UK EMPLOYERS · CHECKED 27 NOVEMBER 2026

What if your new starter reaches six months?

The six-month rule kit. What changes on 1 January 2027, a timeline for every new starter and a review form you can use this week.

WHAT CHANGES ON 1 JANUARY 2027

- From 1 January 2027, an employee needs **six months' service** to claim ordinary unfair dismissal. Until then it's two years.
- The date that counts is **when employment ends**, not when you give notice. Notice given in December that runs into January falls under the new rule.
- From that day, anyone with six months' service or more is covered, including people who joined in 2025 and would not have qualified until 2027 under the old rule.
- The cap on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal is removed on the same day.
- Some claims never needed two years. Discrimination claims, and dismissal for reasons such as pregnancy, whistleblowing or asserting a statutory right, need no qualifying service at all.

> **None of this stops you ending employment that isn't working. It moves the moment you need to decide, and it makes the note you keep matter more.**

WHO'S COVERED ON DAY ONE

1 January 2027

Everyone who joined you on or before 1 July 2026 already has six months' service that day.

HIRING NOW?

Their six-month point falls in the first half of 2027. Put the month-five review in your diary on their first day.

The minimum that works

- Written terms that say how long probation lasts and what it involves.
- A note of every review, even a good one.
- Someone to ask before a review turns into a decision.

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The new starter timeline: six steps from day one to month six, and what to keep at each.

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If it isn't working: four checks before you end anyone's employment in probation.

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A probation review form to print, fill in together and keep.

General information for employers in England, Scotland and Wales, not legal advice. Northern Ireland has its own employment law. Checked against legislation.gov.uk and GOV.UK on 27 November 2026. The 1 January 2027 unfair dismissal date is set in regulations.

The new starter timeline

Six steps, each with a note to keep. The notes are the point.

1	BEFORE DAY ONE	Written terms, including how long probation lasts and its conditions. From 1 January 2027, the Government's statement of trade union rights is due to go with them. Right to work check before they start.	**KEEP** A signed copy of the terms and a dated right to work copy.
2	WEEK ONE	Agree three or four things that "good" looks like by month three. Write them down together.	**KEEP** The list, shared with them.
3	END OF MONTH ONE	A 15-minute check-in: what's going well, what isn't yet.	**KEEP** Two lines in your notes.
4	MONTH THREE	Mid-point review using the form. Say plainly what needs to change, and by when.	**KEEP** The completed form.
5	MONTH FIVE AT THE LATEST	Final review. Confirm, extend (if the contract allows it) or decide to end it. Leave room for notice: if you pay in lieu instead, the law still counts the statutory week when it works out the six months. Close to the line? Get advice first.	**KEEP** The form and your reasons.
6	MONTH SIX	Confirm in writing that probation is complete, or extended to a named date.	**KEEP** The letter or email.

If it isn't working

Before you end anyone's employment in probation:

- [ ] check the reason has nothing to do with pregnancy, a health condition that could be a disability or a complaint they've raised (or any other protected reason)
- [ ] talk to them first and let them respond
- [ ] give the notice in their contract, and at least one week once they've worked for you for a month
- [ ] put the decision and the reason in writing

If any of these makes you pause, get advice before you act.

What "good" looks like

Write three or four points in week one, specific enough that you'd both know if it's happening.

"Answers enquiries the same day" beats "good customer service".

Also, share the list. A standard nobody has seen isn't one.

Probation review form

NAME _____ ROLE _____ START DATE _____

REVIEW DATE _____ REVIEWED BY _____

STAGE

☐ Month 1 ☐ Month 3 ☐ Month 5

WHAT "GOOD" LOOKS LIKE (AGREED IN WEEK ONE)	ON TRACK	GETTING THERE	NOT YET	EXAMPLE
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

WHAT'S GOING WELL

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE, AND BY WHEN

SUPPORT WE'LL GIVE

THEIR COMMENTS

OUTCOME

☐ Continue ☐ Extend to _____ (if the contract allows) ☐ Probation complete

☐ End employment (get advice first)

SIGNED (MANAGER) AND DATE _____ SIGNED (EMPLOYEE) AND DATE _____

Keep a copy with their file.

Not sure about a probation decision?

Want a second pair of eyes on a review? **Book 20 minutes, free**. Retained HR Partner clients can bring every probation question to me as part of the monthly fee, from £150 a month + VAT.

Send me your what-ifs.

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