

Probation and Appointment Assistance Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Test Valley Borough Council recognises the need for all new employees to undergo a period of planned induction, training and integration into the workforce. This will enable employees to feel valued; to gain an appropriate insight in to the workings of the Council and into the role they are expected to play in order to make an effective contribution to the provision of quality services. It is also important for the Council to ensure that new employees are suitable for their post.
- 1.2 To meet this requirement all new employees to Test Valley Borough Council must serve a probationary period.

2. Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 This policy will apply to all new employees of the Council, including those who have previous continuous service with another local authority. It also applies to existing employees who are appointed to a new role within the Council in the form of Appointment Assistance. Employees working in temporary contracts are also required to undertake a probation period. This policy does not apply to casual workers. Casual workers who transfer to a temporary or permanent position will, however, be required to complete a probationary period at that point.

3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The procedure has been designed to deal consistently and fairly with probation issues and to ensure that matters are dealt with without undue delay.
- 3.2 The procedure will be applied in a non-discriminatory way, irrespective of an employee's age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religion and sexual orientation.
- 3.3 Human Resources should be contacted at the earliest opportunity for advice and guidance where a line manager believes that an employee may not be able to meet the standards required.
- 3.4 Nothing contained in this policy should be regarded as affecting an employee's statutory rights.

4. Probation Procedure – New Employees

- 4.1 The new employee's statement of terms and conditions will inform them that the appointment is subject to satisfactory completion of a probation period of six months.

- 4.2 As part of the service induction, the probationary procedure must be explained to new employees, including how, when and why their progress will be monitored.
- 4.3 The employee should be told by their line manager about the key functions of their job and that their performance and suitability for the post will be measured. This is by way of reviews at the three month and six month stage of their employment. The probationary period, however, should be regarded as a period of continuous review.
- 4.4 The line manager must ensure that they meet with new employees regularly during the probationary period to make sure that they are aware of their specific objectives and that they receive the training necessary for them to do their job. Line managers should complete the Objectives Form with the employee, ideally within the first week, or at least in the very early stages of their employment. See Appendix A. Once completed, line managers should give a copy to the employee for their reference.
- 4.5 Employees should be provided with reasonable facilities, supervision and encouragement to help them reach the standard required.
- 4.6 During the first few weeks of employment, dates must be agreed between the line manager and the new employee for reviews. These appointments should be put in diaries to ensure that they take place around the correct time. A probation review meeting should take place at the three month stage with a final review during the sixth month, however, ensuring time is allowed for notice to be given, if required. It is recommended that line managers meet with employees on a monthly basis during probation, however, the scheduling of review meetings, are at the discretion of the line manager.
- 4.7 Line managers will continually review a probationary employee's performance and should problems arise, reviews should be held more frequently than the set periods shown. Where there is any doubt about an employee's suitability, the matter must be raised as soon as possible, so that the employee has ample opportunity to improve.

5. Probation Review Meetings

- 5.1 Probation Review Meetings consider the employee's performance in line with the Council's competencies and other general points, for example, time keeping and attendance. See Appendix B for the Employee Probation Assessment form. The standards each employee's performance is considered against must be realistic and measurable and wherever possible, link to their objectives.
- 5.3 Reviews must take place in private and must be free from interruptions. They must be treated as confidential.

- 5.4 The review dates are set so the new employee can prepare for the review by thinking about their performance and any questions that they may want to raise.
- 5.5 Line managers must make sure that they have clearly defined the points which they wish to raise during the meeting and that these can be substantiated with examples, where appropriate, as this may be used as part of an appeal.
- 5.6 Both strengths and areas for improvement should be discussed.
- 5.7 At the review around the three month stage, a summary of the main points of the discussion must be entered on the Employee Probation Assessment (see Appendix B). Any items for action, either by the employee or the line manager, must be recorded.
- 5.8 Both the line manager and the employee must sign the review form. The employee does not necessarily have to agree with the line manager's comments, but they should sign the form to say they have seen it. Employees are given the opportunity to enter their own comments in the space provided on the review form.
- 5.9 At the end of the review meeting a copy of the review form must be sent to Human Resources for the employee's file and a copy given to the employee.
- 5.10 At the final review, i.e. the six month review, if the employee's performance is satisfactory in every way, their employment should be confirmed in writing.
- 5.11 If at any time during the probationary period it is clear that the employee is not meeting the level of performance required, a formal review meeting should be arranged by the line manager, in consultation with Human Resources.

6. Formal Review Meeting

- 6.1 When an employee is not meeting the level of performance required, a formal review meeting should be held. This should be arranged in conjunction with Human Resources, giving the employee at least five working days notice of the meeting. A letter confirming the arrangements for the meeting should be sent to the employee by the line manager. The letter should include details of the employee's right to be accompanied to the meeting by a trade union representative or work place colleague.
- 6.2 If a scheduled Probation Review Meeting is due in the near future this may be changed to a Formal Review Meeting. Prompt action must be taken, however, to advise the employee about work which is not meeting the required standards or about unsuitability in any respect, so in most cases, a separate meeting should be held. A representative from Human Resources should also be in attendance to advise the line manager.

- 6.3 At this meeting the line manager should inform the employee of their concerns about their level of performance, using examples to support their view. The line manager should then set objectives and targets for improvement. An example of a Performance Improvement Plan can be found in the Capability Policy and Procedure. Ideally the objectives and targets should be agreed with the employee, but if this is not possible then the line manager will impose them. Support should be provided and if appropriate, training arranged to help the employee meet the required standard by a specified time.
- 6.4 The employee must be told that their employment may be at risk if they continue not to meet the necessary level of work performance. The outcome of the meeting must be confirmed in writing, including any potential risk to their employment.
- 6.5 Where further instruction/training is needed, the line manager must arrange this as quickly as possible.
- 6.6 A further Formal Review Meeting should be arranged by the line manager to feedback on any progress and inform the employee of his/her decision. The outcomes are as follows:
- The standard of performance has been achieved and maintained; therefore, the employee will continue on their probationary period until the six month stage.
 - The standard of performance has not been achieved and the line manager will refer the matter to the Head of Service for consideration. The outcome may be the dismissal of the employee.
 - Where the employee is close to meeting the standard, however, minor performance issues still remain, objectives should be set and a further period of review put in place.
- 6.7 A formal meeting should be arranged with the Head of Service, in conjunction with Human Resources, giving the employee at least five working days notice of the meeting. The following information should be included in the letter:
1. The date, time and venue of the meeting.
 2. The reason for the meeting, including details of areas giving rise to concern.
 3. Confirmation of the potential for dismissal.
 4. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a work place colleague or trade union representative.
 5. The name of the Head of Service and anyone else assisting at the meeting.
 6. Copies of any documentation to be referred to.
 7. A copy of the Probation Policy.
 8. Request for the employee to confirm attendance and who will be accompanying them.

9. Request that if the employee wants to provide any additional paperwork, this must be provided as a minimum, two working days before the meeting takes place.
- 6.8 The Head of Service hearing the case will be assisted by an HR representative and will hear from the relevant parties and review the evidence before deciding on an appropriate outcome. The meeting will be conducted as follows:
1. The line manager presents the management case.
 2. The employee, or representative, the Head of Service and HR representative can ask any questions.
 3. The employee or representative can present the employee's case.
 4. The line manager, Head of Service and HR representative can ask any questions.
 5. Both parties can sum up in their turn with no new information being given.
 6. The Head of Service adjourns to consider the case and reach a decision. (All exit except the Head of Service and HR representative).
 7. Where possible the Head of Service reconvenes to give the decision and reasons, were possible.
 8. The Head of Service confirms the decision in writing within five working days of the hearing including advising the employee of their right of appeal.
- 6.9 If the Head of Service considers at this stage the new employee has not reached and is clearly not going to meet the standard needed, he/she must be told this and given formal notice (one week during probationary period) of the termination of his/her employment. The employee should be advised of his/her right of appeal. New employees who choose to resign during their Probation are only required to give the Council one week's notice.
- 6.10 In exceptional circumstances, here, following a review at an earlier stage, it is clear that an employee will not be able to reach the standard required even after further instruction and/or training, then their employment may be terminated by the Head of Service at any stage during the probation period.

7. Extending the probationary period

- 7.1 On rare occasions it may be necessary to extend an employee's probationary period. This should only be done in exceptional circumstances, e.g., where a significant period of absence from work occurred and it has, therefore, not been possible to review performance.
- 7.2 If after careful consideration and consultation with Human Resources, the line manager considers it appropriate, the probationary period can be extended for up to a maximum of three months.
- 7.3 If the probation period is interrupted by maternity, adoption or other extended period of leave, it should be extended by an equivalent amount to ensure completion of six months probation; this is to enable a fair assessment to be made.

7.4 In all cases where probation is extended the following must be discussed between the line manager and employee, with a representative from Human Resources present. The following should be confirmed in writing:

- The reasons for the extension
- Any assistance/ training that will be given in the extension period
- The period of the extension, the performance standards expected and the way in which performance will be monitored
- That if performance fails to meet expectations at the end of the period of extension, employment will be terminated.

8. Temporary Employees

8.1 Temporary employees are required to serve a probationary period in a temporary post as follows:

Length of temporary contract	Probation to be served	Transferred to different post on permanent basis during first six months in post	Transferred to same or similar post on permanent basis during first six months in post
Less than three months	Probation should be length of contract	Six month probation should be served in new post	Six month probation should be served in post
More than three months but less than six months	Probation should be length of contract	Six month probation should be served in new post	Original period should continue*
Six months or more	Six months	A six months probation should be served in new post	Original probation period should continue*

8.2 *If an employee is serving a probationary period and transfers to a different line manager and the posts are the same or similar, details of the employee's performance up until the date of transfer, should be passed to the new line manager.

8.3 If an employee has already served the full probationary period in a temporary post, they do not need to serve a second probationary period when appointed to the same type of post on a permanent basis, provided that the service is continuous. The procedure for employees transferring to another post will apply.

8.4 Whilst a contract may be for less than six months, a shortened probation period should not be applied, in case the contract of employment is extended and concerns about the employee's performance arise later in their

employment. An employee with a contract for less than six months will, therefore, spend the entire length of the contract within their probation period.

- 8.5 An employee with a contract for less than three months will not have a three or six month Probation Review Meeting and an employee with a contract between three and six months will only have a three month Probation Review Meeting. As set out in 4.6 and 4.7, however, the probation period is a period of continuous review and monthly meetings may still be arranged, at the discretion of the line manager. A Formal Review Meeting may also be arranged, if required.
- 8.6 It is essential, therefore, that line managers follow this procedure for temporary employees and do not offer permanent posts to unsatisfactory temporary employees.

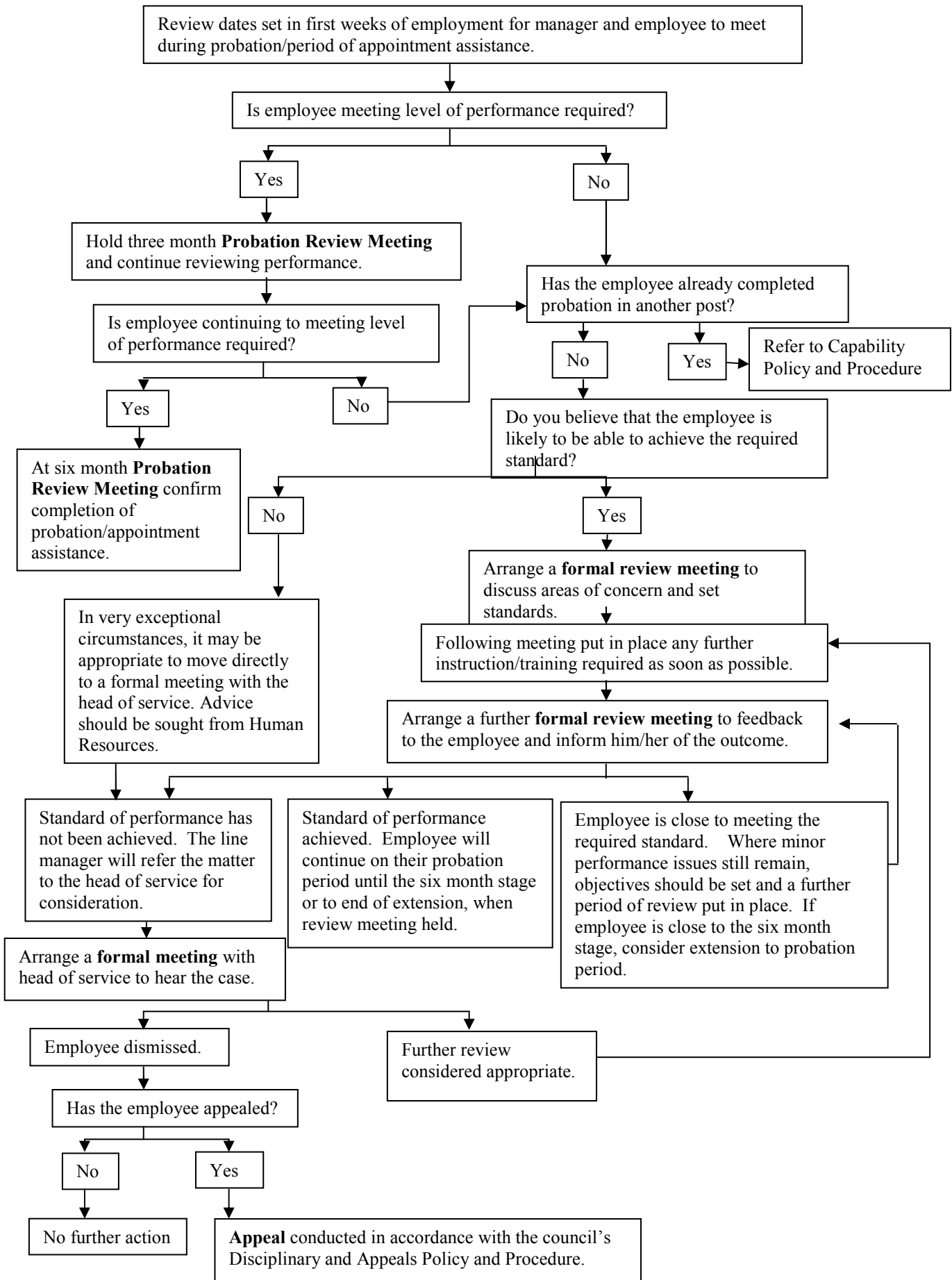
9. Right of Appeal

- 9.1 Where an employee on probation is dismissed as result of unsuitability under this procedure, they will have a right of appeal against the decision.
- 9.2 Any appeal must be made in writing, to the Strategic Human Resources Manager within seven working days of the date of the letter confirming the decision. Such an appeal will not delay the date of the dismissal.
- 9.3 The Appeal will be arranged in accordance with the council's Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

10. Appointment Assistance for an employee who transfers to another post within the organisation

- 10.1 As with new employees, it is important for the line manager of a transferred employee to meet with the employee to make sure that they are aware of their specific objectives and that they receive the training and support necessary for them to carry out their job. (See appendix A)
- 10.2 Employees should be provided with reasonable facilities, training and encouragement to help them reach the standard required. As for new employees, objectives should be set and reviews should be scheduled as detailed above. Satisfactory completion of the supported period of employment should be recorded at the end of six months in the new post.
- 10.3 Where it becomes clear that the transferred employee is not meeting the standard required, the line manager should refer to and apply the Capability Policy and Procedure, as appropriate.

Procedure Flowchart
 Test Valley Borough Council – General Purposes – 10 April 2013



Your objectives for your new job

Name of employee: _____

Your line manager will set the objectives relevant to your role:

Test Valley Borough Council – General Purposes – 10 April 2013

Your Objectives (These must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely)	Link to Corporate/Service Objectives	Target date	Agreed review dates, if different	Any additional training and development required to meet objectives

Employee Probation Assessment

Name of employee: _____

This form should be used by all employees, except Heads of Service and those who report directly to Heads of Service

(Please refer to the appropriate detailed competencies for further information)

Competencies - complete at three month stage			Complete at six month stage
	Comments on performance and examples of how this has been demonstrated	Areas for development – these must be discussed with the employee	Comments on performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving Results 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Experience 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating and Working with Others 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)

Test Valley Borough Council – General Purposes – 10 April 2013

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Managing and Taking Responsibility 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Competencies - Complete at three month stage			Complete at six month stage
	Comments on performance and examples of how this has been demonstrated	Areas for development – these must be discussed with the employee	Comments on performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision Making and Problem Solving 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
General Performance - Complete at three month stage			Complete at six month stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance and Timekeeping 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other key areas relating to job requirements 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)

Line manager and Employee Comments - Complete at three month stage (Send a copy of the form to HR when completed)			
Employee Comments – three month stage:			
Signature: Date:			
Manager’s Comments – three month stage:			
Line manager’s signature: Date:			
Manager Decision - Six month stage only (Send the original form to HR when completed)			
I confirm that I have completed the six month review with the employee named above and recommend that they should have their:			
• Employment confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Probation period extended, until	<input type="text"/>	Please give reason:	
• Future employment with the Council to be considered by Head of Service (new employees only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please give reason:	
• Poor performance addressed due to lack of capability (Existing employees in new post)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please give reason:	
Has the Corporate Induction Programme been completed? Yes/No. If no, please give reason.			
Line manager’s signature: Date:			

Employee Probation Assessment

Name of employee: _____

This form should be used by Heads of Service and those who report directly to Heads of Service

(Please refer to the appropriate detailed competencies for further information)

Competencies - complete at three month stage			Complete at six month stage
	Comments on performance and examples of how this has been demonstrated	Areas for development – these must be discussed with the employee	Comments on performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating and Influencing 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Experience 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision making and problem solving 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)

Test Valley Borough Council – General Purposes – 10 April 2013

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing relationships 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Competencies - Complete at three month stage			Complete at six month stage
	Comments on performance and examples of how this has been demonstrated	Areas for development – these must be discussed with the employee	Comments on performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation and leadership 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-managing and planning 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results orientation 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team orientation 			

		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
General Performance - Complete at three month stage		Complete at six month stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance and Timekeeping 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other key areas relating to job requirements 			
		Meets Standard (Yes/No)	Meets Standard (Yes/No)
Line manager and Employee Comments - Complete at three month stage (Send a copy of the form to HR when completed)			
Employee Comments – three month stage:			
Signature: Date:			
Manager’s Comments – three month stage:			
Line manager’s signature: Date:			
Manager Decision - Six month stage only (Send the original form to HR when completed)			
I confirm that I have completed the six month review with the employee named above and recommend that they should have their:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment confirmed 	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probation period extended, until 	<input type="text"/>	Please give reason:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future employment with the Council to be considered by Head of Service (new employees only) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please give reason:	

Test Valley Borough Council – General Purposes – 10 April 2013

- Poor performance addressed due to lack of capability (Existing employees in new post)

Please give reason:

Has the Corporate Induction Programme been completed? Yes/No. If no, please give reason.

Line manager's signature: Date: