



Probationary Policy and Procedure

September 2025

People Area	Probationary Policy and Procedure
Authored by (Responsible Officer):	Louise Bate, Human Resources Manager
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Policy

Cleveland Fire Brigade expects all employees to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards of performance, conduct and attendance. To achieve this the service recognises that a supportive and developmental probationary period process is crucial to ensure new employees receive the appropriate level of training and support upon commencement of employment. The policy provides a framework to ensure that any concerns are identified and managed in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all new employees of Cleveland Fire Brigade.
- 1.2 Any employee who is promoted to a new role within the service will be subject to the probationary procedures within the Policy unless extraordinary circumstances apply, in which case this must be agreed in advance by the Head of HR and the Executive Leadership Team.
- 1.3 Agency workers will not be subject to a probationary process. It is not necessary for an agency worker to be subject to a probationary period as the agency ensures the worker's suitability for the role through the agencies vetting process and will monitor the workers performance through their contract.
- 1.4 Employees who may be joining Cleveland Fire Brigade with continuous service with a previous fire service may still be subject to a probationary period upon commencement of their employment with Cleveland Fire Brigade. In exceptional cases, should sufficient checks be completed in relation to the employee's previous performance history, provided there is no evidence of any performance or conduct issues, discretion may be applied in consultation with the Executive Leadership team and the Head of HR as to whether the full probation period will apply.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The policy provides a framework for managers and new employees to follow to facilitate a successful induction to the service and their new role and to give clarity regarding support and the appropriate procedure when an employee is not meeting the required work standards.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Employee Responsibilities:

- Engage in the induction process and training to understand their responsibilities and familiarise themselves with key expectations policies and procedures.
- Familiarise themselves with the Probation Policy and Procedure.
- Be responsible for their performance and behaviours and demonstrate a commitment to continued development to meet the expectations of their role.
- Advise of any learning difficulties or any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

3.2 Line Manager Responsibilities:

- Ensure that robust recruitment and induction procedures are consistently applied.
- Create an environment where high-performance levels are encouraged.
- Monitor and evaluate the employee's performance and skills and ensure values are aligned to the services values and ethical behaviours.
- Clearly define what is expected of the employee in relation to performance and conduct and responding to any concerns or issues promptly.
- Provide constructive feedback to the employee, offering any support and guidance to allow the employee to succeed in their role.
- Ensure consistent application of the Probationary Policy and Procedures for all new employees, including the scheduling of probationary review meetings.
- Maintain accurate records of probation meeting discussions and notify the HR team of the outcome of the probationary period

3.3 HR Team Responsibilities:

- Periodical review of the Probationary Policy and Procedure.
- Where appropriate, provide training, advice and guidance to managers on the application of the Probationary Policy and Procedure.
- Attend formal meetings in relation to the Probationary Policy and Procedure to provide advice and guidance to managers.

4. Support Staff

4.1 Introduction and General Principles

- 4.1.1 The service expects all employees to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards of performance, conduct and attendance within their employment and recognises that a supportive probationary period is crucial in

ensuring that employees are supported and are given the right guidance, training and tools to succeed right from the commencement of their employment.

- 4.1.2 All new support staff will be subject to a 6-month probationary period, which is an opportunity for line managers to assess a new employee's performance, conduct and attendance to ensure these standards meet the services requirements.
- 4.1.3 The procedure will be used to identify and address the following issues such as:
- Performance.
 - Conduct.
 - Attendance.
 - Loss of an essential qualification required for the post or failure to attain a essential qualification.
 - Inability to cope with reasonable workloads or not being able to meet identified standards.
 - Values & Behaviours.
- 4.1.4 The probationary period will last for 6 months; in which time the employee is expected to demonstrate their suitability for the post. It is an opportunity to identify if an employee is aligned with the values and culture of the service and to decide if the organisation is a right fit for them. The services Values and Ethical Behaviours Framework can be viewed here <https://clevelandfiregovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/KeyDocumentsA-Z/Documents/Values%20and%20Ethical%20Behaviours%20Framework.pdf>
- 4.1.5 The probationary period is an opportunity to have regular ongoing conversations between the new employee and their line manager, for standards and clear objectives to be discussed and set. A period in which performance can be measured and support and feedback can be provided regularly in a fair and consistent manner. During probation discussions, employees will be given clarity on what is expected of them, which will help minimise any preliminary difficulties during this initial period.
- 4.1.6 Should an individual's performance not meet the required standard then consideration should be given at the earliest opportunity as to whether the probationary period should be extended or whether employment should be

terminated. Advice must be sought from the services HR team before any decision is made.

- 4.1.7 Where performance meets the required standard then the individual will be confirmed in post. Written confirmation of successfully passing their probation will be sent to the employee.
- 4.1.8 The management of performance/capability should always be fair, transparent, consistent and demonstrate respect for the employee in a supportive manner.

4.2 Induction

- 4.2.1 Upon commencement of employment, employees will receive an appropriate induction to gain a basic understanding of the service and their role and responsibilities. The employees' line manager will arrange regular meetings with the new employee to monitor progress during the early stages of their employment, to monitor progress, and to ensure appropriate support and guidance is provided.
- 4.2.2 During the employees' initial probationary meeting, which should be conducted in the first week commencing in their role, the following principles in line with the employees' terms and conditions of employment, person specification and job description, should be observed when the employee commences their employment:
 - Clarification of the key responsibilities and scope of tasks.
 - Key Policies and Procedures to be read, understood and adhered to.
 - Probationary period expectations in terms of performance, conduct and attendance, and the consequences of any failure to meet the required standards.
 - How performance will be monitored during the probationary period and beyond.
 - Identify and put in place support mechanisms including any training and development requirements and/or any reasonable adjustments that may be required.
 - Agreed dates for further review meetings.

4.3 Probation Review Meetings and Monitoring Progress

- 4.3.1 Employees have a contractual responsibility to ensure that they perform at a satisfactory level and should be supported and encouraged to reach this. The service is responsible for ensuring that targets set for employees are reasonable and achievable and making sure that individuals understand what is expected of them. As such, periodic review meetings between the employee and their line manager will be conducted at various points within the employee's probation period.

- 4.3.2 It is important that two-way dialogue is entered into immediately from the induction stage through to probation review meetings to ensure the new employee is aware of their new responsibilities and what is expected of them in the role and to allow the line manager and employee to discuss and overcome any problems or difficulties as soon as possible.
- 4.3.3 Any areas in which an employee is not meeting expected standards in relation to performance and behaviours should be discussed with the employee immediately and consideration given to any appropriate action to be taken, such as additional training, support, guidance and supervision. Careful recruitment, selection and training will minimise the risk of unsatisfactory performance, however, once an employee is appointed regular discussion with employees regarding their performance and conduct will help to identify any issues as they may arise to ensure any remedial action can be taken.
- 4.3.4 Review meetings should be held within the following timescales:

Meeting	Timescale
First Review: During induction	Upon commencement of employment (week 1)
Second Review	1 month service point
Third Review	3 months service point
Final Review	5 months service point

- 4.3.5 During review meetings, constructive feedback should be given to the employee in relation to their performance, conduct and attendance, highlighting any achievements and any areas of improvement required. The employees' progress against the requirements of the role, objectives and targets should be discussed, since the previous review meeting. The review meeting should be documented on a probationary review form which can be found on SharePoint.
- 4.3.6 Where there are concerns regarding any aspect of the employee's performance, conduct, attendance or loss of qualification, the line manager will discuss the concerns and:
- Ensure the employee is aware of areas that require improvement.
 - Reiterate expected standards of performance and behaviours.

- Identify any additional support, training or guidance required.
- Schedule the next review meeting date.

4.3.7 Probation outcome review meetings must take place before the end date of the probationary period. In cases of extended probation periods, the probation review must take place before the end of the extended probation period. The final review meeting will take place when the employee has been in post for 5 months. This will allow sufficient time, if required, for an extension of the probationary period to be arranged or a dismissal hearing to take place should an employee be unsuccessful in meeting the expected performance and behaviour standards and requirements.

5. Operational/Fire Control Employees (Grey Book)

5.1 Introduction and General Principles

5.1.1 All new operational and fire control employees will also be subject to a 9-month probationary period, commencing from day one of their initial training, and continuing upon being posted to a station. This is an opportunity for line managers to assess a new employee's performance, conduct and attendance to ensure these standards meet the services requirements.

5.1.2 Within the 9-month probation period, new employees' performance will be monitored in the following areas:

- Conduct, attitudes and behaviours, as aligned with our [Values and Ethical Behaviours Framework](#)
- Compliance with employment contract and service Policies and Procedures.
- Operational competence.

5.2 Initial Training

5.2.1 Grey Book Staff (Whole-Time and On-Call firefighter and firefighter control) on point of entry will be classed as being in training. This is the point at which an employee is in full-time training and is not yet performing their role in its appropriate context but is still expected to comply with the services Policies and Procedures and demonstrate positive conduct, attitude and behaviours.

5.2.2 Individuals need to have successfully completed their training before they take up the position as a fire-fighter or fire control in development.

5.2.3 If a trainee firefighter fails to complete their trainee course for any reason (e.g. injury, performance, attendance etc.) the Training Team will seek advice from the HR Team and then will discuss actions to be taken with the Head of Emergency Response. This may include, for example, a re-course of a trainee firefighter, subject to maintaining the medical and fitness standards (only one re-course per person will be allowed) or termination of employment. Initial

training may be extended beyond its normal duration (as detailed in the probationer's contract) and the trainee may be re-coursed.

- 5.2.4 During the initial training period the Training team will oversee the performance of new operational employees. Weekly 1-2-1 discussions should take place during the initial training and any issues during this initial period relating to a new employee's performance or conduct must be raised, addressed, documented and discussed with the employee. This information should then be passed on to the relevant Watch Manager upon the employee being posted to the station to commence their probationary period.

5.3 Probation Review Meetings and Monitoring Progress on Station

- 5.3.1 Employees have a contractual responsibility to ensure that they perform at a satisfactory level and should be supported and encouraged to reach this. The Brigade is responsible for ensuring that targets set for employees are reasonable and achievable and making sure that individuals understand what is expected of them. As such Periodic review meetings between the employee and their Watch Manager will be conducted at various points within the employee's probation period:

Meeting	Timescale
Weekly 121 Review Meetings: During the initial training period	Weekly
First Review: Following the initial training period	Upon being posted to a station
Second Review	5-month service point (2 months after posted to station)
Third Review	7-month service point (4 months after posted to station)
Final Review	9-month service point (6 months after posted to station)

If an employee's initial training has been extended, meetings will still occur at the same times in their employment.

6. Successful Completion of Probationary Period

- 6.1 Should an employee complete their probationary period to the expected satisfactory level, the line manager will notify the HR team and a letter confirming this will be issued to the employee and a copy placed in the employee's HR record.

7. Poor Performance

- 7.1 The performance and conduct of an employee may be reviewed at any time during their probationary period and whilst it is anticipated that most issues, problems or difficulties can be resolved by informal discussions, it is however appropriate that any areas of concern are discussed at the appropriate review stages. During review stages it may be necessary to consider providing the employee with help, guidance and additional support, which can include but is not limited to:

- Formal training.
- Establishing/re-establishing targets and/or responsibilities.
- Establishing/re-establishing expected levels of performance.
- Establishing/re-establishing expected and acceptable standards of behaviour.
- Agreeing supportive action plans.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled and/or neurodiverse employees or obtaining specialist advice from HR and/or the occupational health service.
- Emotional support/counselling/employee assistance.

- 7.2 Any agreed action plans, instructions, targets, and expectations should be confirmed in writing to the employee in line with the record-keeping process.

- 7.3 Where an employee has disclosed a medical condition that falls within the definition of a disability under the Equalities Act 2010, the line manager should seek guidance from the Brigades HR team. It may be appropriate to liaise with the services occupational health provider for further advice regarding potential reasonable adjustment

- 7.4 If an employee fails to improve to the required standard or attain the agreed level of performance that has been discussed informally, an extension of the employee's probation period will apply. If the line manager decides that there are serious concerns or issues which may justify dismissal, they will invite the employee to attend a dismissal hearing.

8. Extension of Probation Period

- 8.1 The service reserves the right, where there remains some doubt as to whether an employee is suitable for their post, and as an alternative to termination of employment, to extend an employee's probationary period. An extension may be implemented in circumstances where:

- The employee's performance during their probation period has not been satisfactory, but it is felt that an extension to the probationary period may lead to an improvement through further support, training and guidance.
- There has not been sufficient time for the employee's performance and capabilities to be assessed due to periods of absence from work, which may include sickness absence or maternity leave.
- **To note**, an extension must not be automatically triggered due to maternity leave that has commenced during an employee's probation period, as the leave does not pause an employee's service date. An extension should only be considered due to absence from work through sickness absence or maternity leave if the employee's performance can not be meaningfully assessed in the period they have been at work.

- 8.2 Where consideration is being made as to whether a probationary period is to be extended, the line manager must, where appropriate, discuss their concerns with the relevant Head of Service and seek advice from a member of the HR team.
- 8.3 Discussion between the employee and their line manager will identify the areas in which improvement is necessary; what extra support or training, if appropriate, will be made available, and the timescale in which improvements are required. Confirmation of these points will be given in writing to the employee.
- 8.4 Employees must be informed that should they not meet the required standards during the extension of the probation period, despite the appropriate support and encouragement, their employment with the Brigade will be terminated.
- 8.5 There may be occasions where more than one extension may be considered. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis based on individual circumstances. Where it is the intention that an extension will be the final extension, the employee must be made aware that failure to reach the required standards, or if other significant concerns arise, will result in their offer of appointment being withdrawn.
- 8.6 At all stages, the employee will be advised of their right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or colleague.

9. Termination of Employment

- 9.1 In most cases improvement measures set during probationary review discussions and following the appropriate level of support and guidance, will allow individuals to sufficiently improve their performance to enable satisfactory completion of their probationary period.
- 9.2 If deficiencies are as such that they are considered serious enough to necessitate the termination of employment or the probationary period is not satisfactorily completed due to ongoing performance that does not meet the expected standards following all relevant support provided and an appropriate opportunity for improvements to be made, then the employees' contract may be terminated with a clear written statement of the reasons for this provided to the employee. Or in cases where an existing employee is promoted to a new role within the Brigade and fails to satisfactorily complete the probationary period, demotion may be considered where possible.
- 9.3 Termination of employment due to unsatisfactory completion of a probationary period will only be acceptable where either:
- The employees' performance and conduct have been continually assessed and any deficiencies were drawn to the employee's attention by the Line Manager during 1-2-1 and probationary review meetings.
 - Actions, considered to be gross misconduct, have occurred, such as serious conduct issues or falsification of qualification evidence provided during the recruitment process.
 - An extension to the employees' probationary period would not be considered beneficial.
- 9.4 In the above cases the employee will be invited to a probation hearing to discuss the termination of their employment. The hearing will be chaired by a hearing manager, supported by a representative of the services HR team. The purpose of the meeting will be to consider the information and evidence regarding the unsatisfactory performance, conduct, or other deficiency presented by the line manager who will be present during the hearing to present the case. During the hearing, the employee will be given the opportunity to give information relating to the issues.
- 9.5 During the meeting the Hearing Manager will consider all information and evidence presented by the Line Manager and the employee and will decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if any. The potential outcome will be one of the following:
- Dismissal from employment.
 - An extension of the current probationary period. Where improvements required will be made clear and the consequences of the failure to

achieve the required improvements. This will require the hearing to reconvene at a later specified date.

- No further action and the employee will continue in their current probation period.

- 9.6 A probationary dismissal meeting may take place at any time during an individual's probation period, at the end of the probation period or following an extension to the probationary period.
- 9.7 A minimum of 21 days' notice will be given to an employee to attend the dismissal hearing and the employee advised of their right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.
- 9.8 The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the hearing. Failure to attend the hearing without the appropriate justification will result in the hearing taking place in the employee's absence. An employee may request that the hearing be rescheduled on one occasion, providing the rescheduled hearing takes place as soon as is practicable, usually within 10 working days.
- 9.9 The decision to terminate an individual's employment must only be actioned provided there has been full consultation with the employee. An employee should not be dismissed because of a failure to perform to the required standards if a reasonable timescale to improve has not been given.
- 9.10 The decision must be communicated to the employee in writing, and must include information regarding the employee's Right of Appeal.
- 9.11 Notice of termination during the probationary period will be as set out in the employee's employment contract unless the employee is either in their first four (4) weeks of employment or the reason for dismissal is gross misconduct, which will result in the employee being dismissed without notice.

10. Right of Appeal

- 10.1 When a decision has been made to terminate an employee during their probationary period, if dissatisfied with the outcome of the decision, the employee has the right to appeal the decision. During the probationary period, this is the only right of appeal.
- 10.2 The employee must submit their appeal, in writing, to the Chief Fire Officer within 7 calendar days of receipt of the dismissal hearing outcome letter, stating the grounds and evidence for appeal.
- 10.3 Appeals against dismissal will be heard by the Fire Authority's Executive Committee, with both the dismissal hearing manager and employee presenting their case. The employee will be informed of their right to be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative. Also present at this meeting will be a representative from the

services HR team. The dismissal hearing manager is responsible for ensuring that all parties are provided with any documents that are to be considered during the appeal hearing.

- 10.4 Following the appeal meeting the Fire Authority's Executive Committee, will decide based on the evidence and information provided, whether to uphold or reject the appeal and must advise the employee of the outcome of their appeal, in writing, stating the reason for the decision within 7 calendar days of the Appeal Hearing. There may be situations in which it may not be possible for a decision may not be given within the 10-working day timeframe, any delays must be agreed in writing between all parties.
- 10.5 The outcome of the Appeal Hearing and decision made by the Fire Authority's Executive Committee, will be final and the employee will have no further right to appeal.

11. Record Keeping

- 11.1 Whilst it is not necessary to record every conversation with a new employee during their probationary period, it is important that adequate records are kept of review meetings taking place and that copies are provided to the new employee.
- 11.2 Probation record form templates can be obtained from SharePoint or the Brigades HR team.

12. Policy Review

- 12.1 This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed every three years or periodically where changes to legislation may occur.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – INITIAL SCREENING

EQIAs enable us to consider all the information about a service, policy, practice or activity from an equalities perspective and then put an action plan in place to achieve the best outcome for our employees and service users. EQIAs analyse how the work that we undertake can impact different groups. This will help us to make better decisions and evidence how we have reached these decisions.

Analysis Rating: please tick one box (the analysis rating is identified after the analysis has been completed – See EQIA procedure)	RED		AMBER		GREEN	
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SECTION 1 – INITIAL SCREENING

Directorate:	Strategic Planning & Resources
Department/Section:	Human Resources
Title of EQIA – Name of Service or Policy Conducted on:	Probationary Policy & Procedure
Date Of Assessment:	08 th July 2025
Assessment carried out by:	Louise Bate, HR Manager

Is this Policy/Service/Project: Existing ☐ New/Proposed ☒ Changing ☐ Other ☐

Applicable to: Our staff ☒ Our Communities ☐ Other ☐

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

What are the aims of the service / policy?	The Brigade recognises that a supportive and developmental probationary period process is crucial to ensure new employees receive the appropriate level of training and support upon commencement of employment. The policy provides a framework to ensure that training and support are provided but also that any concerns are identified and managed in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.
Who is responsible for the service / policy? Who is responsible for the assessment?	Human Resources are responsible for completing this assessments and ensuring the periodical review of the policy, and amendments in line with employment laws and legislation.
Who implements the policy? Are external contractors involved?	It is the responsibility of managers to ensure consistent application of the policy and for all Brigade employees to comply with their responsibilities laid out in the Policy and Procedure.
Are there any related policies or processes that will need to be changed associated to this one?	The current Recruitment and Selection Policy & Procedure has a section relating to employee probationary periods which will need to be removed or amended to reflect the changes in probationary periods.
To what extent does the service / policy have an impact on people? Who is affected by it and how?	This policy impacts all Brigade employees.
What analysis has been done to identify if the service / policy is meeting the needs of all of these groups of people?	Ongoing monitoring of probationary period outcomes.

ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE

In this section you should review the data and evidence above and consider the actual and potential impact of the policy, service, activity or practice on employees, residents, groups and other service users. Findings should be noted in the table below. You should also consider whether the decision will, or is likely to, influence CFB's ability to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act and other relevant legislation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups of people
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Using the information available, identity the impact of this service / policy in relation to people across the Protected Characteristics:

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Explain your answer
Age		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of age.
Disability		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of disability. There is reference made within the policy to the consideration given to reasonable adjustments.
Gender Reassignment		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of gender reassignment.
Pregnancy and Maternity			X	This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of Pregnancy and Maternity. There is specific provisions for pausing the probationary period to ensure a full and fair opportunity to assess performance and for the relevant training and support to be given.
Race		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of race.
Religion and Belief		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of religion and belief.
Gender		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of gender.
Sexual Orientation		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of sexual orientation.
Marriage and civil Partnerships		X		This policy is applied equally to all Brigade employees regardless of marriage and civil partnerships.

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? Yes or No If not why?	<i>If you have identified a negative potential impact for group, then you must complete a full Equality Impact Assessment. If you have identified a neutral or positive impact on any groups then no further action is required.</i> N/A
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MONITORING AND REVIEW

What procedures are in place to monitor the impacts outlined in the analysis?	HR team will monitor the application of the Policy & Procedure, ensuring consistent application across the Brigade.
How often will this take place?	Annually
Date of next planned review?	September 2028

Proceed to Full EQIA Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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SIGNATURE OF PERSON COMPLETING THIS SCREENING

Name:	Louise Bate
Job Title:	HR Manager
Date:	08 th July 2025

SIGNATURE OF LINE MANAGER – MINIMUM HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Name:	Michelle Richardson
Job Title:	Head of HR
Date:	08 th July 2025

SIGNATURE OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY OFFICER – HR DEPARTMENT

Name:	Anne Skillcorn
Date:	08 th July 2025

