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| **Setting Objectives – Briefing for Line Managers** |

## **What is an objective?**

The process of setting and agreeing objectives during the probationary period is important to ensure that the expectations are clear, fair and consistent. The new employee should understand what is expected of them and the behaviours required, as well as how this will be measured.

Line Managers should be aware of the employee’s personal circumstances and training needs, and consider these when setting achievable objectives.

It is necessary to differentiate between goals and objectives.

* Goals refer to aspirations, purpose and vision. They may be long-term and may involve others’ actions, which are outside the individual’s direct sphere of influence or control.
* Objectives are potential work achievements of the individual that could be realistically met by them by following a certain number of steps. These should be SMART.

Objectives should focus on identifiable outcomes – what will achievement of the objective look like?

## **Where should the objectives come from?**

During probationary period, the principal objectives, including behavioural standards, will normally be based on the key duties on the Job Description used to define the post for appointment purposes.

## **SMART**

Probationary objectives should be based on the SMART acronym:

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| **S** | **M** | **A** | **R** | **T** |
| Specific | Measureable | Achievable (and agreed) | Relevant | Time specific |
| What exactly  needs to be  done, with, or  for whom? | Is it measurable  and can the  Employee and  the Line Manager  measure it? | Can it be achieved in the timeframe set,  with the resources  available?  Is there support  for it to be done? | Will this objective lead  to the end goal, i.e. confirmation of  a good  recruitment  decision? | When will this  be  accomplished  /completed? |

There is no single correct way to write a SMART objective, but it is helpful to think through some of the following tips:

**Specific:** Be concrete. Use ‘action’ verbs.

**Measureable:** May be numeric or descriptive of quantity, quality or cost. How will you demonstrate that the objective has been met?

**Achievable:** The objective should be appropriately limited in scope and within the employee's control and sphere of influence (it is better to split big objectives into sub-objectives for clarity, especially if there are different deadlines, targets or measures).

**Relevant:** Measure outputs or results, not activities.

**Time specific:** Identify target dates, including interim milestones and plans to monitor progress in line with the formal probationary meeting schedule.

The objectives should relate to the Employee’s key work requirements, as the purpose of this exercise is to be confident that the employee is capable of doing the job.

Objectives should be kept under review. Where circumstances change the Line Manager should revisit the objective to see if it is still relevant and achievable within the timescales. If it is not, it should be updated, removed or replaced, as appropriate.