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**Alternative Employment Programme**

Frequently Asked Questions for Recruiting Managers

***Contents:***

* [What is the Alternative Employment Programme?](#_Toc160004782)
* [Is the Alternative Employment Programme the same as Redeployment?](#_Toc160004783)
* [What are my responsibilities as a manager of a staff member on the Alternative Employment Programme?](#_Toc160004784)
* [How can my HR Representative support me?](#_Toc160004785)
* [What are the different levels of redeployment and when do these apply?](#_Toc160004786)
* [What Support is available to my staff on the Alternative Employment Programme?](#_Toc160004787)
* [What is the recruitment and selection process for Redeployees to apply for Cumberland Council vacancies?](#_Toc160004788)
* [What other useful contacts and information are there?](#_Toc160004789)

## What is the Alternative Employment Programme?

The Alternative Employment Programme (AEP) enables the movement of talent, knowledge, skills and experience around the council as we continue to re-shape the organisation. The council’s position is that, wherever possible, it is a priority to retain a well skilled workforce, one that is talented, knowledgeable and experienced.

## Is the Alternative Employment Programme the same as Redeployment?

Yes.

## What are my responsibilities for Recruiting an employee on the Alternative Employment Programme?

As a Recruiting Manager, you must consider all applications submitted by AEP employees before the advert closes or shortlisting of any other applicants has occurred.

Where an AEP employee meets or reasonably meets the essential criteria for the post, you must invite them to a discussion about starting a trial period in the role. Where there are gaps in the essential requirements, serious consideration should be given to whether with reasonable additional training, coaching or mentoring it would enable the AEP candidate to acquire them within a reasonable period of time.

In relation to applicants with a disability, recruiting managers must make all efforts to ensure that reasonable adjustments are provided for employees. In most cases the recruiting manager should have a discussion with the employee to determine what their needs are and their suggestions for support. Recruiting managers should contact People Management for further advice.

Recruiting managers must evidence the shortlisting and trial period discussion decisions providing detailed information where candidates are not shortlisted / appointed and the considerations/adjustments that were taken into account in the decision making process.

All shortlisting information must be provided to the Resourcing Team via the Recruitment Portal so that the outcomes can be recorded, moderated and trial period discussion letters can be issued. Where necessary, invitation letters should not be issued until all information has been received.

Recruiting Managers can access the trial period discussion letters on our AEP information point and should issue out letters to the AEP applicant unless otherwise advised by the Resourcing Team that the letters will be issued centrally.

The recruiting manager will be advised by Resourcing Team of any applications from AEP employees who are due to leave employment prior to the scheduled shortlist or trial period discussion date. Where an AEP employee is identified as ‘at risk’ of redundancy and has been issued with notice of termination, they must be invited to a trial period discussion if they reasonably meet the essential criteria of the post and, if both parties agree, offered the post before their termination date.

Recruiting managers must be aware that where both AEP and non AEP employees are deemed as appointable through the recruitment process based on the criteria applicable to the circumstances, that AEP candidates will take precedence over non AEP applicants.

Recruiting managers must be prepared to provide constructive feedback to AEP candidates who are either not shortlisted or where both parties don’t agree to starting a trial period at the discussion. Feedback should be provided promptly to aid the AEP employee to adopt any suggested improvements to their applications or personal presentation technique.

## How can my HR Representative support me?

Your HR Representative can also offer further information and guidance around the AEP procedure, and outline what you need to do to recruit an employee on the AEP.

## What are the different levels of redeployment and when do these apply?

There are various reasons why an employee may require the support of the AEP.

Where there are applications from more than one AEP employee, and where the reasons for displacement of such employees differ, recruiting managers must follow a priority order in shortlisting and initiating a trial period discussion. The priority order is as follows:

* **Priority 1** – Employees facing redundancy who are on maternity, adoption of shared parental leave.
* **Priority 2** – Employees who are pregnant and cannot continue in their current post.
* **Priority 3** – Employees who require a reasonable adjustment due to a disability or are deemed by Occupational Health to be medically unfit to carry out their substantive role.
* **Priority 4** - Employees under threat of redundancy or facing expiry of fixed term contract for reasons of redundancy. This includes those nearing completion of an Apprenticeship.
* **Priority 5** - Employees for reasons of discipline, grievance or capability.

## What will be the recruitment and selection process for Redeployees to apply for Cumberland Council vacancies?

Employees on the AEP are required to check the council’s Current Vacancies on a daily basis and submit an application for any jobs they wish to be considered for.

They should indicate their status in their application by selecting ‘Yes’ for the *Are you on the AEP (Alternative Employment Programme)?* Question under the *Internal Applicants* section of the application form.

When they do this, the Resourcing Team will pick up their application and forward it to you as the Recruiting Manager.

You must review their application and, depending on other applications from other employees on the AEP, invite them to a discussion meeting about starting a trial period for the role.

If both you and the employee agree to start the trial period from the discussion meeting, the you must confirm to them in writing with a trial start date and objectives for them to meet during the trial period in the role.

**Recruiting managers must be aware that where both AEP and non AEP employees are deemed as appointable through the recruitment process based on the criteria applicable to the circumstances, that AEP candidates will take precedence over non AEP applicants.**

**You cannot offer the role to another individual where there is an appointable AEP applicant.**

## What is the trial period and how does it work?

The trial period is the opportunity for the AEP employee and you to see if the alternative role is the right fit for them.

You must give the AEP employee role objectives at the start of the trial and meet with them on a weekly basis to provide a progress update against these objectives and give/capture feedback on their performance.

The trial period is the opportunity for the AEP employee to try out the new the role without being completely committed to it.

At the end of the trial period, you can decide to extend the trial or end it – where the employee is either offered the role or not offered the role.

## How long can the trial period be?

The trial period for a role will usually be at least 4 weeks. During the trial you must give your AEP candidate objectives and review progress against the objectives with them each week.

Trials can be extended where required up to a maximum total period of 3 months.

## Will an employee’s current salary be protected if they move to a lower grade role?

Yes. AEP employees’ current salary will be protected for 12 months where they move to a lower grade role.

## What happens if a trial period is unsuccessful?

If a trial period is unsuccessful, you must confirm this in writing. You can use the template letter from our web page for this.

In this case, the employee will return to their original role and continue to be a member of the Alternative Employment Programme until the end of their notice period.

You can end a trial period early during the trial where strictly necessary but should provide each AEP employee the opportunity to complete the full duration of their trial.

## Are employees guaranteed an interview whilst on the AEP?

We no longer require interviews as part of the selection process for AEP employees to find and secure alternative employment.

**Providing their application demonstrates that they meet or reasonably meet the essential criteria, or could do so with reasonable training or coaching within a reasonable period of time, then the employee must be invited for a discussion about starting a trial period in the role.**

## Are employees able to reject a job if it has different grade, hours, and responsibilities?

Potentially. An offer of suitable alternative employment is one that offers similar terms and conditions as an AEP employee’s current role. An employee on AEP will need to bear in mind the factors that determine if an offer is a 'suitable alternative' before making a final decision.

Any decision regarding the role from the employee should come after their trial period discussion.

## If an employee is on AEP for health reasons are Occupational Health involved in the recruitment process at all?

Where an AEP applicant applies and this is the case, you need to seek appropriate advice and support from Occupational Health regarding the affected employee’s health and in particular, the suitability of the role for them and the reasonable adjustments that they might need.

## What happens if an application comes in from an employee who is the AEP whilst on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave?

Employees on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave have an express statutory right to be offered a post where they meet or reasonable meet all the essential criteria for the post with reasonable training or coaching.

Where they meet the minimum criteria for the role or could do the role with relevant training or a reasonable adjustment, they should be invited for a trial period discussion. Where there are applications from more than one AEP employee, you should follow the prioritisation order noted further above.

Following a successful trial period discussion, they would be offered a trial period in the role. The trial wouldn’t start until the employee returns from their leave.

## Can an employee apply for any job at any grade whilst on AEP.

Yes, but the AEP is intended to support employees to obtain a suitable alternative employment at their substantive grade or, where applicable a grade lower.

## If an employee secures a fixed term contract whilst on AEP will they be able to re-join when it expires?

Yes, it is advisable to re-join AEP 3 months prior to their fixed term contract ending. This would be done via their Recruiting Manager who would become their Line Manager on commencement of the fixed term contract.

## Can an employee attend training courses to assist them to find alternative work?

Yes, the Council is committed to supporting employees in finding alternative work. If an employee identifies any relevant training opportunities or courses, their line manager will arrange this for them to give them the best chance of securing the alternative employment they’ve applied for.

**Where relevant training is accessible and timely available, a lack of training and knowledge is not a reason to use to decide against offering an AEP applicant a trial period in a role.**