

Changes to terms and conditions of service

Introduction of a probationary requirement for new appointees

Currently, HA contract staff are not required to go through a probation period. Hence, no mechanism is in place to appraise the abilities and performance of the new recruits at an early stage. The proposed introduction of a probation period gives the management an early opportunity to evaluate an officer's suitability for undertaking the duties incumbent upon them. It ensures retention of only those officers who can establish, by their performance and conduct within a prescribed period, that they possess the necessary qualities and abilities for continual employment. For those who fail to measure up to the required standard during probation, the Department can terminate their service by giving a relatively shorter notice period thereby enabling removal of sub-standard and unsuitable staff more speedily. The negative side of this flexibility is that staff on probation can resign from service by giving a relatively shorter notice period and this may cause disruption to the offices concerned. Having balanced the pros and cons, we consider that the probationary requirement is instrumental to enhancing the overall quality of the HA contract staff. We therefore propose that new appointees should be required to undergo a probation period with duration as follows-

- (a) 6-month probation for staff appointed on contracts lasting over one year¹; and
- (b) 3-month probation for staff appointed on contracts of one year¹.

2. We recommend that the proposed consultant be asked to further examine the desirability of implementing this proposal for HA contract staff on first appointment by drawing reference from the experience and practices in the private sector.

¹ As at 1.4.99, 80% of the HA staff are serving on contracts exceeding one year and 20% on one-year contracts.