

**CFRS**

**Policy**

**No. 46**

**Probation**

**Policy**

1. Introduction

1.1 It is the organisations policy to operate a probationary period for all new fire fighters. This policy is intended to enable both the employee and Line Manager to assess objectively whether or not the employee is suitable for the role.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service believe that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new employees will perform effectively in their role.

1.2 It is important that probation is monitored via an appropriate policy and procedure.

2. Policy

2.1 Length of Probation

The probationary period will continue for a period of 2 years.

It is recognised that in the preliminary stages of employment new Fire Fighters will spend their time with the Learning and Development team as required;

Within this period the Learning and Development team will oversee the probation and performance of these employees.

Any issues will be dealt with and documented in accordance with the Probation policy. Concerns which have been raised and documented with the new employee during this period will be passed to the relevant Manager as soon as the employee is attached to a Station. The Manager in charge of the Station will deal with the probationary period from that point thereafter.

2.2 Within the probationary period new employees will be assessed periodically on aspects of competence in the following areas;

1. Operational competence

2. Attitude and behaviour

3. Compliance with the contract of employment and Fire Service policies and procedures.

2.3 Formal Probationary assessments will be undertaken at;

* 6, 12, 18 and 24 months for regular fire-fighters
* 9, 15, 21 and 30 months for on-call fire fighters

Assessments undertaken for on call fire fighters are arranged at later points in the employment and this reflects an acknowledgment that comprehension and development into the role may take slightly longer given the difference in the number of working hours.

Probationers will be expected to progress and develop into their role in each of the areas above at the standards and levels as defined by the probationary assessments.

Providing that the probationer is on target and has successfully completed the relevant operational and probationary assessments employment will be confirmed after the third round of assessments at 18 months for regular fire-fighters and 21 months for on call.

The Service recognises that this does not mean that the Fire Fighter has reached full competence but has reached such a level that the Service is willing to confirm that the probationary period has been passed. Necessary training and development will continue beyond this point to support the achievement of full competence.

2.4 Operational Competence Assessments are carried out by the Learning and Development Team and the Manager will meet with the probationer to assess and record performance in the areas of;

• Attitude and Behaviour

• Compliance with the contract of employment and Fire Service policies and procedures

The Manager is responsible under this policy for ensuring that all new employees are appropriately supported and monitored during their probationary period.

3. Managing Concerns within the Probationary Period

3.1 Where problems arise during probation, the Managers must ensure that issues are addressed promptly and that support is given to aid improvement; this will ensure that the employee is aware that an aspect of his/her performance or conduct is unsatisfactory and will provide the opportunity to plan relevant support or direct a change in behaviour.

**Do not wait for a formal assessment date to address any issues of concern. Any performance issues should be discussed immediately with the employee.**

Detailed records must be conserved when managing the probationary period in order to ensure that both the Manager and the employee are aware of the following points;

1. The area(s) of concern

2. All support provided/arranged in order to aid improvement (including mentoring, formal training, supervision)

3. Relevant timescales for expected improvement

4. Regular documented feedback with the employee relating to improvement progress.

In situations where the new recruit fails to achieve the required standard in the ‘operational assessment process’ then a re-assessment will be scheduled to be undertaken no later than 3 months from the original assessment date.

If the individual is unable to achieve the required standard at the re-assessment then the Manager will refer the case to the Head of Service Delivery (HOSD) who will liaise with the HR department for appropriate advice and a Probation Review Meeting will be arranged.

4. Behavioural and Attitudinal Issues

4.1 Cumbria Fire and Rescue Services expect a professional approach and attitude from all employees. Behaviour identified within the PQA document clearly categorises the required standards and can be used to educate and guide employees.

In situations where issues with behaviour or attitude arise during the probationary period it is the responsibility of the Manager to assess the situation and to determine an appropriate period of time in which s/he can expect to see the required improvement and this will depend upon the nature of the areas for concern. On this basis a review date will be fixed by which point the employee will be expected to have achieved satisfactory standards.

The Manager will meet with the employee on a regular basis (no less than once every two weeks) in order to set targets, assess improvement and performance against previously set targets and to agree actions from that point.

A review date will only be offered when the Manager considers it will lead to the required improvement, or where the employee has been absent from the workplace due to ill health for more than 4 weeks during the probation period.

**4.2. Table**

**The table below identifies the information which must be discussed and recorded with the employee.**

**Details of the meeting must be documented and a copy provided to the employee.**

|  |
| --- |
| * the reason why the performance is unsatisfactory including 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 a set period; |
| * the support, for example further training, that will be provided during that period ; |
| * a statement in writing that, if the employee does not meet the required standards by the end of the period, s/he will not be confirmed in post. |

5. Compliance with the requirements of the employment contract for On-Call

5.1 Where there are issues relating to compliance with the requirements of the contract of employment for example; (but not exclusive);

* Availability
* Turn-out
* Training

The Manager should advise the employee of the pertinent requirements as set out in the contract of employment and immediate compliance should be expected.

However, If the employee is experiencing any work related or personal issues such as caring responsibilities, health concerns or difficulties in the work place which they feel are inhibiting them from adhering to their contract of employment then this should be discussed with the employee and advise should be sought from the HR department to ensure that appropriate support is provided to prevent any discrimination.

If compliance or a mutually agreeable outcome is not achieved then the details of the case will be referred to the Head of Service Delivery who will liaise with HR to secure appropriate advice and the employment may be terminated.

Misrepresentation of Skills

6.1 If, during an employee's probation, it is suspected or established that the employee does not have the qualifications, experience or knowledge that he/she 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 his/her abilities in any way, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service may terminate the employment with contractual notice paid in lieu.

Probation Review Meeting

7.1 Where it is clear that the employee is unable to meet the required standard, the Manager’s Assessment of the Probationary Period must be sent to the Head of Service Delivery with a recommendation that a Probation Review Meeting is held.

7.2 The following information must be provided by the Manager to the HOSD in the Probation Assessment report;

* Written evidence of probation review meetings with clearly defined objectives
* Operational Competence Assessments
* Details of concerns raise during the probationary period
* Details of support and guidance which has been provided
* The employee has had adequate opportunity to improve, or meet the required standards
* In appropriate cases, consideration of health issues including
* Sickness absences during the employment
* Occ health support and advice
* disability

7.3 A Probation Review Meeting will be arranged to consider the facts relating to an employee who is not achieving satisfactory performance in their probationary period. It will be attended by the employee who may be accompanied by a colleague or employee representative. It will be chaired by the Head of Service Delivery (or other manager at that level) and the Manager will present the Probation Assessment Report. The chair of the meeting will make a final decision regarding the dismissal of the probationary employee which will be confirmed in writing to them.