



Title of policy:	Professionalisation Policy (Competency and Conduct)
Version:	1
Purpose:	To set out how North Star ensures that all staff have, and continue to maintain, the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours required to carry out their roles safely, effectively and competently
Updated:	September 2026
Next review:	September 2028
By:	Director of People

Introduction

North Star welcomes the Competency and Conduct Standard and is committed to maintaining high standards of competence and professional conduct as an integral part of delivering consistently high quality services for our customers.

We recognise that competence is developed and sustained through continuous learning, reflective practice, ongoing development and practical experience. North Star has a range of frameworks and processes in place to support regular, constructive conversations that provide clarity around expectations, promote high standards of performance and encourage staff to take ownership of their continued learning and professional development.

Where concerns relating to competence, conduct or performance arise, these should be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity

Policy Framework

We are committed to supporting staff to develop the knowledge, skills, behaviours and competencies required to deliver high-quality, safe and effective services to our customers. This policy brings together North Star's approach to:

- Continuous Conversations;
- Annual Developmental Continuous Conversations;
- Probation and Induction and
- Capability.

Bringing these together makes it easier for staff, managers and customers to understand how North Star supports staff development throughout the employment lifecycle without having to navigate multiple policies.

This policy should be read in conjunction with North Stars [Code of Conduct](#).

Manager's Responsibilities

Managers play a key role in supporting staff through onboarding, induction, probation, regular continuous conversations and annual developmental continuous conversations in terms of identifying developmental needs, providing feedback and creating an environment which encourages continuous learning and improvement

Staff Member's Responsibilities

Staff are responsible for discussing their learning, development and performance with their line manager through regular and annual developmental continuous conversation processes where feedback, development and career aspirations are discussed and progressed.

Continuous Conversations

Continuous Conversations replace the traditional annual appraisal model and encourage regular, meaningful discussions every 4-6 weeks.

These conversations provide an opportunity to review progress against objectives and priorities, recognise achievements, discuss wellbeing and any support that may be needed, and identify learning and development opportunities. They also enable managers and staff to review role-specific competencies, explore career aspirations, identify and address any barriers to performance, and agree appropriate actions to support ongoing development and continuous improvement.

These conversations are intended to be supportive, forward-looking and focused on helping staff members achieve their full potential, rather than being a one-off assessment of performance. Managers and staff share responsibility for ensuring that conversations take place regularly and that agreed actions are followed through.

Development Continuous Conversations

Development Continuous Conversations are held annually to provide a dedicated opportunity for employees to discuss their professional development and career growth.

These conversations are intended to identify individual development needs, aspirations and appropriate opportunities to enhance staff skills, knowledge and understanding. Staff and managers should work together to consider relevant development opportunities, which may include:

- Development of technical or role-specific skills;
- Development of management and leadership skills;
- E-learning and other structured learning activities;
- Shadowing or gaining experience in other areas of the organisation;
- Educational qualifications; and
- Professional qualifications and accreditation.

Development Continuous Conversations - Questions

Development opportunities should be considered in the context of the individuals role, aspirations, organisational needs and the availability of appropriate resources.

Further Education and Professional Qualifications

Where staff request to undertake in person or online professional study or Higher-level apprenticeships, they will be required to complete an application form. Once authorisation is granted and staff are accepted onto a relevant course; registration fees, course fees and examination fees will be paid by North Star.

Staff undertaking professional study, or study for preliminary qualifications which could allow them to commence a course for professional qualification, normally qualify for Day Release. Members of SMT/MT are authorised to approve or reject each application for Day Release on the basis that:



- a) It should lead to a relevant professional qualification in due course or provide a clear benefit to the North Star.
- b) The work of North Star should not be prejudiced by the time lost.

An allowance of up to £50 per annum can be claimed towards books. Where the professional study will take place over a number of years the allowance can be aggregated e.g. an allowance of £200 may be claimed over a four year period – all allowances claimed must be supported by receipts. Staff retain books purchased for their personal use.

North Star will pay for the cost of travelling to Day Release courses on the basis of Standard Class rail or bus fares, minus the equivalent cost of travelling to the individual's normal place of work.

If staff are required to attend evening sessions as part of their study they are not eligible to accrue lieu time for the evening part of the study.

Probation and Induction

North Star's [Probation Framework](#) is designed to guide and support new staff members through their initial four-month period, offering a clear and structured approach to their development and performance assessment. Formal review points at 1 month, 3 months, and 4 months ensure regular, constructive feedback and early identification of support or training needs. The review points help establish clear performance expectations, monitor progress, and document outcomes to ensure the employee is on track for success.

The framework places strong emphasis on both performance and behavioral competencies that are critical for working at North Star. In particular, it assesses resilience (the ability to adapt and cope under pressure), response to challenge (handling setbacks and striving for improvement), change management (willingness and capability to embrace change), as well as accountability and responsibility (ownership of actions, outcomes, and professionalism). By incorporating these elements, the framework ensures not only consistent evaluation but also alignment with organisational values and long-term growth potential

North Star's induction programme supports new employees to integrate effectively into their role, team and the wider organisations, ensuring they understand their responsibilities, contribution, ways of working, culture and organisational goals. Line managers are responsible for providing a structured departmental induction from the first day of employment, including role expectations, workplace orientation and appropriate support. This is complemented by corporate induction coordinated by People Services, with input from relevant leaders and teams covering the organisation's vision, values, strategy, culture, health and safety, digital systems and other key requirements. New staff are also provided with a buddy to support their integration and understanding of departmental systems and processes, while new managers are provided with a mentor.

Capability

North Star is committed to addressing performance concerns at the earliest opportunity, with a focus on supporting staff to succeed in their role. The aim of the capability process is to identify and understand the reasons for any performance concerns, provide appropriate support to help staff improve, agree realistic improvement actions, monitor progress, and achieve sustained improvement wherever possible.

Formal capability procedures will normally only be considered where informal support has not resulted in the required improvement or where the nature of the concerns is sufficiently serious to warrant formal intervention. Where formal action is required, managers must follow North Star's Capability Procedure to ensure the process is fair, consistent and in line with legislation. Further information can be found here [Capability Policy](#).

