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**Alternative Employment Programme**

Frequently Asked Questions for Line Managers

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## What is the Alternative Employment Programme?

The Alternative Employment Programme (AEP) enables the movement of talent, knowledge, skills and experience around the council as we continue to re-shape the organisation. The council’s position is that, wherever possible, it is a priority to retain a well skilled workforce, one that is talented, knowledgeable and experienced.

## Is the Alternative Employment Programme the same as Redeployment?

Yes.

## How do I place an employee on the Alternative Employment Programme?

Refer to the AEP Guidance document for valid reasons an employee could be placed on the AEP.

If there is a valid reason, you should inform the affected employee and submit a Manager Authorisation Form to the Resourcing Team who will add the individual to the AEP Employees list. You should also then issue a letter to the employee confirming they have been placed on the AEP Employees list.

If employees need to join the Alternative Employment Programme for restructure reasons, joining the AEP will be confirmed by HR Operations Teams.

In either case, it means the affected employee will be part of the Alternative Employment Programme and must look for a new role within the council and go through the AEP recruitment and selection process.

## What are my responsibilities for an employee on the Alternative Employment Programme?

As a Line Manager, you should help your employee to understand the AEP procedure. You should hold regular review meetings with your employee, at least every 2 weeks, to help them focus on seeking a suitable alternative post.

You should also arrange any training or support which may be required to assist your employee in securing a suitable alternative post. This support may be in the form of mentoring and/or shadowing and helping to identify transferrable skills.

Where your employee has a disability and/or requires reasonable adjustments, you should support the employee to obtain these adjustments where possible.

## How can my HR Representative support me?

Your HR Representative can also offer further information and guidance around the AEP procedure, and outline what you need to do to help employees through the process.

## What are the different levels of redeployment and when do these apply?

There are various reasons why an employee may require the support of the AEP.

An employee can join the AEP if:

1. They are identified as at risk of redundancy through reorganisation or restructuring, including during maternity leave,
2. They are nearing completion of an Apprenticeship,
3. They are approaching the end of a fixed term contract and they will have more than one year’s continuous service by the date employment is due to terminate,
4. They become pregnant and cannot continue in their current post,
5. Through ill-health or disability, they cannot continue in their current post; or where another post could be more suitable due to their disability with a reasonable adjustment,
6. There are reasons connected with discipline, grievance or capability.

## What will be the recruitment and selection process for Redeployees to apply for Cumberland Council vacancies?

Employees on the AEP are required to check the council’s Current Vacancies on a daily basis and submit an application for any jobs they wish to be considered for.

In applying for the post, they should select ‘Yes’ for the *Are you on the AEP (Alternative Employment Programme)?* Question under the *Internal Applicants* section of the application form.

When they do this, the Resourcing Team will pick up their application and forward it to the Recruiting Manager.

The Recruiting Manager will review their application and, depending on other applications from other employees on the AEP, will invite them to a discussion meeting about starting a trial period for the role.

If both the employee and Recruiting Manager agree to start the trial from the discussion meeting, the Recruiting Manager will confirm to them in writing with a trial start date and objectives for them to meet during the trial period in the role.

Where an employee is unsuccessful in securing a trial period for an alternative role, either due to deciding not to proceed with a given role or due to there being another applicant from the AEP with a higher priority status score, they will continue as a member of the AEP and be required to check the council’s Current Vacancies on a daily basis and submit an application for any jobs they wish to be considered for.

## What is the trial period and how does it work?

The trial period is the opportunity for the AEP employee and their Recruiting Manager to see if the alternative role is the right fit for them.

The AEP employee will be given role objectives and will meet with your Recruiting Manager on a weekly basis to provide a progress update against these objectives and give/capture feedback on their performance.

The trial period is the opportunity for the AEP employee to try out the new the role without being completely committed to it. Employees should give their all and aim to do their best during any trial.

## How long can the trial period be?

The trial period for a role will usually be at least 4 weeks. During the trial AEP employees will be given objectives and their recruiting manager will review progress against the objectives with them each week.

Trials can be extended where required up to a maximum total period of 3 months.

## Will an employee’s current salary be protected if they move to a lower grade role?

Yes. AEP employees’ current salary will be protected for 12 months where they move to a lower grade role.

## What happens if a trial period is unsuccessful?

If a trial period is unsuccessful, the Recruiting Manager will confirm this in writing. In this case, the employee will return to their original role and continue to be a member of the Alternative Employment Programme until the end of their notice period. If they reach the end of their notice period without securing alternative employment, their employment with Cumberland Council will end.

## What happens if an employee doesn’t apply for a vacancy while on the AEP?

Employees will continue to be a member of the Alternative Employment Programme until the end of their notice period. If they reach the end of your notice period without securing alternative employment, their employment with Cumberland Council will end.

In this case, as a line manager, you would process the employee as a Leaver through HR.

## Are employees guaranteed an interview whilst on the AEP?

We no longer require interviews as part of the selection process for AEP employees to find and secure alternative employment.

Providing their application demonstrates that they meet or reasonably meet the essential criteria, or could do so with reasonable training or coaching within a reasonable period of time, then the employee will be invited for a discussion about starting a trial period in the role.

## Are employees able to reject a job if it has different grade, hours, and responsibilities?

Potentially. An offer of suitable alternative employment is one that offers similar terms and conditions as an AEP employee’s current role. An employee on AEP will need to bear in mind the factors that determine if an offer is a 'suitable alternative' before making a final decision.

## If an employee is on AEP for health reasons are Occupational Health involved in the recruitment process at all?

The Recruiting Manager and People Management would seek appropriate advice and support from Occupational Health regarding the affected employee’s health and in particular, the suitability of any roles and the reasonable adjustments that they might need.

## What happens if an employee is placed on the AEP whilst on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave?

Employees on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave have an express statutory right to be offered a post where they meet or reasonable meet all the essential criteria for the post with reasonable training or coaching. Where an appropriate vacancy exists, following a successful trial period discussion, they would be offered the alternative role under a new contract that begins on the day immediately following the expiry of their previous contract. The new role must be suitable alternative employment.

## Can an employee apply for any job at any grade whilst on AEP.

Yes, but the AEP is intended to support employees to obtain a suitable alternative employment at their substantive grade or, where applicable a grade lower.

## If an employee secures a fixed term contract whilst on AEP will they be able to re-join when it expires?

Yes, it is advisable to re-join AEP 3 months prior to their fixed term contract ending.

This would be done via their Recruiting Manager who would become their Line Manager on commencement of the fixed term contract.

## Can an employee attend training courses to assist them to find alternative work?

Yes, the Council is committed to supporting employees in finding alternative work.

All employees can access online training via Organisational Development and Workforce Training - My Learning - <http://cumbria.learningpool.com/>. This includes e-learning materials, exercises, and links to further reading on a range of topics.

If an employee identifies any relevant training opportunities or courses, please discuss these with them.

You must support reasonable time off work for your employee to look for alternative work or attend/participate in relevant training.

## When should an employee on a fixed term contract be added to the AEP?

This should usually be done 3 months prior to the end of the fixed term contract to allow the employee sufficient time to try and secure another role within the council.