.2 It sets out how we:

- Support new employees to succeed through clear expectations, training and feedback;
- Build a culture of trust, respect, and open communication;
- Ensure performance is managed in a fair, consistent and evidence-based way;
- Make timely and legally sound decisions about continued employment.

1.3 Our approach reflects our values of fairness, accountability, inclusivity, and transparency.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all newly appointed employees within their first 6 months of employment.

2.2 It does not apply to agency workers, contractors or consultants.

2.3 The principles of this policy do apply to existing employees who change roles within the Council.

3. Key Principles

3.1 **In line with our People Strategy and behaviours:**

- We start from a position of trust and treat people with dignity and respect;
- We have open, honest and proactive conversations;
- We take accountability for our decisions and actions;
- We support people to grow through clear expectations and feedback.

3.2 **Operationally:**

- The probation period is 6 months (including notice, where applicable);
- A decision to dismiss must be made no later than the end of month 5;
- Managers must act early, consistently and with evidence;
- Employees will have the opportunity to understand concerns and respond.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Managers play a key role in delivering a positive employee experience and enabling people to succeed. They will:

- Set clear expectations from the outset;
- Hold regular 'Check-In' (1-2-1s) and review meetings;
- Provide clear, constructive feedback;
- Act promptly where concerns arise;
- Keep clear written records;

- Make timely, fair and evidence-based decisions.

4.2 Employees are expected to:

- Engage with induction and training;
- Take ownership of their performance and development;
- Act on feedback;
- Raise concerns or support needs early.

4.3 Human Resources will:

- Provide advice and guidance;
- Support fair and consistent application of the policy;
- Help managers manage risk and ensure compliance.

5. Procedure

5.1 Induction and onboarding (Month 1)

5.1.1 We will support employees to connect and feel part of One Team East Devon.

5.1.2 Within the first month of employment managers will have:

- Agreed objectives and expectations;
- Identified training and development needs;
- Explained expected behaviours and standards;
- Scheduled regular check-ins and review meetings.

5.2 Probation review prompts and timeframe

5.2.1 Progress through the probation period will be monitored as a minimum using the following structured approach to ensure employees are provided with early support and clarity and time to improve where needed. Human Resources will issue a formal prompt for a progress review at the end of month 1 and the start of months 3 and 5.

Stage	Timing (by end of):	Focus
Initial review (Manager led / HR prompt)	Month 1	Early feedback and support for employee HR prompt is to ensure objectives and monitoring is in place.
Progress review (HR initiated)	Month 3	Confirm progress on track OR conduct formal probation/implement formal PIP review meeting where concerns remain unresolved
Critical review (Manager led)	Month 4 - 4.5	Formal PIP review to confirm progress on track or initiate final formal probation meeting
Final decision (HR prompt / Manager led)	Month 5	Confirm, extend (exceptionally), or dismiss.

5.2.2 In addition to timely completion of the 1, 3 and 5-month prompts, Managers are expected to conduct and evidence regular reviews throughout the probation period through the

Council's 1-2-1 'Check-in' process are to make timely, documented and fair decisions at each of the above stages.

5.2.3 Employee's will be entitled to 5 working days' notice of any formal probation review meetings.

5.3 Internal moves

5.3.1 Where employees move roles internally a structured review period will apply with concerns being managed under the relevant Council policy.

6. Managing probation concerns

6.1 In reflecting our commitment to open communication and supporting people to succeed, from the start of employment and prior to month 3, managers will:

- Raise concerns promptly;
- Provide examples and clear expectations;
- Agree improvement actions and support;
- Maintain a transparent record of progress; and
- Confirm discussions and the above in writing.

6.2 HR will prompt managers for a formal review at the start of month 3. Managers must have either confirmed the probation is on track or hold a meeting to instigate a formal improvement by the end of month 3. There is nothing preventing instigation of a formal improvement process prior to this where circumstances warrant it.

6.3 Formal improvement stage (typically Months 3–4)

6.3.1 Where concerns warrant, the manager will arrange and hold a formal probation review meeting with the employee to discuss this. Employees may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at the formal review probation meeting.

6.3.2 This meeting may result in a formal improvement plan being issued. This will include:

- Clear evidence of concerns
- Required standards
- Measurable objectives
- Timescales – the formal improvement plan must have concluded prior to the end of month 4.5.
- Support and development

6.4 Final review stage (no later than Month 5)

6.4.1 HR will prompt managers for a formal review at the start of month 5. Where performance remains insufficient the manager will be responsible for arranging and holding a final probation review meeting which must be timed for a decision to be taken prior to the end of month 5.

6.4.2 The employee may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative and will:

- Receive evidence in advance;
- Have the opportunity to respond;
- Be treated fairly and respectfully.

- 6.4.3 Managers must decide on one of the following outcomes prior to the end of the 5th month:
- Confirm in post; or
 - Dismiss with notice following a formal review process and having obtained advice from HR; or
 - Extend (exceptional circumstances only see 6.6 - Extension of probation).

6.4.4 In addition, by the end of month 5, managers must have completed the 5-month probation review prompt sent by HR.

6.5 Termination during probation

6.5.1 If employment is terminated a decision must be made and confirmed in writing by end of Month 5. Manager must complete a leaver form to this effect at least 1 week prior to the end of the 5th month.

6.5.2 A minimum of 1 months' notice will be given (unless the reason for dismissal relates to gross misconduct).

6.5.3 The written outcome will include:

- Reason(s) for dismissal
- Evidence
- Right of appeal

6.6 Extension of probation

6.6.1 Extensions are exceptional and will only be used where:

- There is clear potential for improvement within a reasonable timeframe.
- Or where disability related absence has prevented a fair assessment

6.6.2 Where an extension is granted this:

- Must be agreed before the end of Month 5;
- Normally limited to 1–3 months;
- Confirmed in writing with clear expectations.

6.6.3 Should the extension not bring about sufficient improvement, the process will move to the relevant Council policy and may commence at the final stage of that policy depending on the circumstances.

6.7 Appeals

6.7.1 Employees may appeal a decision to dismiss. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 5 working days.

6.7.2 An appeal meeting will be arranged and the outcome will be confirmed in writing.

7. Policy administration

8. Equality impact considerations

Equality Impact Assessment completed in June 2026

9. Data protection

The [EDDC Data Protection Policy](#) outlines how we store and use personal information.

The following privacy notice(s) provide further information on how we will use personal data, how it is gathered, how long we will retain this information, and what rights individuals have in relation to this.

Choose the relevant privacy notices from the drop-down menu below.

Choose an item.

GDPR Privacy Notice for Staff

All our privacy notices can be found on the EDDC website – <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/access-to-information/data-protection/privacy-notices/>.

10. Policy review

History of most recent policy changes – Must be completed			
Date	Section	Change	Origin of change (e.g. change in legislation)
June 2026	5 and 6	Changes to ensure timely, evidence based, clear and fair probation review processes within the 6-month probation period to reflect the reduction from 2 years to 6 months continuous service for acquiring unfair dismissal rights. Additionally, linkage to the people strategy and refreshed performance management framework.	Employment Rights Act

11. Policy authorisation

This policy was originally approved by ELT, Personnel Sub Committee and Unison on 14 January 2025.

12. Policy dissemination

This policy will be communicated via:

- One Team East Devon Hub
- Manager briefings
- HR guidance materials

13. Related policies, strategies, procedures, and legislation

- People Strategy (2025–2028)
- Capability Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Employment Rights Act 2025
- ACAS Code of Practice