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1. 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 Lay 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 Lay Employee's personal circumstances and training needs when setting achievable objectives. It is important 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**.

2. Where should the objectives come from?

During the probationary period, the principal objectives, including behavioural standards, will normally be based on the key duties noted within the Job Description.

3. The use of SMART

Probationary objectives should be based on the **SMART** acronym:

S	M	A	R	T
Specific	Measurable	Achievable (& agreed)	Relevant	Time specific
What exactly needs to be done, with, or for, who and what?	Can the Line Manager and Employee measure the results?	Can it be achieved in the timeframe set, with the resources available? Is there appropriate support for it to be done?	Will this objective lead to the end goal, (i.e. will it confirm a good recruitment decision was made?)	When will this be completed and/ or accomplished

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.

In order for a goal to be effective, it needs to be specific. A specific goal answers questions like:

- What needs to be accomplished
- Who's responsible for it
- What steps need to be taken to achieve it

Generally, the narrower and more specific a goal is, the clearer the steps to achieving it will be.

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

Specificity is a good start but quantifying goals, and making sure that they are measurable and trackable, makes it easier to monitor progress and demonstrates when the objective has been achieved.

The key here is to ensure that there will be evidence that can be tracked to monitor progress.

Achievable: Are the goals realistic? It is important that, where possible, they are – and that the objective remains limited in scope so that it remains realistically within the Lay Employee's control. To summarise, you should ensure the set goal is realistic and possible to complete or maintain within the set time frame.

Relevant: Why are you setting the objective? Is it genuinely relevant? Whilst common sense, you should remember to measure the outputs and results from the objective, and not the activities around it.

It is important to make sure that the goal itself aligns with values and long-term objectives.

Time bound: It is important to identify target dates, including interim milestones, and to plan how you will monitor progress with these adhering to appropriate time frames.

The objectives should relate to the Lay Employee's key work requirements remembering that the overriding purpose of this exercise is to be confident that the Lay 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.