

# Settling in

## The probationary period

All newly appointed employees should undergo a probationary period normally as set out in their contract of employment.

### Why have a probationary period?

A probationary period:

- Allows you to assess the suitability of your nanny
- Enables the nanny to determine whether he/she wants to work with your family
- Provides the opportunity for your nanny to develop her skills, knowledge and experience
- Enables the nanny to understand how the role fits in with those around them and understand the routine, values, standards and rules of the family.
- Gives the nanny an opportunity to prove themselves
- Ensures that your nanny receives appropriate support and supervision during the initial period of employment
- Ensures that training needs are identified
- Provides a mechanism for investigating and addressing concerns over performance
- Provides a mechanism for the dismissal of a nanny whose performance during the probationary period is demonstrated to be unsatisfactory within the contractual obligations of the post.

At the end of the probationary period you will need to decide if you want your nanny to stay on and your nanny will need to decide if she/he wants to work for you. And remember that a probationary employee is still an employee and must be given the appropriate guidance and advice.

### Timing of Probationary Reviews

The probationary period is normally between three and six months.

All employees should have three reviews in their probationary period, for example:

3 Months Probationary Period	6 Months Probationary Period
after 4 weeks	after 6 weeks
after 8 weeks	after 15 weeks
after 12 weeks	after 24 weeks

Regular formal discussions should be held throughout the probationary period between the nanny and his/her employer. The aim of these discussions is to provide support and to monitor progress.

The employee should be given adequate notice of the date of each formal meeting. To prepare for the meeting they should be sent a probationary review form to complete (See Example at the end of this Factsheet).

### Probationary period outcomes

There are three possible outcomes of the probationary period:

1. Successful completion of probation – job confirmed in writing
2. Extension of the probationary period – this is an option where the employee is making progress, but is not reaching the required standards. It allows the employee further time to make the necessary improvements in performance.
3. Non-confirmation of the probationary period (i.e. termination of employment) where the employee fails to meet the standards required

### How to manage the probationary period

1. At the beginning of the induction set clear standards so the nanny knows what level of performance is expected by the end of the period; these targets should be recorded on a Probation Review Form.
2. Explain the consequences of failing to meet these targets.
3. Meet regularly with your nanny in the early stages of appointment to discuss his/her progress.
4. Discuss the induction, the work, any difficulties he/she is experiencing, and additional support he/she may need. This will include identifying training and development needs.

5. If concerns arise during the probationary period you should discuss these with the nanny as and when they arise rather than wait for the next formal probationary review meeting.
6. Before holding a probationary review meeting you should discuss the nanny's progress with any other relevant people – partner, children etc.
7. Hold the appropriate Probationary Review meetings on time and consistently.
8. At the meeting discuss progress and record the discussion on the Probation Review Form – it's a two-way forum so make sure you include the nanny's comments.
9. At the meeting, if necessary, discuss areas where improvement is required, but keep the meeting positive. If your nanny hasn't met the required level you may extend the probation period by giving him/her a letter highlighting what improvements need to be made and explaining that if these are not met the contract may be terminated.
10. At the end of each meeting, you and the nanny should agree appropriate targets with time scales where necessary, making progress clear to your nanny. This is particularly important where the nanny is not meeting the standards required.
11. Give a copy of the meeting form to nanny, clearly stating the outcome of the review.
12. At the final review meeting make a decision about the nanny's employment status and inform him/her of this and follow this up in writing.

## **Meeting content**

### **Initial probationary review**

Initial probationary review meetings should cover the following:

- Exploring how well the employee is performing his/her duties
- Considering whether attendance and punctuality are acceptable
- Discussing the aspects of the job that have been undertaken and where some aspects of the job have not yet been tackled, exploring the opportunity for your nanny to familiarise himself/herself with these tasks during the probationary period
- Discussing the nanny's interaction with the rest of the family and anyone else they regularly come into contact with on behalf of your family
- Discussing whether the nanny's skills are being fully utilised
- Discussing the support currently available and whether any additional support is considered necessary
- Establishing if any special training, not already arranged, is necessary
- Checking if there are any exceptional factors that need to be taken into account that have impacted on the nanny's progress
- Discussing whether the employee is experiencing any difficulties

Following the initial probationary review meeting you should complete the probationary review form and ask the nanny to sign and retain a copy. Where the nanny disagrees fundamentally with the probation assessment, he/she is entitled to record his/her dissent on the probation review report. The signed review report should be kept securely.

### **Second probationary review**

Complete as initial review. Ensure that the nanny understands how he or she is progressing. If progress isn't as it should be make sure that he or she understands the consequences of not improving.

### **Final probationary review**

Final probationary review meetings should:

- Review the progress of the nanny in all aspects of his/her job since the initial probationary review meeting
- Assess the extent to which any problems identified earlier in the probationary period have been resolved
- Establish that action has been taken to address any identified training needs
- Be the last opportunity to determine if the nanny's progress is such that his or her appointment should be confirmed

If you decide to appoint the nanny then complete the final review report and ask him or her to sign and keep a copy. If your nanny disagrees with the probation assessment, he/she is entitled to record his/her dissent on the probation review report. The signed review report should be kept securely.

While a nanny may be deemed to have satisfactorily completed his/her probationary period there may still be aspects of his/her job in which he/she needs to gain further experience and some skills which need to be further developed. So it's a good idea to review progress regularly and offer support as necessary.

When the probationary period has been successfully completed, you will need to give your nanny written confirmation. You may, however, wish to extend the probationary period where performance has not been considered completely satisfactory.

## **The probationary process**

When your nanny starts work, you should ensure that he or she understands what the probationary period means, and that they are clear on how their progress in respect of performance, conduct and attendance will be reviewed and assessed during this period.

The following provides a brief summary of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the probationary process.

**Employee:**

The nanny should demonstrate commitment to developing the necessary skills and experience to undertake all the duties of his/her post, seeking and accepting support as required from you.

**Employer:**

You should provide advice, support and supervision to your nanny throughout the probationary period, ensuring that the nanny develops appropriate skills and carries out their duties effectively. You should identify any areas of concern and discuss with your nanny how they can best be addressed. You should meet regularly with him/her to review progress and complete the probationary report forms as soon as possible.

**What to do when an employee is experiencing difficulties**

If your nanny is giving cause for concern at any stage during their probationary period you should discuss any problems with her/him as and when they arise and not wait until the next scheduled probationary review meeting.

In many cases discussions with the nanny will help to clarify and resolve any difficulties. However, some difficulties may require a programme of additional support within the probationary period that should be agreed with the nanny. In the meeting with the nanny, you should cover the following aspects:

- The difficulties being experienced
- Clarify the level of performance expected
- Offer guidance on how difficulties can be overcome
- Determine whether additional support is necessary and whether it would be helpful to involve another family member in discussions or seek advice from an outside body such as The National Childminder's Association
- Ensure the nanny understands your concerns and attempt to engender a climate where he or she is willing to work co-operatively in resolving the difficulties
- Agree the arrangements for reviewing progress and make clear to your nanny that the degree of progress achieved will determine the outcome of the probationary period
- Make a written record of the discussions held and action agreed and provide your nanny with a copy

In most cases employees will react positively in overcoming any difficulties within the probation period. However, an extension of probationary period may be appropriate if it would be unrealistic to expect your nanny to effect the necessary improvements within the time span of the original probationary period.

**How to extend the probationary period**

The purpose of extending a probationary period is to allow the nanny further time to effect the necessary improvements in performance.

In cases where additional support and monitoring have not led to the required improvements in you may need to consider extending the probationary period. In these circumstances the following should happen:

You should meet as soon as possible with the nanny to discuss the continuing difficulties and advise him/her that an extension to the probationary period is necessary.

After the meeting the following points will be communicated in writing:

- The reasons for the extension
- The improvements that are required
- The final review date (no longer than three months would be envisaged for an extended probationary period).
- If the required standard is not met by the review date, the contract may be terminated with the appropriate contractual notice.

You don't have to extend the probationary period if you don't want to. And it's not usual practice to offer more than one extension of probationary period to an employee if things aren't working out. If you do extend the probationary period, a final decision on whether or not to confirm your nanny's appointment will be taken by the final date previously notified to the nanny.

**What to do when the decision is to terminate employment**

In the regrettable situation of a nanny not performing to the required standard within his/her probationary period (or extended probationary period), despite any support having been given to improve his/her performance, it may be necessary to terminate the nanny's appointment, either at the end of the original probationary period or the end of the extended probationary period.

So long as you have held regular reviews with the nanny and at the last meeting they are fully aware of the issues with their performance and the consequences of its not improving or reaching the required standards, you may terminate employment by holding a meeting and giving him/her appropriate notice (normally one week at this stage in employment, unless they are dismissed for reasons of gross misconduct).

# Confidential

## Probationary review form

Name of Employee ..... Job Title:.....

Please complete the following form giving a report on the employee's progress after one, two and three months' employment. The content of the form should be discussed with the employee at each probationary review meeting before it is signed.

Has the employee attained the required standards?	
<b>Quality of work:</b> Comments:	Yes / No
<b>General aptitude for, and attitude to the work:</b> Comments:	Yes / No
<b>Relationships with employer, children etc.:</b> Comments:	Yes / No
<b>Attendance, punctuality and overall conduct:</b> Comments:	Yes / No

Please note any areas in which improved performance is required and the support/training that will be provided to assist the employee in improving their performance:

**Employer's Overall Assessment:** Progress satisfactory/ not satisfactory (\*Delete as appropriate)

**Employee's comments:**

(The employee must sign the form to confirm that they have been informed of any required improvements. A copy of the form should then be retained by the employee and the employer.)

**Employee's signature:**..... **Date** .....

**Employer's signature:**..... **Date** .....