

**CFRS**

 **Policy**

**Probationary Period**

Introduction

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) operates a probationary period for all new firefighters to allow enable both the employee and Line Manager to assess objectively whether or not the employee is suitable for the role.

Scope

This policy applies to all new operational firefighters in CFRS

**Principles**

CFRS believe that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new employees will perform effectively in their role.

[Procedure](http://www.intouch.ccc/elibrary/Content/Intranet/536/671/5053/6001/41410105256.doc)

**Length of Probation**

* 1. The probationary period for CFRS operational firefighters is 2 years.
	2. It is recognised that in the preliminary stages of employment new Fire Fighters will spend their time in a learning environment with the Learning and Development team as follows;
* On-call Fire Fighters – a period of two weeks
* Regular Fire Fighters – up to 12 weeks
1. Within this period the Learning and Development team will oversee the probation and performance of these employees.
2. 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 Station Manager as soon as the employee is attached to a Station. The Station Manager will deal with the probationary period from that point thereafter.
3. Within the probationary period new employees will be assessed periodically on aspects of competence in the following areas;
* Operational competence
* Attitude and behaviour
* Compliance with the contract of employment and Fire Service policies and procedures.
1. 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
1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Operational Competence Assessments are carried out by the Learning and Development Team and the Station 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
1. The Station Manager is responsible under this policy for ensuring that all new employees are appropriately supported and monitored during their probationary period.

**Managing Concerns with the Probationary Period**

1. Where problems arise during probation, the Station Manager 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.
2. **Do not wait for a formal assessment date to address any issues of concern. Any performance issues should be discussed immediately with the employee.**
3. Detailed records must be conserved when managing the probationary period in order to ensure that both the Station Manager and the employee are aware of the following points;
* The area(s) of concern
* All support provided/arranged in order to aid improvement (including mentoring, formal training, supervision)
* Relevant timescales for expected improvement
* Regular documented feedback with the employee relating to improvement progress.
1. 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.

1. If the individual is unable to achieve the required standard at the re-assessment then the Station 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.

**Behavioural and Attitude Issues**

1. In situations where issues with behaviour or attitude arise during the probationary period it is the responsibility of the Station 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.
2. The Station 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.
3. A review date will only be offered when the Station 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. The following areas must be discussed and recorded with 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.

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

**Compliance with the Requirements of the Employment Contract for On-Call**

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
1. The Station Manager should advise the employee of the pertinent requirements as set out in the contract of employment and immediate compliance should be expected.
2. 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.
3. 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**

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.

**Probationary Review Meeting**

1. A Probation Review Meeting is arranged to consider the facts relating to an employee who is not achieving satisfactory performance in the probation period.
2. A Probation Review Meeting will be arranged when other Management Interventions such as support/training or occupation health advice has not resulted in the required performance.
3. Where it is clear that the employee is unable to meet the required standard, the Station Manager’s Assessment of the Probation Period must be sent to the Head of Service Delivery stating the recommendation that the appointment should not be confirmed
4. After considering the Assessment of Probation Period report, the Head of Service Delivery and the Station Manager will make a final decision regarding the dismissal of the new employee. The outcome of the Probation Review meeting will be confirmed to the employee in writing.
5. The following information must be provided by the Station manager to the HOSD in the Probation Assessment report;
* Written evidence of probation review meetings with clearly defined objectives
* Operational Competence Assessments
* Details of support and guidance which has been provided
* Consideration of extension or the appropriateness of an extension to the probation period
* The employee has had adequate opportunity to improve, or meet the required standards
* Consideration of health issues including
* Sickness absences during the employment
* Occupational Health support and advice
* disability