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**Alternative Employment Programme**

Frequently Asked Questions for Employees

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## 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.

## How can I join the Alternative Employment Programme?

Speak to your line manager. If you both agree there is a valid reason for you to be on the Alternative Employment Programme, your line manager will submit a Manager Authorisation Form to the Resourcing Team who will add you to the AEP Employees list.

If you need to join the Alternative Employment Programme for restructure reasons, joining the AEP will be confirmed by HR Operations Teams.

In either case, it means you will be part of the Alternative Employment Programme, you must look for a new role within the council and go through the AEP recruitment and selection process.

## What are my responsibilities on the Alternative Employment Programme?

Employees on 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.

AEP employees should consider all posts which are a similar grade to their current post and where they can demonstrate that they have (or can attain with reasonable training and support) the knowledge, skills and experience to fulfil the key responsibilities of the advertised post. They should also consider changes to their working arrangements for example, whether they are able to work in an alternative location or different hours as this may enhance the possibility of securing an alternative post.

If an AEP employee unreasonably refuses an offer of suitable alternative employment they may forfeit their entitlement to redundancy pay and may be removed from the AEP.

## How can my Manager and HR Representative support me?

Your Line Manager should help you to understand the AEP procedure. They should hold regular review meetings with you, at least every 2 weeks, to help you focus on seeking a suitable alternative post.

Your Line Manager should arrange any training or support which may be required to assist you in securing a suitable alternative post. This support may be in the form of mentoring and/or shadowing and helping to identify transferrable skills.

Where you have a disability and/or require reasonable adjustments, your Line Manager should ensure that they support you to obtain these adjustments where possible.

Your HR Representative can also offer further information and guidance around the AEP procedure, seeking a suitable alternative post, the AEP recruitment process, what a trial period involves and also guidance around outcomes should you not be successful in finding a suitable alternative role.

## 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.

An employee can join the AEP if:

1. They are identified as at risk of redundancy through reorganisation or restructuring, including during maternity leave,
2. They are nearing completion of an Apprenticeship,
3. They are approaching the end of a fixed term contract and they will have more than one year’s continuous service by the date employment is due to terminate,
4. They become pregnant and cannot continue in their current post,
5. Through ill-health or disability, they cannot continue in their current post; or where another post could be more suitable due to their disability with a reasonable adjustment,
6. There are reasons connected with discipline, grievance or capability.

## What Support is available to me on the Alternative Employment Programme?

Where you are looking for further support, speak to your line manager. Your Line Manager can arrange any training or support, such as mentoring and/or shadowing and helping to identify transferrable skills, to assist you in securing a suitable alternative post.

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

As an employee on the AEP, you 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.

In applying for the post, you should select ‘Yes’ for the *Are you on the AEP (Alternative Employment Programme)?* Question under the *Internal Applicants* section of the application form.

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

The Recruiting Manager will review your application and, depending on other applications from other employees on the AEP, will invite you to a discussion meeting about starting a trial period for the role.

If you both agree to start the trial from the discussion meeting, the Recruiting Manager will confirm to you in writing with a trial start date and objectives for you to meet during your trial period in the role.

Where you are unsuccessful in securing a trial period for an alternative role, either due to you deciding not to proceed with a given role or due to there being another applicant from the AEP with a higher priority status score, you will continue to be 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.

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

The trial period is the opportunity for both you and your Recruiting Manager to see if the alternative role is the right fit for you.

You will be given role objectives and you will meet with your Recruiting Manager on a weekly basis to provide a progress update against these objectives and give/capture feedback on your performance.

The trial period is the opportunity for you to try out the new the role without being completely committed to it. You should give your all and aim to do your best during any trial.

## How long can the trial period be?

The trial period for a role will usually be at least 4 weeks. During the trial you will be given objectives and your recruiting manager will review progress against the objectives with you each week.

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

## Will my current salary be protected if I move to a lower grade role?

Yes. Your current salary will be protected for 12 months where you move to a lower grade role.

## What happens if my trial period is unsuccessful?

If your trial period is unsuccessful, your Recruiting Manager will confirm this in writing. In this case, you will return to your original role and continue to be a member of the Alternative Employment Programme until the end of your notice period. If you reach the end of your notice period without securing alternative employment, your employment with Cumberland Council will end.

## What happens if I don’t apply for a vacancy while I’m on the AEP?

You will continue to be a member of the Alternative Employment Programme until the end of your notice period. If you reach the end of your notice period without securing alternative employment, your employment with Cumberland Council will end.

## Am I 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 your application demonstrates that you meet or reasonably meet the essential criteria, or could do so with reasonable training or coaching within a reasonable period of time, then you will be invited for a discussion about starting a trial period in the role.

## Am I 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 your 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.

## If I am on AEP due to my health are Occupational Health involved in the recruitment process at all?

The Recruiting Manager and People Management would seek appropriate advice and support from Occupational Health regarding your health and in particular, the suitability of any roles and the reasonable adjustments that you might need.

## What happens if I am on 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 an appropriate vacancy exists, following a successful trial period discussion, you would be offered the alternative role under a new contract that begins on the day immediately following the expiry of your previous contract. The new role must be suitable alternative employment.

## Can I 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 I secure a fixed term contract whilst on AEP will I be able to re-join when it expires?

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

## Can I attend training courses to assist me to find alternative work?

Yes, the Council is committed to supporting employees in finding alternative work.

All employees can access online training via Organisational Development and Workforce Training - My Learning - <http://cumbria.learningpool.com/>. This includes e-learning materials, exercises, and links to further reading on a range of topics.

If you identify any relevant training opportunities or courses please discuss these with your manager.

Reasonable time off will be given to look for alternative work or attend/participate in relevant training.

## When should an employee on a fixed term contract be added to the AEP?

This should usually be done 3 months prior to the end of the fixed term contract to allow the employee sufficient time to try and secure another role within the council.