Probation

1 What the policy covers

This policy provides an overview of GHC's process for reviewing and supporting new employees during their initial months in post.

During the probation period, if it becomes apparent that the individual is not suited to the position or is incompetent, it may eventually result in dismissal.

2 Principles

- GHC is committed to ensuring that all new employees understand the expected standards of performance, conduct and attendance, and that they are provided with timely and effective support to settle into their new job.
- This policy applies to all GHC employees commencing substantive or fixed-term employment except medical staff.
- During the probation period, the Disciplinary, Improving Performance and Supporting Attendance policies will be followed. However, following one of these policies does not take precedence over this policy.

3 Responsibilities

Managers have a responsibility to:

- ensure this policy is applied consistently and in a way that does not discriminate
- meet with the employee to discuss the job description, person specification and key areas of the role to ensure the employee understands what is expected of them and what their performance will be measured against
- provide local induction, training and support help the employee to achieve expected standards and document the role's key areas as a part of the induction process and ensure sign off when completed
- ensure regular progress meetings take place, including the first, second and third review meetings
- take necessary supportive action at the earliest opportunity if required standards are not being met.

New employees should ensure that they:

- attend and actively participate in corporate and local inductions
- fully understand the standards of performance, conduct and attendance expected of them during their probation period and beyond
- discuss with their manager any concerns they may have in relation to meeting these standards
- are fully prepared for their review meetings.

4 Policy in practice

4.1 Probation period

New employees joining GHC will be required to complete a six-month probation period. The probation period for new employees on a fixed-term contract of less than six months will be the length of the contract.

4.2 Probation review meeting

Any concerns regarding performance should be raised with the member of staff at the earliest opportunity. The manager will undertake three review meetings as follows:

- an induction review meeting, to be held after the employee has been in post for 2-4 weeks
- a middle review meeting, to take place after the employee has been in post for 12 weeks (ie mid-way through the probation period)
- a final review meeting, to take place two-three weeks before the end of the six-month probation period.

Probation review meetings will take place in accordance with the following principles:

- all probation review meetings will be scheduled in advance and their outcome confirmed in writing to the employee using the Probation Review form
- the timing of meetings may be bought forward and/or additional review meeting(s) during the probation period may be required as determined by the manager
- the meetings will be a two-way confidential discussion, to identify where there are areas of both positive performance and any areas of concern
- managers should provide all possible support to their new team members to give them a fair opportunity to become fully integrated and productive employee.

If the employee's performance is satisfactory, the manager will inform the employee that they will continue with their probationary period or continue with their employment for the period specified in their employment contract (at the final review meeting).

If an employee passes their six-month probation period, they will receive confirmation in writing from their line manager, with a copy placed on their personal file.

If the employee's performance has not met the standards required, the manager must seek advice from HR prior to the meeting. Where there are minor areas of concern, the manager will identify if additional support can be given to address the concerns, so that the employee can continue with their employment contract.

Should the performance fall significantly short of the standard expected, and where all reasonable support has been provided, a probation hearing meeting will be arranged with a senior manager to consider the matter. The employee should be informed of this at the final/ extension review meeting and confirmed in writing. If appropriate notification is not given before the end of the probation/extension period, it could result in the probation period being confirmed by default. HR advice must be sought before a manager informs an employee.

The employee will be informed in writing in advance of the meeting and an HR representative will also attend. GHC reserves the right to hold this meeting without notice in exceptional circumstances.

"If an employee passes their six-month probation period, they will receive confirmation in writing from their line manager, with a copy placed on their personal file"

The employee will receive written confirmation of the decision of the probation hearing meeting within seven calendar days.

There is no specific right of appeal during the probation period, however, GHC will consider using a modified version of its generic appeal procedure. An appeal must be made in writing, within seven calendar days of the original decision, setting out the grounds for the appeal.

4.3 Probation extension

An extension to an employee's probation period should only be put in place at the final review meeting where there are specific identified concerns. The reasons for the extension must be explained and then recorded on the Probation Review form.

The manager should seek HR advice prior to any decision to extend an employee's probation period. Any extension of a probation period should be for no more than three months and only one extension will be granted. The extension will be confirmed in a letter to the employee and a copy placed on the employee's personal file.

If an employee is absent due to maternity or paternity leave or in other exceptional circumstances, the probation period should be suspended until they are able to return to work. At which point, the probation period will restart to ensure a full six months' of work is considered.

4.4 Employees recruited to a new role

If an employee transfers to a different post at GHC during their probation period, the length of the original probation period will continue and the responsibility to complete the assessment of the employee will transfer to the new manager.