

## **When things are not working (Disciplinary procedures) and Probation and Supervision**

### **When things are not working (Disciplinary procedures)**

As a small employer, at the moment you don't have to include a disciplinary and grievance procedure, but it is good practice to do so. This is going to change in 2004. If you decide not to, the written statement must give the name of someone, such as yourself, with whom the PA can raise any grievance.

The idea of having a policy for grievances and disciplinary matters is that they can encourage sorting things out informally, through discussion, well before difficulties occur. They show you have been thinking about these things and have worked out a way of dealing with them. This can be reassuring to you and anyone you employ. As the relationship with a PA is such a close one, it is a good idea to include a list of the actions or behaviour you would consider so serious that it could result in summary (immediate) dismissal should gross misconduct occur.

This will help your PA to know exactly where they stand and will make it much easier for you in the event that you have a PA who behaves badly. (Contact ACAS [for more information](#))

These documents are a real opportunity for you to establish the basis for a fruitful and productive relationship with your PA. As you become more experienced at employing PAs or as the law changes, you might want to refine your contract or code of conduct so it reflects your particular needs and way of working.

### **Probationary period**

However good your interviewing skills are, the only way you really find out what someone is really like is when they start working for you. For this reason, it's a good idea to say at interview or in the contract, that the PA will initially be employed for a trial or probationary period. You should also say how long the probationary period is and the amount of notice required, if either of you wish to terminate the contract. If you are both happy at the end of the trial period, the contract can be made permanent.

But if there are problems, discuss any concerns you have well before a PA's probationary period ends. It is easier to end the contract during the probationary period than once the contract has become permanent. If you decide to extend the probation period put your reasons and the time period in writing. Supervision Setting aside time to give your PA regular supervision can seem daunting, but really it's an investment in the creation of a good working relationship. See the time as an opportunity for you to learn from the PA what they are thinking about their role and for you to give your PA constructive feedback. Remember it's as important to say what is good about the way they work as well as identifying areas where you would like them to do things differently. Try and be as objective and specific as possible when describing any problems. Remember, a PA may be genuinely unaware of your concerns and welcome guidance on the matter.