Probation review letters

Templates for employers in England, Wales and Scotland reviewing a new employee's probation

Checked 15 November 2026 against the Employment Rights Act 1996 (sections 1, 4, 86, 92, 97 and 108), the Employment Rights Act 2025 (section 25 and Schedule 3) and its commencement regulations (SI 2026/559), the Employment Relations Act 1999 (sections 10 and 13), and Acas guidance on probation periods. Electra HR, electra-hr.com. General information, not legal advice on a particular case.

Before you send any letter

Remove the pink employer instructions, complete every placeholder in square brackets, delete the alternatives you are not using, and check all dates, contractual terms and enclosures.

These letters are for probation concerns about performance, conduct standards and suitability for the role. Take advice instead if the case involves redundancy, gross misconduct, significant ill health or disability, pregnancy or family leave, or a complaint the employee has made about wrongdoing (a possible protected disclosure).

The rules

- There is no legal requirement to have a probation period and no statutory maximum length, but the length should suit the role. If you have one, the written statement of particulars must set out the probationary period, including any conditions and its duration (ERA 1996, s1(4)(ga)).
- Day-one rights apply throughout probation, including the minimum wage, paid holiday, and protection from discrimination and from detriment for whistleblowing. Many automatically unfair reasons for dismissal, including pregnancy and protected whistleblowing, need no qualifying service.
- Ordinary unfair dismissal: the qualifying period is two years today. It falls to six months for any dismissal whose effective date of termination is on or after 1 January 2027, even if notice was given before then (ERA 2025, s25; SI 2026/559, regs 3 and 4). Anyone with six months' continuous service on 1 January 2027 is protected. The cap on the unfair dismissal compensatory award is removed from the same date.
- Check both continuous service and the termination date. Continuous service can start before the job did, for example after a TUPE transfer. After one month's service, statutory minimum notice is one week while service is under two years (s86), and contracts often give more. Where employment ends without the full statutory minimum notice being given, that notice still counts towards qualifying service, even if you make a payment in lieu (s97(2)). Do not assume that paying instead of giving notice avoids the six-month threshold.
- Probation does not remove the risk. Acas says that ending probation before protection starts does not avoid legal risks, and that six months or less may not be right for every job.
- Written reasons for dismissal: an employee can ask for them after two years' service today, and after six months for terminations on or after 1 January 2027 (s92(3); ERA 2025, Sch 3, para 1(2)). Acas says to give reasons in writing anyway.

- Extending probation: arrange and confirm the extension before the original period ends, as failing to do so could be a breach of contract (Acas). You need a power to extend in the contract, used within its limits, or the employee's agreement. Then give a written statement of the change at the earliest opportunity and in any event no later than one month after it (ERA 1996, s4(3)). Letter 4 can do both.
- Extending probation does not delay statutory rights. If ordinary unfair dismissal protection applies by the time the extension ends, any later dismissal needs a potentially fair reason and a fair process suited to that reason.
- Absence: an employee who has been off can still pass on the evidence you have. Consider the reason for the absence before extending. Do not discriminate in extensions for maternity, adoption or shared parental leave, and make reasonable adjustments for disability (Equality Act 2010, ss20 and 21).
- Reviews and warnings are different. Letters 1 and 2 are for supportive, informal reviews. If you are considering a formal warning, use your formal procedure: written notice of the concerns, a hearing with the right to be accompanied, and an appeal. The right to be accompanied applies to hearings that could result in a formal warning or other action, including dismissal (Employment Relations Act 1999, ss10 and 13(4)). The Acas Code on disciplinary procedures covers poor performance, and a tribunal can increase an award by up to 25% if an employer unreasonably fails to follow it (TULRCA 1992, s207A).

Timeline for a six-month probation

Only the rows marked law are set by statute. The rest are suggested points based on Acas guidance. Adjust them for a longer or shorter probation.

When	What
Week 1 (suggested)	Set the standards and objectives in writing, using the first part of the review log. Share them with the employee.
Month 1 (suggested)	First review meeting (Letter 1). Informal check-ins throughout.
Month 3 (suggested)	Mid-point review. If there are concerns, say so now and set out the support (Letter 2). The outcome should not be a surprise later.
Month 5 (suggested)	Final review. Pass (Letter 3), extend (Letter 4), or invite to a final meeting where ending employment is possible (Letter 5).
Before the probation ends (Acas)	Any extension arranged and confirmed in writing (Letter 4).
Within one month of an extension (law)	Written statement of the change, at the earliest opportunity (s4(3)). Letter 4 can serve as this.
Six months (law, from 1 January 2027)	Ordinary unfair dismissal protection starts. Count continuous service, and any statutory notice not given (ss97(2), 108).

The six-month date is a planning aid, not a safe last day for dismissal.

Probation review log

Complete the first table at the start and the second for each review. Share the employee's own review record with them afterwards, not a combined bundle containing other people's confidential information. Record work effects and agreed support, not medical detail; keep sensitive material separately. Keep records in line with UK GDPR.

Item	Notes
Employee and role	
Start date and continuous service start date	
Probation length and end date	
Date six months' continuous service is reached	
Contractual and statutory notice	
Power to extend in the contract, and its limits	
Extension: date agreed or notified, basis and new end date	
Standards and objectives, and date shared	

Review	Notes
Review date, type and who attended	
Evidence shared before the meeting	
Progress against each objective	
Employee's comments	
Work effects of any absence, and adjustments agreed	
Support or training to be provided	
Review outcome (on track / support plan / pass / extend / final meeting)	
Next action, owner and deadline	
Any formal warning or appeal (date, outcome)	

Letter 1: invitation to a probation review meeting

Use for a routine probation review where no formal warning or dismissal will be decided. If either is being considered, use your formal procedure, or Letter 5 for a final meeting.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Your probation period started on [start date] and is due to end on [end date]. I would like to meet you to review how it is going.

The meeting will be on [date] at [time] at [place / video link], with [name, job title]. We will discuss your progress against the objectives set on [date], any feedback, how you are settling in, and any support or training that would help.

[I enclose / attach] [the information we will discuss, for example targets, feedback or work samples], so that you can prepare. Please bring anything you would like to raise.

Please tell us if you need any adjustments to take part in the meeting. If the date does not suit, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can rearrange.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 2: review outcome, concerns and support plan

Use after a review where the employee is not yet meeting the standards. This records feedback and support; it is not a formal warning, and it does not replace one where the circumstances or your procedure require it. Make sure the support you promise happens.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for meeting me on [date] to review your probation.

[Start with what is going well.] We discussed the following areas where you are not yet meeting the standards we expect:

- [Standard or objective]: [what we have seen, with examples]
- [Standard or objective]: [what we have seen, with examples]

To help you improve, we will provide:

- [Training, coaching, check-ins or other support, with dates]
- [Any adjustments agreed with you]

We will review your progress on [date]. By then we need to see [specific, measurable improvement].

I want you to succeed in the role. If the standards are not met by the end of your probation, the possible outcomes include extending your probation or ending your employment. This letter is not a formal warning. If you think anything in it is not right, please tell me by [date] so that we can discuss it.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 3: probation passed

Use when the employee has met the standards. You can send it before, on or after the scheduled end date; choose the matching wording. Describe any change in notice or benefits as your contract provides.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

[Choose one:] I am pleased to confirm that you will successfully complete your probation on [scheduled end date]. / I am pleased to confirm that you have successfully completed your probation with effect from [date].

[Name one or two specific things that went well.]

[Choose one:] As your contract provides, from [date] your notice period becomes [period] and you become eligible for [benefit]. / Your other terms stay the same.

Thank you for your work so far. Your next review will be [date or process, for example your annual appraisal].

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 4: probation extended

Arrange this before the original probation ends. Check the contract first: whether it has a power to extend, and its limits (maximum length, conditions, notice). Without a power, the extension needs the employee's agreement and takes effect only once agreed. Before extending because of absence, consider the reason for it, any protected leave or disability-related adjustments, and whether the evidence you have already allows a fair assessment. This letter also serves as the written statement of the change (ERA 1996, s4).

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for meeting me on [date] to review your probation, which is due to end on [original end date].

[Choose one and delete the other:]

[Contractual power:] Under clause [number] of your contract, we are extending your probation from [original end date] to [new end date], because [reason].

[Agreement required:] We propose extending your probation to [new end date], because [reason]. Please confirm whether you agree by [date, before the original end date]. The extension will take effect only once you have agreed.

During the extension we will:

- [Support or training, with dates]
- Hold review meetings on [dates]
- Hold a final review on [date]

By the final review we need to see [specific standards or objectives].

During the extension, your notice period is [period] and [state any benefit that depends on passing probation, as your contract provides]. Your other terms and conditions are unchanged.

At the final review, the possible outcomes are that you pass your probation, or that your employment ends with notice.

[If agreement is required:] I agree to the extension of my probation to [new end date]. Signed: _____ Date: _____

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 5: invitation to a final probation meeting

Use when ending employment is a possible outcome, including at the end of an extension. Hold the meeting promptly, allowing reasonable time to prepare and for any investigation needed. Give the employee the evidence in advance.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Your probation period is due to end on [date]. I am writing to invite you to a final probation review meeting on [date] at [time] at [place / video link], with [name, job title].

At the meeting we will discuss [the concerns, for example performance against the objectives set on [date], and the support provided since our review on [date]]. [I enclose / attach] [the information we will rely on].

The possible outcomes of the meeting are that you pass your probation, that your probation is extended, or that your employment is ended with notice. No decision has been made, and we will listen to what you say before deciding.

You have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or a trade union representative. Please tell me who, if you would like to. If your chosen companion cannot attend, please propose a reasonable alternative time within five working days after the original meeting date, and we will postpone the meeting to that time.

Please tell us if you need any adjustments to take part in the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 6: probation not passed

Use after the final meeting. Before sending, check: the notice due under the contract and the statutory minimum, including whether any extension was valid and whether a longer notice period already applies; that the termination date matches when and how the decision is communicated (do not leave 'today' in a letter sent later); whether notice is to be worked; and the payment date and basis of any payment in lieu. The appeal period should match your procedure. The appeal should be heard by someone impartial, and where possible by someone not involved so far.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for attending the final probation meeting on [date]. [Name of companion, if any] also attended.

I have considered what you said at the meeting, which was [summary]. I am sorry to tell you that I have decided you have not passed your probation and that your employment will end.

The reasons for my decision are [specific reasons, linked to the standards and the support given].

You are entitled to [notice period] notice. [Choose one:] Your notice starts on [date] and your employment will end on [date]. [You are expected to work your notice. / You will not be required to work your notice and will be paid as normal until then.] / Your contract allows us to pay you in lieu of notice. Your employment ends on [date], and on [payment date] you will be paid [amount], which is [basis, for example basic pay for the notice period].

Your final pay, on [date], will include any holiday you have built up but not taken, [number] days, and [any other pay due]. Please return [company property] by [date].

You can appeal against this decision. If you wish to, please write to [name] by [date], explaining why you think the decision is wrong. We will arrange an appeal meeting, and you may bring a work colleague or trade union representative.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Letter 7: appeal outcome

Use after the appeal meeting. Choose one outcome. If the appeal is upheld after employment has ended or a payment in lieu has been made, reconcile pay with what has already been paid. Extending probation on appeal still needs a contractual power or the employee's agreement; if the original probation period has already ended, take advice before extending.

[Employer name and address]

[Date]

Private and confidential

[Employee name], [address or email]

Dear [name],

Thank you for attending the appeal meeting on [date] about the decision that you had not passed your probation. [Name of companion, if any] also attended.

[Outcome A, appeal upheld:] Your appeal is upheld and the decision to dismiss you is withdrawn. Your employment continues without a break. [Confirm the probation outcome, for example: You have passed your probation with effect from [date]. / We propose extending your probation to [date], as set out in the attached letter, if you agree. Until you reply, you will work as normal on your existing terms, and [state your probation status and notice period in the meantime].] [Return to work: please return on [date] at [time].] [Pay: your salary and benefits continue as normal. Any payment already made for the period since [date] will be taken into account, and payroll will confirm the adjustment by [date].]

[Outcome B, appeal not upheld:] I have considered the points you raised, which were [summary]. I have decided not to uphold your appeal, because [reasons]. The decision to end your employment on [date] stands.

This is our final decision.

Yours sincerely,

[Name], [Job title]

Need help with a probation?

Electra HR can review a draft letter before it goes out, as a fixed-price written answer, or support you through a final meeting and any appeal. We advise employers and employees. electra-hr.com/contact

Our employment contracts, at electra-hr.com/hr-templates, include your probation terms.

Sources: Employment Rights Act 1996, ss1, 4, 86, 92, 97 and 108; Employment Rights Act 2025, s25 and Sch 3; SI 2026/559; Employment Relations Act 1999, ss10 and 13; TULRCA 1992, s207A; Equality Act 2010, ss20 and 21 (legislation.gov.uk); Acas guidance on probation periods and the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures (acas.org.uk).