

Staff probationary policy

New policy number:	1013
Old instruction number:	PER:E010:a1
Issue date:	9 April 2024
Reviewed as current:	11 April 2025
Owner:	Assistant Director, People Services
Responsible work team:	Policy, Pay and Reward

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Probation	2
3	Probationary procedure expectations.....	4
4	Documentation.....	6
5	Addressing issues	6
6	Records	9
7	Help and support	9
	Document history.....	10

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the arrangements for the Brigade's staff probationary procedure(s) and applies to permanent employees. Fixed term contract staff will undertake probation mirroring that of permanent staff, provided the contract is as long as the probation period. Agency workers are not employees so are not subject to probation.
- 1.2 A probationary period provides the opportunity for the Brigade and you to assess your suitability for the role before the Brigade and you commit to your employment.
- 1.3 The probation procedures differ between operational, FRS, TMG and control staff groups and roles, because of the differing levels of experience, skills and knowledge required including demonstrating these safely.
- 1.4 The Brigade will work with you throughout your probation to support you and your development so that you can effectively perform your role.
- 1.5 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
 - Service – We put the public first.
 - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
 - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
 - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
 - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
 - Integrity – We act with honesty.

2 Probation

- 2.1 Your appointment is subject to you satisfactorily completing your probationary period. You are normally expected to complete your probation within the periods listed in the table in paragraph 2.8, applicable to your rank/grade. Formal assessments will be conducted at regular intervals as set out in that table. Throughout this period your line manager will assess your performance, conduct and attendance. If for any reason you are deemed to be unsatisfactory then your appointment may be terminated at the end or at any time during your probationary period.
- 2.2 Operational transferees who transfer into the Brigade from another fire brigade are required to successfully complete a probationary period.
- 2.3 Control staff transferring from another local authority fire brigade may have the whole or part of their service in that brigade count towards the completion of their probationary period at the discretion of the assistant commissioner operational resilience and control (AC (OR&C)) in consultation with the deputy commissioner – operational director.
- 2.4 FRS staff with previous Brigade experience as an operational or FRS member of staff may at the discretion of their head of service, in consultation with the director people services (or nominated manager), decide whether the full staged six or twelve month probationary period should be applied. After checking your previous performance history, and provided that there is no recorded evidence of performance and conduct issues, you can be assessed at the end of the six or twelve month period prior to confirmation of your appointment.
- 2.5 For all staff, during the probationary period the Brigade's Disciplinary procedures - Policy number 392a, Policy number 392b and Sickness capability - Policy number 873 do not apply directly, as any matters or issues will be dealt with under this Probationary policy. However, the standards

expected of you are the same as detailed in these policies. Once you satisfactorily complete your probationary period, these policies will then directly apply to you, and any issues if appropriate will be dealt with under those policies directly.

- 2.6 For Control staff the successful completion of the probationary period will also be reflected by salary progression from the probationer rate of pay to the qualified control officer minimum rate of pay. Rates of pay are detailed in Policy number 559 – Control staff pay rates policy.
- 2.7 For FRS staff after successful completion of the probationary period you will become eligible to apply for and undertake secondment opportunities. It is only in exceptional circumstances, that this will be agreed during probation, as set out in Policy number 972 - Recruitment policy - FRS and Control.

Duration and reviews

- 2.8 Please see below table for the period you are expected to complete probation and when probation reviews are due:

Rank/Grade	Duration	Review	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3
Firefighter to group commander (including transferees but linked to role map).	10 months	When posted to station or if initial training is extended, informal discussion.	6 months	8 months	10 months
DAC to assistant commissioner (including transferees but linked to role map). 12 months probation	12 months	N/A	6 months	11 months	N/A
Control staff to control commander	9 months	N/A	3 months	7 months	9 months
FRS B to FRS E	6 months	N/A	2 months	4 months	5 months
Fire safety adviser (FRS C)	9 months	When posted to team following the completion of CLE.	5 months	7 months	9 months
FRS F to TMG A	12 months	N/A	6 months	11 months	N/A

3 Probationary procedure expectations

3.1 Line managers your role is to:

- Ensure you are properly informed at the start of the employment about the probationer's role requirements and the standards you expect during probation.
- Properly monitor performance and progress during the probationary period.
- Provide any necessary and appropriate training, support and guidance to the probationer during the probation period.
- Familiarise yourself with and follow the probation policy correctly and to the timescales set.
- Act when you are concerned about conduct, attendance, or performance in a timely manner and not wait until the next scheduled report.
- Keep staff aware of their progress and notify in writing any changes to the probation.
- Notify HR services via the e-mail address: @>PROBATIONFORMS of any changes, especially extensions to probation.

You/employees can expect:

- To be given fair and reasonable opportunity to demonstrate your suitability for the role.
- To receive necessary and appropriate support, training and guidance.
- To be given written confirmation of permanent appointment/fixed term appointment having satisfactorily met the required standards upon completion of the probationary period.
- The right to appeal against a decision not to confirm appointment.

You as an employee are expected to:

- Take responsibility for demonstrating your suitability for the role during the probationary period and uphold the Brigade's values.

Human resources responsibility is to:

- To be a resource for managers requiring further advice, if and as required.
- Provide support for staff, if and as required.
- Ensure all advice is provided in line with the policy, by being accurate, informed and aligned with the LFB Values.
- Human Resources role is not to manage or run the processes themselves.

Initial training

- 3.2 **Operational** probationers, trainee firefighters will be subject to regular reviews of progress while undertaking their initial training. Upon satisfactory completion of the initial training, an end-of-course summary report will be forwarded to the station to which they are posted, and the first probation review is undertaken at that station.
- 3.3 If initial training is extended the first probation review is still undertaken as it would be at station, and the next reviews will take place with the same regularity taking into account the reasons for extending the initial training period and any ongoing improvements already outlined.
- 3.4 Where there are concerns during initial training over conduct, attendance and/or performance then action under this policy, including dismissal, may also be brought forward. **Decisions to**

extend probation after you are posted to a fire station, should normally be deferred until after posting, but a longer Phase 1 training may result in review and an extension of probation at an earlier point.

- 3.5 **Control** probationers will have assessments during the initial 11 weeks of training.
- 3.6 **FRS - Fire safety advisers** will have weekly catch ups with their supervisor during initial technical training in the Fire Safety 'Learning Academy' (CLE). The length of training may vary between staff, but it is expected to normally be completed within 5 months of their first day in post.
- 3.7 If initial training is extended, the first probation review still occurs as it would were they posted to their team, and the next reviews will take place with the same regularity taking into account the reasons for extending the initial training period.

Operational - on station

- 3.8 Regular supervision discussions will take place on each tour of duty between the probationer and the sub or station officer. Station commanders will conduct regular formal probation reviews that will normally take place:
- On being posted to station following completion of initial training.
 - Approximately 2.5 months after being posted to station following completion of initial training or within 6 months of the first day of service with the Brigade (whichever occurs earlier).
 - Within 4.5 months of being posted to station following completion of initial training or after 8 months total service with the Brigade (whichever occurs earlier).
 - At 10 months total service with the Brigade.
 - These are the normal intervals unless extension of the Probation is carried over from Phase 1 training.
- 3.9 If your initial training was extended, meetings will still occur at regular intervals in your employment with the Brigade, and if different, this should be stipulated in the extension and information sent to station on posting. An informal meeting on being posted to station should always take place, regardless of the duration of your initial training.

All staff

- 3.10 For all staff during probation, your manager should be guiding, supporting and identifying areas where you may not be meeting the required standards and agreeing appropriate additional support. You will be informed of any improvements required and the timescales for achieving them. This will be closely monitored, and a review date will be set depending on the amount of time it is felt reasonable for improvement to be made.
- 3.11 When you achieve the required improvements within the time scales set it will be recorded, however, if a problem or issue is overcome during the period, but you repeat this at a later date in the probationary period, it will be treated in an historical context and not as a first-time occurrence.
- 3.12 If a probationary period is extended, a formal hearing will normally be conducted at the completion of 12 months service with the Brigade, if not earlier for staff who are not operational. A decision on whether you are suitable for continued employment and to confirm you in the position, or to terminate your employment, should be made and communicated to you in writing

as soon as possible after the hearing. If a formal hearing is deemed unnecessary and you have successfully completed probation, you will be written to confirming this.

Control staff

- 3.13 Probation validations for control staff will be carried out every three weeks after an initial 12 tours working on the watch. Validations will be carried out by the operations support team along with your assistant control commander.
- 3.14 Support discussions will take place on a regular basis between you and your assistant control commander. These cover the outcomes of any observation and support in the completion of the Development Pathway. Control commanders will conduct the probation review meetings that will normally take place following:
- Three weeks after joining the new watch.
 - 20 weeks after being posted to watch, or seven months from first day of service, (whichever occurs earlier).
 - 29 weeks after being posted to watch, or nine months from the first day of service, (whichever occurs earlier).

4 Documentation

- 4.1 Probationary reports will be completed following each formal review of progress. Copies of reports to be completed will be included in development folders. Once reports have been completed, they will be sent to the HR Services. Managers e-mailing operational trainees reports, should send them to FFDPROBATIONFORMS@london-fire.gov.uk. A copy will be placed on the probationer's electronic personal record file (e-PRF). For probationers on station, the reports will be forwarded to HR Services for filing on the probationer's e-PRF. The form is located in Q:\Templates\Forms (Stations)\Personnel Forms\Probationary Report for Operational Staff.dotx
- 4.2 For FRS roles HR Services will send the probation form to the manager at 2, 4 and 5 months service (6 and 11 for FRS grades F and above) for completion. Completed forms should be signed by you and your line manager and returned promptly by your line manager to HR Services by email to PROBATIONFORMS@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 4.3 Upon the satisfactory completion of the probation, for station based staff the station commander will provide the documentation for the group commander's sign off and email this to FFDPROBATIONFORMS@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 4.4 When HR Services receives notification probationers have successfully completed probation, then they will check the information and will issue letters confirming employment with the Brigade to you.

5 Addressing issues

- 5.1 Your performance, conduct and/or attendance may be reviewed at any stage during the probationary period. If the required standard of work, conduct or attendance is not met and if there is no reasonable expectation that you will improve, action may be taken to extend your probation period or possibly terminate the contract of employment in line with the probationary procedure.
- 5.2 Where any probationer from **any staff group** may have a condition that falls within the definition of a disability under the Equalities Act 2010; the manager should seek guidance from People Services, OHS, Learning Support and Resilience Team, or Inclusion Team as appropriate. It is the

probationer's responsibility to make those around them aware, as soon as possible, if they believe a disability does, or may apply to them.

- 5.3 The line manager, seeking advice where necessary, will investigate issues and consider whether further action is appropriate. At this point the line manager should seek advice from their own line manager (station commander / FRS E / control commander) whether that is advice, further support, a probation extension or convening a formal hearing.
- 5.4 If management require specialist advice from People Services or Occupational Health (OHS) etc, they should request this at the earliest opportunity so the information can inform any decisions taken.
- 5.5 Any failure to achieve the required standard will be raised with you at the first available opportunity. The manager should meet with you to discuss the concerns, discuss the support available and set out expectations for improvement. Managers will confirm this in written form.
- 5.6 If you have been unable to achieve the expectation set, your probation period may be extended or a formal hearing convened.

Operational staff

- 5.7 Your probation period will normally be extended for a further 2 months with agreement from the group commander or above.
- 5.8 If at 12 months it is deemed appropriate to extend beyond this period, then a case conference must be set up before the extension is determined. Following the case conference, the line manager should summarise the discussion and seek approval for further extension from the deputy assistant commissioner.
- 5.9 This can be extended further in exceptional circumstances but would not normally exceed an 18 month period overall. If your probationary period is extended, you will be notified in writing by your line manager (station commander or above).
- 5.10 If following the extension the required standard has not been met, or if the concern is significantly serious, you will be invited to a formal probation hearing.

Control staff

- 5.11 Your probation period will not normally be extended beyond the 9 month period unless in exceptional circumstances it may be extended for a further 2 months with agreement from the DAC Control in consultation with the AC (OR&C).
- 5.12 This would not normally exceed an 11 month period overall. If your probationary period is extended, you will be notified in writing by your line manager (control commander or above).
- 5.13 If following the extension the required standard has not been met, or if the concern is significantly serious, you will be invited to a formal probation hearing.

FRS staff

- 5.14 Your probation period may be extended with agreement from the head of service/assistant commissioner by up to 6 months and in exceptional circumstances longer as may be agreed with the director people services (or nominated manager).
- 5.15 This would not normally exceed an 18 month period overall. If your probationary period is extended, you will be notified in writing by your line manager.

- 5.16 If following the extension the required standard has not been met, or if the concern is significantly serious, you will be invited to a formal probation hearing.

Probation hearing – all staff

- 5.17 If management (station commander, control commander/ control training support manager or FRS E, as the minimum levels) decide there are serious concerns about your performance, attendance or conduct that may justify dismissal, they will invite you to attend a formal hearing with a 'Presiding Manager' (group commander, senior control commander or FRS F). The manager inviting you to this meeting is known as the 'Management Representative'.
- 5.18 The Management Representative will send a letter to you, requiring your attendance at this hearing. They will set out the circumstances which have led to the probation hearing being arranged.
- 5.19 The Management Representative will circulate copies of any evidence, which they wish to rely on at the hearing and will provide a copy of this to you and your representative.
- 5.20 You will receive at least 7 days notice of the hearing from the date of the letter. A union representative or a work colleague may accompany you to the hearing.
- 5.21 You will take all reasonable steps to attend the hearing. If you fail to attend the hearing without good reason, it may take place in your absence.
- 5.22 At the formal hearing the Presiding Manager will consider the case presented by the Management Representative together with the representations made by you and will come to a decision on the appropriate action to take. This may be dismissal or an extension of the probationary period, or that you continue with your probation and there is no action to be taken.
- 5.23 The Presiding Manager's decision will be provided to you in writing within 7 working days of the hearing, or at a date otherwise agreed between parties.

In cases of dismissal

- 5.24 You will receive a letter confirming the decision to dismiss, reasons and notice period if applicable. This will provide details of how you may go about appealing the dismissal and time scales within which to appeal.
- 5.25 If you are dismissed, the appropriate period of notice is as specified in your contract of employment unless the reason for dismissal is gross misconduct upon which you may be dismissed without notice.

Appeals against dismissal

- 5.26 Where the decision is to dismiss, you may submit an appeal in writing within 7 days of the date of the outcome letter. Your appeal must be in writing and must include the reasons for the appeal. Your appeal should be sent to the Presiding Manager.
- 5.27 A hearing to consider the appeal will be convened by an 'Appeal Manager' (deputy assistant commissioner, DAC or AC (OR&C), or an FRS G) within 7 days of receiving the notice of appeal. Copies of any documents which are to be relied on at the appeal hearing must be sent to you and Appeal Manager prior to the appeal.
- 5.28 The Appeal Manager will consider the Presiding Manager's submission as well as yours (and you may be accompanied by a union representative or work colleague at the hearing). The Appeal Manager's decision, to uphold or reject the appeal will be given to you in writing within 7 days of the appeal hearing, or at a date otherwise agreed between parties. The Appeal Manager's

decision is final. If reinstated, the period between the original hearing and appeal will be treated as ongoing service.

6 Records

- 6.1 Please send records by email to RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk. Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record files (e-PRF). Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

7 Help and support

- 7.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on extension 89100 (option 3) and by email to IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk. The Local Pension Partnership can be contacted on 0300 323 0260.
- 7.2 Model letters can be accessed via this link: **People & Employment templates**.
- 7.3 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss your needs and options.
- 7.4 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn so if you have a suggestion that can improve this policy then please submit your idea via the Staff Suggestion Scheme on Hotwire as set out in Policy number 887 – Staff suggestion scheme. Any changes do need to go through the agreed engagement, consultation, negotiation or governance requirements.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	10/04/2025	SDIA	L - 28/04/2025	HSWIA	28/04/2025	RA	N/A
-----	------------	------	----------------	-------	------------	----	-----

Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
	PN480, PN683 and PN809 have been amalgamated into this policy and cancelled.	09/04/2024
Page 1 Page 8, para 6.1 Page 8, para 7.3	Title changed to policy. Data protection details added. Access to alternative policy format details added.	24/04/2024
Page 8, para 6.1 Page 8, para 7.4	Records Services details added. Staff suggestion scheme access details added.	14/05/2024
Page 3, para 2.6	Control officer trainee rate of pay removed wef 01/06/24.	31/05/2024
Throughout	Changes to duration and re-drafting of guidance.	10/04/2025
Throughout Page 5, para 3.12 Page 8, para 5.28 Page 8, new para 5.28	Reviewed as current with the following changes made: Months changed from 11 to 12 owing to the lengthening of probation by 1 month, originally omitted in error. Moved paragraph up to 5.25 with minor modifications. Additional sentence added at end for clarity.	11/04/2025
Page 10	SDIA and HSWIA dates added.	29/04/2025
Page 4, para 3.1	Bullet added to notify HR services of any changes, especially extensions to probation.	09/06/2025

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Probation	
-----------	--

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification