

June 2006

To: All Board Chairs

cc. Governors and Directors at Prison Establishments
Managers at Immigration Removal Centres
Clerks to IMBs (2 copies)
National Council
National Tutors
Independent Interviewers

Dear Chair

PROBATIONARY YEAR FOR NEW MEMBERS

I am pleased to be able to tell you that Gerry Sutcliffe, the new Prisons Minister, has approved the National Council and Secretariat proposal to introduce a one year probationary year for new members. The proposal had already been approved earlier this year by the then Immigration Minister.

The purpose of the probationary year is to provide a formal framework for the training and development of new members. We know that Boards already put a lot of effort into welcoming and inducting new members but unfortunately a significant number still resign in their first year. One way of retaining new members is to actively support them through their first year to ensure a successful appointment. The enclosed procedures are designed to help Boards achieve this.

How will it work?

In order to ensure a successful outcome to the probationary year Boards will be expected to observe the following principles:

- new members should be given every support in their training and development
- they should be given every opportunity to know what is expected of them
- they should receive regular feedback on their progress
- where there are areas of performance which need to be improved, they should be told clearly what they are and be given guidance on how to improve.

Ministers will continue to appoint all new members, subject to the successful completion of the probationary year. Delegated authority has been given to the Secretariat to confirm appointments after successful completion of the probationary period. On rare occasions it may be necessary for the Board Chairs to recommend termination of appointment during or on completion of the probationary period. These cases will be submitted for Ministerial consideration together with any representations the new member may wish to make, but only after the Secretariat has ensured that the Chair has provided substantive reasons for recommending termination of appointment and is satisfied that the probationary procedures were followed correctly.

When will it take effect?

The probationary year will apply to new members who apply on or after the 1st July 2006. New members whose applications were made before that date will not be affected by the new procedures, even if the date of their appointment falls after 1 July 2006.

Application packs and letters to applicants are currently being revised to include reference to the probationary year and these updated versions will replace the current literature from 2 June 2006. This means that prospective applicants will be fully aware of the probationary year.

Will any training be provided?

The enclosed procedures set out the roles and responsibilities of the Chair, Training Co-ordinator and Mentors and we expect many Boards will find that they already have similar processes in place. However, we propose issuing guidelines for mentors by the end of August 2006, (as it is extremely unlikely that any new members who applied after 1 July 2006 will have been appointed before then) and training on the probationary year process will be provided on future Training Co-Ordinator, Experienced Members and new Chairs courses.

Where can I go for help in the meantime?

We hope the enclosed procedures are reasonably straightforward and self-explanatory but if you have any questions about the process please contact your National Council representative or Mike Paice the Appointments Officer on 020 7035 2260, Nigel Mulcaster on 020 7035 2259, David Hawes on 020 7035 2264 or Paul Blake on 020 7035 2263.

Norman Mclean
Head of IMB Secretariat

PROCEDURES FOR THE 12 MONTH PROBATIONARY PERIOD

1. Introduction

1.1 This guidance seeks to advise Boards on the training and development of new members in their first twelve months. It is all part of the need to welcome, induct and retain new members. They should be supported throughout their first year to ensure a successful appointment.

1.2 The paper also tries to set out what might reasonably be expected of new members during the first twelve months and what action Boards should take if those expectations are not being met.

1.3 The National Council, in conjunction with the IMB Secretariat and with the Minister's approval, has therefore drawn up the following procedures to guide Boards in the support that they should give to new members and what to do if the new member finds himself or herself unsuited to the role. In this sense, the first twelve months will be regarded as a probationary period.

2. The Probationary Period

2.1 During the probationary process it is essential that the following principles are followed:

- new members should be given every support in their training and development
- they should be given every opportunity to know what is expected of them
- they should receive regular feedback on their progress and be commended for good progress
- where there are areas of performance which need to be enhanced, they should be told clearly what they are, be given guidance on how to improve, and be commended when those improvements take place

2.2 This clear framework provides a positive opportunity to ensure a successful outcome with both parties being aware of their roles in this probationary year and creating a foundation for a positive working relationship.

2.3 It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the probationary process is properly managed for each new member and that reliable records are maintained throughout the probationary period in order to demonstrate, if called upon to do so, that the requirements outlined above have been met. To

assist Chairs, a Probationary Record proforma has been designed which sets out each of the key probationary milestones, with entries for names and dates. Chairs should use this proforma as an aide-memoire and to provide an audit trail (see Annex A).

2.4 If at any time during the probationary period a new member feels concerned about how the process is being managed s/he should speak to their Training Co-ordinator or Chair. If, having done so, they continue to have concerns they should contact their National Council representative or a member of the IMB Secretariat.

3. The Process

3.1 Application packs and interview panels should make clear to applicants that they will be subject to a 12 month probationary period before their appointment can be confirmed by the Secretary of State.

3.2 On joining the Board new members should again be reminded of the probationary period and should be provided with the details of the process. Attention should be drawn, in particular, to the 8 key competencies against which a Board member's performance will be evaluated (see Annex B). New members will be sent a copy of this guidance, including the National Induction Programme, on appointment as it includes all the necessary information about the probationary year. Chairs and training coordinators should check that new members have received their copies and understand the process.

3.3 The Chair should open and keep a file on each new member containing correspondence, records and interviews, induction record, etc.

3.4 During the first 6 months of the probationary period new members must complete local training in accordance with the National Induction Programme¹ for newly appointed members. The Training Co-ordinator should update the Probationary Record on completion of the Induction Tasks.

3.5 New members should be mentored by a minimum of two experienced members from their Board throughout the probationary period. The new member will thus benefit from a broader range of skills, knowledge and experience and will have fewer problems finding mutually convenient times and dates for visiting the establishment (especially important if the new member and/or mentors are in employment).

3.6 There are benefits from a formal mentoring relationship for both parties

For the mentee

- It aids induction into the new role and culture

¹ The National Induction Programme has been endorsed by the National Council as being the common standard to which new members are inducted and by which they are assessed. It is recognised that some adaptation of the Programme may be necessary to reflect the circumstances within each establishment.

- It aids in the process of understanding the formal and informal structures of the organisation
- It helps with developing skills in a structured way based on individual needs
- It provides an opportunity for a new member to reflect on his/her own progress and resolve his/her own problems

For the mentor:

- It broadens his/her own skills and knowledge
- It brings new insights into the organisation
- It enables him/her to demonstrate additional skills in developing other individuals
- It also provides an opportunity for the existing Board Member to reflect on his/her own progress and performance

3.7 Please note however that while new members should be encouraged to visit the establishment in the company of any experienced member willing to be accompanied, part of the mentor's role is to review the new member's performance. Dedicated mentors are therefore necessary to ensure a degree of consistency in appraisal and reporting over the probationary period.

3.8 The mentors should bring to the attention of the new member any concerns they or the Training Co-ordinator identify as they arise with advice on how to remedy them. The only exceptions to this are concerns about security, safety, or misconduct, which should be brought to the attention of the Chair immediately.

3.9 When the new member feels ready to do so, and the Chair, mentors and Training Co-ordinator are satisfied with his/her performance, the Training Co-ordinator will arrange security and key training for the new member. With the approval of the security department the member will then have the facility to draw keys and can go solo when appropriate. It is expected that all new members will be drawing keys before the end of their probationary period.

3.10 On or around the 6 month anniversary of the new member's arrival on the Board the Chair and the new member should meet to discuss how s/he is settling in to the new role and whether there are any questions or concerns. This meeting is also an opportunity for the Chair to provide feedback to the new member well before the end of the probationary period so that any need for improvement in performance can be remedied.

3.11 The Chair should meet the mentors and Training Co-ordinator beforehand to discuss the new member's progress. This discussion must include evaluation of the member's performance against the 8 key competencies. The Chair should note the date of this meeting and the names of those present on the Probationary Record and a written record of the discussion should be made recording any successes and highlighting any areas giving cause for concern. A copy of this record of discussion should be made available to the probationary member.

3.12 Feedback on performance should be discussed with the new member and any achievements recognised. Where there is a need for improvement in any areas, specific advice or guidance on what needs to be done in order to improve, including a timescale if appropriate, should be given to the new member in writing.

3.13 If a problem on which specific written advice has been given, reoccurs at any time during the probationary period, the Chair may submit a recommendation for termination of appointment to the Secretariat with substantive reasons why the appointment should not be confirmed.

3.14 Following the 6 month review meeting the new member should attend the next available New Members course. Attendance on the New Members' course is a requirement of successful completion of the probationary period and it is advisable to contact the Secretariat shortly after the new member joins the Board in order to book a place on a suitable New Members' course.

3.15 Before the end of the 12 month probationary period the Chair, Vice Chair and new member should meet to review the past year, in particular the period since their last meeting, and to decide whether the new member's appointment should be confirmed. It is recommended that this meeting takes place at the 9 months of the probationary period to ensure the necessary administrative process is completed in time to confirm the new member's appointment on or close to his/her 12 month anniversary. As at the 6 month review, the Chair should discuss the member's progress with the mentors and Training Co-ordinator beforehand and evaluate performance against the 8 key competencies. A brief written record of the meeting agreed and signed by all parties should be placed on file. The recommendation should be sent to the Appointment Section in the Secretariat to arrive no later than 2 months before the anniversary of the member taking up his/her appointment.

3.16 At the 'End of Probation' review meeting, or the meeting held on completion of an extended probationary period (see paras 3.20 to 3.21 below), the Chair should decide whether the new member is suitable for the role of Board member. If so, s/he should inform the member that a recommendation to confirm appointment will be submitted to the Secretariat. The recommendation should be made on the Probationary Report form (see Annex C) to which a copy of the Probationary Record, confirming completion of the National Induction Programme and the New Members Training Course, should be appended. A copy of this form should be made available to the new member.

3.17 The new member may decide at this point that the role of an IMB member is not for them and not seek confirmation of appointment. The new member should inform the Chair in writing of this decision and a copy should be sent to the Secretariat. An exit interview should always be completed and any lessons learned be noted by the Board and highlighted to the Secretariat, where appropriate.

3.18 If the Chair believes the new member is unsuitable for the role of Board member he should explain the reasons to the member. None of the reasons should come as a surprise to the member. They should already have been explained to him/her and the person should have been given the opportunity to improve. The Chair should submit the recommendation for termination of appointment to the Secretariat, with substantive reasons why the appointment should not be confirmed, on the Probationary Report form appending a copy of the Probationary Record. If the Secretariat supports the Chair's recommendation the new member will be given the opportunity to make representations. Any such representations will be submitted to the Minister by the Secretariat together with the Chair's recommendation.

3.19 There may be occasions when the Secretariat is unable to support a recommendation to terminate the new member's appointment, for example if the Chair fails to give substantive reasons for termination of appointment, or fails to provide a completed Probationary Record demonstrating that probationary requirements have been met, including the need for the member to have been told of how to improve and been given the opportunity to do so. In such cases the Secretariat will contact the Chair to discuss the case and seek further information.

Extensions to the Probationary Period

3.20 There may be occasions when a new member's performance gives cause for concern towards the end of an otherwise exemplary probationary period, or the new member is unable to complete the conditional elements of the probationary period within 12 months of joining the Board. If the Chair, following discussion with the mentors and Training Co-ordinator, believes there are grounds for extending the probationary period beyond 12 months in order to give the new member time to complete induction training and/or demonstrate an improvement in performance, the Chair should contact the Secretariat to seek agreement to an extension to the probationary period. Each request for an extension will be considered on its merits and will be granted in exceptional cases only, for example where ill health or pressing domestic or employment concerns have prevented attendance on the scheduled New Members course. Such extensions will normally be granted for up to a 3 month period only.

3.21 If the Secretariat approves the requested extension, the Chair should explain the reasons for seeking an extension to the member at the 'End of Probation' review meeting and confirm these in writing together with the date on which the extended probationary period will end. At the end of the extended probationary period a further review meeting will be held, again following a preliminary meeting between the Chair, mentors and Training Co-ordinator .

Annex B

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS

BOARD MEMBER KEY COMPETENCIES

The following have been identified as the key competencies and qualities commonly required of Board members across all IMBs.

1. Ability to listen and respond effectively and appropriately
2. Willing to ask questions and eager to learn
3. Knows where to go for the answers
4. Commitment and enthusiasm for the Board's tasks and understanding of the demands and parameters of the monitoring role.
5. Healthy awareness of security matters and personal safety
6. At ease with prisoners and detainees
7. Awareness of the roles and responsibilities of prison or centre management and staff
8. An effective team player.

Annex C

PROBATIONARY REPORT

NAME:

BOARD:

DATE OF APPOINTMENT:

DATE COMMENCED DUTIES:

DATE OF END OF PROBATION REVIEW:

PROBATIONARY REPORT ATTACHED: Yes/No (delete as appropriate)

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Having reviewed this member's performance against the key competencies identified for new IMB members I am able/unable (delete as appropriate) to recommend confirmation of appointment.

If unable to recommend appointment, please provide full your reasons, continuing on a separate sheet if necessary.

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE: _____

PRINT NAME PLEASE: _____

DATE: _____

(See overleaf for Board Member's comments)

Annex C (cont.)

BOARD MEMBERS COMMENTS

Please indicate whether you have read and discussed this probationary report with the Chair: **Yes/No (delete as appropriate)**

Comment below if you wish.

BOARD MEMBER'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Annex A

PROBATIONARY RECORD (DC /2006, IMM /2006 refers)				
MEMBER: DATE APPOINTED TO BOARD: (print name) DATE COMMENCED DUTIES:			BOARD:	
MENTOR: (print name)			MENTOR: (print name)	
TASK	SIGNED OFF BY:	NAME	DATE	NOTES/COMMENTS
Check copy of DC .../.... received and understood by new member	Training Co-ordinator			
National Induction Programme Tasks 1 to 7 completed	Training Co-ordinator			
6 month review meeting with Training Co-ordinator and mentors	Chair			
6 month review meeting with member	Chair			
Security Training completed	Training Co-ordinator			
Keys arranged	Training Co-ordinator			
New members training course (Induction Task 8) completed	Training Co-ordinator			
End of Probation review meeting with Training Co-ordinator and mentors	Chair			
End of Probation review meeting with member	Chair			
Extension agreed by Secretariat (If applicable)	Chair			
Extension discussed and agreed with member (If applicable)	Chair			
Review meeting with Training Co-ordinator and mentors on	Chair			

completion of extension (If applicable)				
Review meeting with member on completion of extension (If applicable)	Chair			
Recommendation of appointment confirmation /dismissal submitted to Secretariat (delete as applicable)	Chair			