

Policy



Police Staff Probation

URN: J-P-064

Version: 2.2
Effective Date: 23/02/2022
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Host Force: Dorset Police
Host Policy Unit: Dorset Police Legitimacy Team
Policy Owner: Alliance Head of Employee Relations
Policy Author: Strategy & Policy Lead (ER)

Associated
Step by Step: J-Pr-068 Police Staff Probation Step by Step

Applicable to:

Devon & Cornwall Police	☒
Dorset Police	☒
OPCC Devon & Cornwall	☐
OPCC Dorset	☒
Officers	☐
Staff	☒

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The probationary period provides an opportunity for new staff (employees) to demonstrate, through performance and attendance, that they are suitable for the role to which they have been appointed.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the requirements of the probationary period for all newly appointed employees, including apprentices and those on fixed term contracts. It does not include agency staff or contractors.
- 1.3 A probationary period will not apply to internal transfers from other police staff roles where the employee has successfully completed a probationary period.
- 1.4 The line manager will provide appropriate induction, training, and support for a new employee to enable them to successfully complete their probationary period.
- 1.5 During the induction, the line manager will explain the requirements of the role, the associated standards of behaviour, performance and attendance expected by Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police ('the Force'), and the Force's expectations of regular and reliable attendance at work. The line manager and the employee will also explore any reasonable adjustments, as appropriate.
- 1.6 All new employees, including former police officers, are required to complete a mandatory induction course.

2.0 Probation

- 2.1 The probationary period and associated terms are set out within the Written Statement of Particulars.
- 2.2 The length of probation will normally be six months, except in exceptional circumstances, and as identified within section 3.11 of this policy.
- 2.3 In order for the employee to establish their suitability for the appointment, the length of probation may differ according to the role applied for, based on:
 - The nature and complexity of the role,
 - The training required to achieve competency in role.
- 2.4 This policy applies to performance and attendance issues during the probationary period. Alleged misconduct during the probationary period may be investigated in line with this policy. Allegations of gross misconduct, however, will be subject to J-P-116 Police Staff Misconduct Policy.
- 2.5 J-P-024 Attendance Support Policy, J-P-194 Capability Policy and their associated procedures will not apply to employees during the probationary period, however, will come into effect when the probationary period has ended, and the employee is confirmed in post.
- 2.4 The notice period during the employee's probationary period will be the statutory minimum (one week) by either side, in most cases. However, where the

employment contract stipulates that the employee is required to provide a period of notice of 12 weeks, the employee must provide four weeks' notice during their probationary period. In this situation, the Force will also provide four weeks notice to the employee during probation. In the unlikely event that an employee's probationary period is extended beyond two years' employment, the notice period by the Force will be the statutory one week for each complete year of employment, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. Once the probationary period has been completed, a longer notice period will apply as stipulated in the employee's Written Statement of Employment Particulars.

3.0 Probationary Periods

- 3.1 Probation provides for a specific period during which the employee is expected to demonstrate by performance, attendance and conduct, that they are suitable for the role to which they have been appointed. During the probationary period, employees will not be able to apply for attachments or secondments, internal or external.
- 3.2 For entry level apprenticeships, completion of the apprenticeship is seen as an important demonstration of suitability for the appointment alongside performance, attendance and conduct. The employee will be required to successfully pass their apprenticeship, as well as successfully completing their probationary period. Failure to successfully complete both the probationary period and the apprenticeship may result in employment with the Force being terminated. Where the length of the apprenticeship extends beyond the probationary period, and the apprenticeship isn't successfully completed, this will be dealt with under J-P-194 Capability Policy.
- 3.3 It is a key responsibility of all managers to ensure that employees are assessed and monitored effectively throughout their probationary period, prior to confirmation in post. This includes identifying and dealing promptly and effectively with any shortcomings and/or training needs. Line managers should ensure they provide appropriate support to employees, where required, exploring and implementing reasonable adjustments, as necessary.
- 3.4 Where an employee takes a period of maternity, adoption, paternity (maternity/adoption support) leave, or shared parental leave during their probation, the probationary period will be 'paused' until such time as the employee returns to work on conclusion of the family leave indicated.
- 3.5 A period of probation should not normally exceed the timeframe set out in 2.2 and 3.11. In exceptional circumstances, where performance, attendance or conduct causes concern, the line manager may extend the probationary period for up to three months, where they believe there is a realistic prospect of the employee demonstrating their suitability within the extension period.
- 3.6 Where an extension is put in place, written confirmation will be provided to the employee, setting out the terms of the extension period.
- 3.7 Where probation is extended, the line manager is responsible for ensuring the employee meets the standards of behaviour, performance, attendance and

conduct expected by the Force. Where the employee declines to engage with the extension, employment will be terminated.

- 3.8 Employment may be terminated by the Force at any time during, or at the end of, the probationary period, with due cause and the appropriate notice, including situations which are judged to be irretrievable. On reaching the end of the probationary period and its extension, where applicable, employment should either be confirmed or terminated.
- 3.9 The line manager should be aware that if they fail to extend the probationary period or terminate the employment within the set probationary period, the employee may effectively be confirmed in post. Once confirmed in post, any performance, attendance or conduct concerns will be managed through the capability, attendance support or misconduct policies. Advice is available from HR Operations - Delivery, as required.
- 3.10 For specified roles with a longer probationary period, as set out at 3.11, a 24-month tenure period applies (which includes the probationary period), where the employee will be unable to apply for any internal police staff vacancy, attachment or external secondment, or to become a police officer. The tenure period commences from the start date of their role. In exceptional circumstances the tenure period will not apply, for example, recruitment into a service critical role.
- 3.11 The probationary periods for the specified roles are:
- Cyber Support Investigators (D&C), 12 months' probation,
 - Resource & Incident Management Officers (RIMO) (D&C), 12 months' probation,
 - CMCU Contact Officers (D&C), 12 months' probation,
 - Police Enquiry Officers (D&C), 12 months' probation
 - Crime Scene Investigators (D&C and Dorset), 12 months' probation,
 - Police Staff Investigators (D&C and Dorset), 12 months' probation,
 - Contact Officers (Dorset), 12 months' probation,
 - Counter Services Officers (Dorset), 12 months' probation,
 - Dispatch and Contact Officers (Dorset), 12 months' probation,
 - Police Community Support Officers (Dorset), 12 months' probation.

4.0 Review Periods

- 4.1. The line manager will undertake regular reviews throughout the probationary period, which will include measures of performance, attendance and conduct. Probationary review forms will be retained by HR Operations - Admin, on the employee's HR record.
- 4.2. Probationary review meetings will be held at regular intervals during the employee's probationary period, until their confirmation in post or termination of employment.
- 4.3. Where an employee commences with the Force via an apprenticeship, see 3.2, they will be subject to regular reviews throughout their apprenticeship in liaison

with the apprenticeship provider, in addition to the requirements set out within this policy and accompanying procedure.

- 4.4. Employees are expected to establish their suitability for the post and be subject to written reports from their line manager.
- 4.5. The regular review points do not preclude a line manager from holding more frequent development meetings, where necessary. If, at any stage during the probationary period, the line manager feels the employee is not reaching the required standards and may not be suited to the role, they should undertake an increased level of review and monitoring. The line manager will work with the employee to identify their development needs and provide supportive action via a written plan, to assist the employee to perform effectively. During this time, the employee will not be eligible to apply for other roles unless there is a restructure and other staff in the same role are either 'under review' or 'at risk'.
- 4.6. The employee's attendance record will be considered at the probationary review meetings. The line manager will check the management intervention thresholds, as applicable, on Myself, contacting HR Operations - Delivery for advice where there is an attendance concern.
- 4.7. Where an employee applies for another role during their probationary period, they will be required to continue and successfully complete their probationary period; situations may be managed on a case by case basis. The probationary period may be extended for the purposes of retraining.

5.0 Confirmation of Probation

- 5.1 Employment may be ended by the Force at any time during, or at the end of, the probationary period (including any extension, where granted) with appropriate notice. By the end of the probationary period the employment should be confirmed or terminated.
- 5.2 At the conclusion of the probationary period, the final probationary report must be completed by the line manager during discussion with the employee and endorsed by HR Operations - Admin. Subject to satisfactory service, the employee should be advised that they have successfully completed their probationary period.
- 5.3 Where the employee has satisfactorily completed their probationary period, this will be confirmed in writing by HR Operations - Admin.
- 5.4 Once an employee has completed their probationary period, any further action in relation to performance, attendance or misconduct will be dealt with via the attendance support, capability or misconduct policies and procedures.

6.0 Unsatisfactory Performance

- 6.1. In cases where the employee has not attained the required standards at their final probation review meeting, and the line manager does not think that the employee is suitable for confirmation of appointment, the Head of Department should conduct a formal final probation review meeting.

- 6.2. The employee will be invited, with at least seven calendar days' notice, to attend the formal final probation review meeting. The invite letter will reference the previous communications under this policy and will set out the required improvements, details of support provided, and will also advise the employee that termination of employment with the Force may be a potential outcome of the meeting.
- 6.3. The employee will have the right to be represented by a Trade Union representative, or accompanied by a work colleague, at the formal final probation review meeting.
- 6.4. The meeting will be held with HR Operations - Delivery, with a notetaker in attendance. The line manager will attend the meeting, to outline the concerns they have regarding the employee's performance, attendance or conduct, as applicable, and the support and assistance they have provided.
- 6.5. Where the performance issues relate to attendance or health, the line manager must ensure that they have sought up to date advice on the employee's medical condition from Occupational Health. Where the medical condition relates to pregnancy or disability, advice should be sought from HR Operations - Delivery.
- 6.6. At the formal final probation review meeting, the line manager will explain the areas of concern and clarify that the issues have been identified and discussed with the employee, referring to the details set out in the invite letter at 6.2, and any supporting documentation previously provided.
- 6.7. The employee will have the opportunity to respond during the meeting and their views will be considered before a final decision is made.
- 6.8. At the formal final probation review meeting a decision will be made by the Head of Department, with support from HR Operations - Delivery, as to the most appropriate course of action. This may include an extension to the probationary period in certain circumstances, or termination of employment or the employee deciding to resign.

7.0 Sickiness During the Formal Final Probation Review Meeting

- 7.1 An employee reporting sick, once they have been informed of the requirements to attend a formal final probation review meeting, should report their absence to their line manager in accordance with J-Pr-020 Absence Recording Procedure.
- 7.2 Where the employee is sick and unable to attend their formal final probation review meeting, the process may be delayed for up to four weeks, upon receipt of a medical certificate. If after a four week delay the employee remains too unwell to attend, relevant proceedings will continue in the employee's absence, as appropriate. Where a delay extends beyond the end of the probationary period, the line manager must liaise with HR Operations - Delivery for an extension to be put in place.

- 7.3 Where it is necessary to proceed with the formal final probation review meeting in the absence of the employee, they will be afforded the opportunity of appointing a Trade Union representative or a work colleague to attend the meeting on their behalf and/or submit written representation / evidence.

8.0 Termination of Employment

- 8.1 Following the formal final probation review meeting, where the employee has not demonstrated sufficient improvement in their performance, attendance or conduct, and it is decided to terminate employment, the employee will be notified in writing and provided with the relevant notice period as set out at 2.4. The line manager and employee will agree whether the employee remains at work during the notice period or does not attend the workplace through the use of annual leave, flexi or TOIL. Employees are expected to utilise all outstanding flexi, annual leave, and TOIL during this notice period. Where there is insufficient alternative leave available, garden leave will be utilised, and the employee will retain pay and any contractual benefits without the requirement to attend the workplace. Alternatively a payment in lieu of notice may be made.
- 8.2 It should be noted that termination of employment could take place at any time within the probationary period, where it becomes clear to the line manager that the employee will not reach the standards required, even where additional support and development are granted, and any reasonable adjustments put in place, as appropriate.
- 8.3 The line manager must liaise with HR Operations - Delivery at the earliest opportunity where they consider the employee has not met the required standards.
- 8.4 The line manager is responsible for recommending to the Head of Department / Commander and HR Operations - Delivery that the employee be released from employment where:
- they have not demonstrated their suitability for the role, despite support and development, or,
 - their conduct or capability has been considered inappropriate.
- 8.5 Where the Head of Department / Commander approves the recommendation to release the employee, in liaison with HR Operations - Delivery and the line manager, they will meet with the employee to terminate the employment contract.
- 8.6 The Head of Department / Commander will confirm the termination of employment in writing to the employee.
- 8.7 HR Operations - Admin will progress the release of the employee and notify the Payroll team.

9.0 Appeal

- 9.1 The employee has the right to appeal against their dismissal.

9.2 Appeals can be made on the following grounds:

- A procedural error or abuse of the process has occurred, or,
- New evidence has come to light which could not reasonably have been available during the formal final probation review meeting.

9.3 The appeal should be made in writing, stating the grounds on which it is based and submitted to HR Operations - Delivery within seven calendar days of the issue of the written termination of the contract.

9.4 An appeal manager will be appointed, an appeal hearing scheduled, and the employee invited to attend. The employee may be accompanied to the appeal hearing by either a Trade Union representative or work colleague, providing their details to the appeal manager in advance of the appeal hearing.

9.5 Appeal hearings should be heard without unreasonable delay. Where an appeal hearing takes place outside the notice period, the employee's termination date will stand, however, in the event they are reinstated, the employee's pay will be appropriately backdated to the date of the termination.

9.6 Appeal hearings will normally be conducted by reviewing the decision made. In such cases the appeal hearing will only consider that the decision taken by the relevant party was a reasonable one to have taken, in the light of the evidence and circumstances presented at the formal final probation review meeting.

9.7 If the appeal is made based on procedural error, or new evidence which has come to light, the appeal hearing will determine whether the Force are required to convene a further formal final probation review meeting. Where a further formal final probation review meeting is required, the appeal hearing will direct whether a new appeal hearing should commence, or the original appeal hearing be reconvened.

9.8 Following the appeal hearing, the decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing within 14 calendar days.

9.9 The two possible outcomes are:

- The appeal is upheld or,
- The appeal is dismissed.

10.0 Regulatory Background

The principal documents regulating this aspect are:

- a. Employment Rights Act 1996
- b. The Police Staff Council Handbook

The Force is obliged to abide by all relevant legislation and other guidance as appropriate:

- Code of Ethics (DCP)

- Code of Ethics (DP)
- Equality Act (2010) including the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Records Management (DCP)
- The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- UK General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act (2018)
- Our Purpose (DCP)
- Vision, Purpose & Priorities (DP)
- Standards of Professional Behaviour
- HR Privacy Notice

11.0 Monitoring, Review, Enquiries and Feedback

Review and amendments will be coordinated by the Policy Unit.

The Alliance Head of Employee Relations is responsible for overseeing this policy to ensure a consistent Force approach is maintained. Monitoring will be primarily carried out subject to Force processes of continuing review and in line with Force governance requirements.

This policy will be reviewed every two years subject to legislation / process changes.

Please note: Where legislation / guidance changes have occurred / scheduled to occur or operational needs demand it, ahead of the revised review date, Alliance People policies and associated procedures / step by steps will be applied in line with prevailing legislation / guidance.

For day to day enquiries relating to this policy please contact HR Operations (D&C) - Admin or HR Ops Dorset – Admin.

We welcome any comments or suggestions you wish to share about the content or implementation of this document. If you would like to make contact to discuss further, please email: .Policies@dorset.PNN.police.uk.

12.0 Other Associated Documents

Policy and Procedure

- J-P-116 Police Staff Misconduct Policy
- J-P-024 Attendance Support Policy
- J-Pr-020 Absence Recording Procedure
- J-Pr-018 Attendance Support Step by Step
- J-P-194 Capability Policy

SharePoint

- People Portfolio A-Z

College of Policing

- National Decision Model
- Authorised Professional Practice (APP)

Other

- Equality Impact Assessment

13.0 Version History

Version: 1.0
Date: 23/02/2022
Reason for Amendments: Initial document
Amended by: Strategy & Policy Lead – Employee Relations (HR Operations)
Approved by: Strategic People Board
Date Approved: 22/02/2022
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.1
Date: 04/05/2022
Reason for Amendments: Review - Amendment to Probation Period with those with an extended notice period.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.2
Date: 06/05/2022
Reason for Amendments: Inclusion of PILON – 8.1
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.3
Date: 19/10/2022
Reason for Amendments: 'OPCC Devon and Cornwall' unticked from the 'Applicable to' table. No change to review date.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.4
Date: 15/05/2023
Reason for Amendments: Amends to the change of terminology from 'discipline' to 'misconduct' and the different policy that applies in instances of misconduct or gross misconduct.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.5
Date: 18/10/2023
Reason for Amendments: Fit for purpose review, the majority of amendments are cosmetic in order to provide additional clarification, to support the recent changes in terminology within the Contract of Employment and to reflect some changes to role titles. The Cyber Support Investigator role has been added to the list of posts with a longer probation and tenure period, which has been through the appropriate consultation and subsequent agreement at Joint Partnership Group. Updated to latest template.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: Alliance Head of Employee Relations
Date Approved: 09/10/2023
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.6
Date: 14/06/2024
Reason for Amendments: Changes implemented to reflect the fact that the Dorset Counter Services Officers have a probation period of 12 months and a tenure period of 24 months. An update has also been made to reflect the 24-month tenure period of Dorset Police Community Service Officers. Links corrected throughout document where required.
Amended by: Requested and amended by Employee Relations.
Approved by: n/a
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.7
Date: 18/07/2024
Reason for Amendments: The probation period for 'D&C Police Enquiry Officers' is amended from six months to 12 months.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: n/a

Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.8
Date: 21/10/2024
Reason for Amendments: Fit for purpose review completed resulting in minor amendments.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: 07/10/2024
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.9
Date: 26/01/2025
Reason for Amendments: Amends made to provide additional clarity by including reference to attendance and conduct, alongside performance. The documents already refer in the introduction that all three areas are considered so this minor amend sets out to provide that level of clarity for the end user.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: Legitimacy Manager
Date Approved: 26/01/2025
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 2.0
Date: 01/05/2025
Reason for Amendments: D&C CSI's probation periods are extended from 6 months to 12 months.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: Board
Date Approved: 02/04/2025
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 2.1
Date: 06/06/2025
Reason for Amendments: Amended to include Dorset Police Staff Investigators as having a 12-month probation period, along with the 24-month tenure. Approved at Joint Partnership Group on 3 June 2025
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: Board
Date Approved: 03/06/2025
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 2.2
Date: 28/09/2025
Reason for Amendments: Full review undertaken, no significant changes.
Amended by: Strategy & Policy Lead (ER)
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: 21/09/2025
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

14.0 Governance

Present Portfolio Holder: Alliance Head of People (HR Operations)
Present Document Owner: Alliance Head of Employee Relations
Present Owning Department: Alliance People Portfolio

The details below are only required for new documents, major amendments subject to consultation.

Name of Board: Strategic People Board
Chief Officer Approving: ACO (D&C) and ACO People, Director of People and Support Services (Dorset)
Date Approved: 26/01/2022
