

## Trial Procedure

### Guide for employees

This guide outlines the trial procedure for all permanent (and fixed term contract) employees.

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#### Getting help

**In the first instance, any queries relating to this policy should be directed to your manager.**

Managers can obtain advice by:  
Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0845 6060603.

Employees working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0845 604 787

For web access please go to:  
<https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com/>



# Trial Procedure

## Guide for employees

### Overview

This guide provides details of the trial period procedure and explains how to manage and support an employee who is undertaking a trial period.

All new permanent and fixed term employees are expected to complete a trial period; the length of trial depends on the role and the part of Royal Mail the employee works for.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the *Recruitment Policy*.

### Who does this guidance apply to?

This guide applies to permanent and fixed term employees (expected to work for Royal Mail for at least 6 months) working in Royal Mail Group.

It does not apply to casual employees, contractors or self-employed individuals, or agency staff.

For more information on fixed term contractors please refer to the *Recruitment Guidelines for Fixed Term Contracts Guide*.

More information on how to manage recruiting agency workers can be found in the *Recruiting Agency Workers Guide*.

For more information on contractors please refer to the *Recruitment of Interims and Contractors Guidelines*.

### What is the purpose of a trial period?

The trial period ensures that all employees are suitable for their position and that trialists are given appropriate coaching and development to meet the required standards. Best practice focuses on the opportunity for learning & personal development during a trial period. For example, trial periods allow:

- Both managers and the employee to both see whether the job is suitable and whether the employee fits within the team
- The employee the ability to build their skills and knowledge of the new role
- The employee a period of time focussed on personal development
- Either the employee or the business to cancel the arrangement without penalty during the trial period

### Managing employees during their trial period

Although in the majority of situations, an employee who is within a trial period should be managed in the same way as any other employee, it is important to recognise that trialists may need more support and guidance than other employees.

Employees within a trial period may need extra help to settle into their new role and managers should encourage open and frank discussions about any issues or difficulties the employee may be having. Managers should arrange Review Meetings throughout any trial period in order to support trialists. More information about holding review meetings is detailed below.

Managers need to also be mindful when managing an employee on a trial period who is undergoing a formal process such as attendance, conduct and performance management. More details on how to manage a trialist in these situations is set out in the appropriate sections below.

**How long is a trial period?**

All permanent employees (including those on Fixed Term Contracts), who are expected to be employed for six months or more, must complete a trial period. The length of trial period varies depending on the role and part of Royal Mail the employee works for.

**Length of trial period (months)**

	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Review Period</b>	<b>Trial Period</b>	<b>Possible Extension</b>
<b>Royal Mail</b>	OPG	3	6	9
	MANAGERIAL	3	6	9
	ENS/APE/EHS ENGINEERS	6	12	N/A
<b>HR Services</b>	CSA/CS1/CS2	3	6	9
	FSA	3	6	9
	LA1	3	6	9
	LA2	3	6	9
	ACA	2 & 4	6	9
<b>Network</b>	DNU	6	12	N/A
	LA1	6	12	N/A
	OPG	3	6	9
	ORR	3	6	9
	PC5 (Admin)	6	12	N/A
	PM1	6	12	N/A
	PM2	6	12	N/A
	PMR	6	12	N/A
	PTT	3	6	9
	S01 (Supplies Officer)	3	6	9
	CLERICAL (CAS,VA2)	3	6	9
	EX P&E GRADES	6	12	N/A
MAIL SCREENERS	6	12	N/A	
<b>MDEC</b>	MDEC	3, 6 & 10	12	
<b>Commercial &amp; Professional Functions</b>	Managerial & Non-Managerial	3	6	9

**Trial reviews**

Employees in their trial period require ongoing open discussions to help them settle in to their role, give them the opportunity to discuss any issues they may have and overcome any difficulties they may be experiencing. To help facilitate the trial review meetings a trial report template has been created.

Unite/Communication Managers Association (CMA) represented managers do not have a specific trial report form as they are covered by the normal one-to-one and performance development review processes.

The trial review meetings should take place in line with the review periods previously detailed however if your employee is not meeting Royal Mail's standards you should hold additional regular counselling sessions with them to help improve their performance.

During Trial review meetings the following approach is advised:

- **Before the Meeting:** Include details on how often these meetings should be held. Is this agreed with the employee? Where do the review meetings take place?
- **During the Meeting:** Refer to the appropriate trial report forms. It may be useful to include the following information on how to facilitate such meetings:
  - Managers should encourage discussion through:
    - Active Listening: being attentive while the employee is speaking and paraphrasing and reflecting back what is said
    - Using leading questions: to encourage the employee to give further details
    - Treating the employee as an individual: not making a judgement based on experience of similar cases, but listening to the employee's personal circumstances
    - Being positive about the employee's skills and ability: in order to create a positive atmosphere where the employee understands their contribution to the business and that it is valued
- **After the Meeting:** Explain the outcomes of the meeting. This should include information on setting SMART actions and making sure that the employee knows where to go for support and more information as well as the L&D training available, or support from other employees for example a buddy or mentor to also offer support during the trial period

Whilst managing a conduct or performance management case for an employee who is within a trial period. It is important to note that the same standards of conduct and performance are expected of employees who are within a trial period and that they will be subject to the same procedures.

**Managing a trialist who is absent**

When an employee who is within a trial period is absent, their absence should be managed under the *Attendance Policy*, as for permanent employees. More information on how to manage an employee who is unable to attend can be found in the *Managing Short Term Absence Guide*.

Managers should make sure that they hold a return to work discussion when the employee returns to work.

However, it is important for managers to note that Royal Mail Group has separate standards of attendance for trialists, as set out below:

	Attendance standard	Action	Possible Outcomes

<b>Attendance Review One</b>	Less than 2 periods of absence or 7 days absence in 6 months	Attendance Review Meeting	Formal Notification
<b>Attendance Review Two</b>	Less than 1 absence within 2 months of the first attendance review	Attendance Review Meeting	Formal Notification
<b>Attendance Review Three</b>	Less than 1 absence within 2 months of the second attendance review	Attendance Review Meeting	Dismissal

## **Trial completion** **Confirmation of Appointment**

When an employee has successfully completed a trial period, the line manager should meet with the employee to confirm they have completed their trial period. The manager should update their trial review form and confirm that they have completed their trial period by the *Confirmation of Employment Letter* which can be found on PSP. This should be retained locally.

If the employee is at any stage of the Attendance Procedure or Conduct Procedure their employment cannot be confirmed.

### **Extending Trial**

A trial period should not normally be extended beyond the agreed length. However, in exceptional circumstances, where a manager believes that the employee can improve their performance to meet the required standards, it may be appropriate to extend the trial period.

The manager should meet with the employee to explain this decision and what action the employee needs to take in the trial extension period in order to achieve permanent employment. A template for the *Trial Extension Letter* can be found on *Manage My Team*.

### **Consideration of Dismissal**

The vast majority of new entrants are expected to complete their trial. However, there may be employees that do not meet the required standards.

The dismissal of an employee while they are on their trial period should be conducted by the employee's second line manager, who has the authority to dismiss. This would usually be carried out at the end of their review period although an employee can be dismissed at their three month review meeting if:

- The new entrant has consistently failed to meet the standards of performance required and it is unlikely they will be able to improve their performance with further coaching and training, or
- If the line manager is concerned about a wide range of the new entrant's abilities and in addition they have either received a warning under the *Attendance Policy* or a discipline penalty under the *Conduct Code*.

Managers must have clear and justifiable reasons to dismiss an employee under the trial procedure and these must be documented. The employee should be invited to a

*Dismissal Interview* in order to discuss their dismissal.

## Dismissal Interview

Advised process for conducting a dismissal interview:

- **Before the Meeting:** Invite the employee using the *Request to Attend Dismissal Interview Letter*. The manager should confirm if the employee has the *Right to be Accompanied* and should inform the employee that a likely outcome of the meeting is dismissal. The employee should be sent relevant documents e.g. their attendance record.
- **During the Meeting:** The meeting should be conducted by the second line manager. The manager should inform the employee of the reasons that they are being considered for dismissal, and should allow the employee to present any mitigating evidence.

**After the Meeting:** Clearly outline to the individual what has been an agreed and next step.

**Keeping records** It is important to keep records of Trial Reports as these may need to be referred to at later stage of the process. Therefore:

- Records should be kept at all stages of the process
- Records should be treated as confidential and not kept longer than necessary
- Refer to the *Keeping Records Guide*

## Where to go for further information

Please refer to the 'Getting help' box on the front page of this policy for details of where to go for further information.

Please also refer to the *Policy and Information* site on PSP and the *HR pages of the intranet* (non-PSP users) for further guidance relating to this policy.

In the event of any inconsistency between this policy and the supporting documentation the terms of this policy take precedence.

The following form can be found on the *Policy & Information* site:

- Trial Report (3/6/9/12 months)

Useful letters can be found on the Policy & Information site:

- Confirmation of Employment
- Confirmation of Employment OPG
- Trial Extension
- Dismissal Following Trial
- Trial Extension following Dismissal Interview
- Request to Attend Interview for Failure to Meet Standards While on Trial
- Trial Extension following Appeal Interview

You may find it useful to read the following documents (located on the Policy and Information site) in conjunction with this policy:

- Employee Handbook
- Our Code: Code of Business Standards
- Induction Guidelines
- Guide to Recruitment
- Leavers Guidelines

Collective agreements related to this policy:

- The CWU Way Forward Agreement