

# Managing Attendance Policy



**June 2017** 

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## 1.0) Introduction

The Council as an employer is concerned about the health, safety and well-being of all of its employees and is committed to promoting good health and best practice throughout the organisation. The Council is committed to providing best value services for the local community, and within this context the Council recognises that high levels of attendance at work make a significant contribution to the planning and provision of effective Local Authority services.

The Council recognises that it is inevitable that employees will experience periods of ill health which prevent them from attending work. It will ensure that all such sickness absences are treated fairly and sympathetically, and is committed to providing appropriate support and encouragement to employees who are absent. The Council will take all reasonable steps to assist employees to return to work.

High levels of employee absence increase the workload for other members of staff who may be required to provide cover for absent colleagues. This is disruptive and can reduce the quality of service provided to customers.

Employee absence is also financially expensive for the Council in terms of sick pay, overtime payments to cover additional workloads, costs from agency or casual workers brought in to provide cover and lost productivity. Satisfactory levels of employee attendance are therefore a priority for the Council.

## 2.0) Underlying Principles

## 2.1) The Council Recognises:

- 1. The need for a clear, fair and consistent policy and procedures for managing attendance.
- 2. The health and well-being of employees to be of paramount importance. The Council is committed to rehabilitation and aims to support those who are too unwell to attend work.
- 3. Sickness absence can be in the form of either short term absence or long term incapacity.
- 4. That, while the vast majority of employees are conscientious and give good attendance, any absence is likely to put additional pressure on other employees and this, in turn, can affect the level and quality of service provided to customers and other stakeholders.
- 5. Its obligations in terms of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 (as amended) and will comply with the relevant provisions when operating the Managing Attendance Policy and Procedures. This will include making any reasonable adjustments to facilitate an employee's continued employment or return to work.
- 6. The need to provide a safe working environment.

# 3.0) Policy Statement

The Council expects the regular and punctual attendance of all employees at work. The Council recognises that staff occasionally will be absent from work due to sickness absence. Employees are not expected to come to work when they are too unwell to do so.

As an employer the Council has a responsibility for the health, safety and wellbeing of all its employees and commits itself to promoting good employee health throughout the organisation.

The Council understands that employees are increasingly balancing a range of activities, interests and relationships outside work whilst striving to meet the increasing demands of the workplace. The Council will try where reasonably practicable to accommodate an employee's requests to achieve a good work-life balance.

The Council's Senior Management Team will monitor sickness absence levels on a monthly basis and develop initiatives to reduce sickness absence in accordance with the Chief Local Government Auditor's Annual Letter to Council.

Breaches of this policy by managers or employees may result in disciplinary action being taken against them in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

## 3.1) Aims

#### The Council will:

- 1. Manage non-attendance due to ill health.
- 2. Ensure as far a consistent approach in dealing with absenteeism.
- 3. Ensure employees are treated fairly, sympathetically and with dignity.
- 4. Ensure all employees are aware of their contractual obligations to adhere to the Council's Managing Attendance policy and procedures.
- 5. Provide managers with a framework for managing attendance.
- 6. Provide managers with guidelines on how to manage the different types of absence.

- 7. Ensure managers take appropriate action in respect of unacceptable levels of absence.
- 8. Ensure sickness absence is monitored on an ongoing basis and where excessive absences are identified that this be brought to the employee's attention for improvement.
- 9. Deal effectively with those employees and managers not adhering to the policy and associated procedures.
- 10. Deal effectively with abuse of the sick pay scheme.
- 11. Ensure employees attend work whenever they are fit to do so and that they take a proactive approach to managing their health.
- 12. Regularly monitoring the financial cost of sickness absence and investing in appropriate employee health initiatives to promote good health.

# 4.0) Roles and Responsibilities

## 4.1) Manager/Supervisor

Each manager is responsible for managing attendance and for the sensitive, fair and consistent treatment of employees. In managing attendance each manager has the general responsibility to:

- 1. Ensure all employees are aware of the policy and procedures, in particular absence reporting.
- 2. Ensure confidentiality of personal information at all times.
- 3. Ensure the Managing Attendance policy and procedures are implemented in full and applied consistently.
- 4. Notify Human Resources of all reported absences and provide them with completed return to work interviews and other absence documentation in accordance with the Managing Attendance Procedures.
- 5. Monitor the attendance of all employees for whom they have responsibility.
- 6. Maintain accurate records of absence by ensuring the Managing Attendance procedures are followed.
- 7. Ensure referrals to occupational health are made in accordance with the Managing Attendance procedures and that referred employees are aware of the reason for the referral.
- 8. Seek help and support from Human Resources and occupational health when required.
- 9. Explore with occupational health and Human Resources any requirements or options for reasonable adjustments for disability related cases.
- 10. Ensure as part of induction to new employees that:
  - the importance of good attendance is explained,
  - all new employees understand the Managing Attendance policy and procedures.
- 11. Ensure that absence is never ignored.
- 12. Contact employees who fail to report their absence, suspending sick pay and implementing disciplinary action for unauthorised absence in accordance with the managing attendance procedures.
- 13. Ensure effective and supportive return to work meetings are carried out ideally on the employee's first day of return to work following sickness absence and in any case no longer than 3 working days from their return.
- 14. Conduct attendance meetings as set out in the Managing Attendance Procedures.
- 15. Maintain appropriate, and early contact with employees who are absent from work and maintain reasonable contact throughout the period of illness.

#### 4.2) Senior Managers

Senior Managers (including the Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors) are required to take an active role in ensuring that:

1. Attendance is managed effectively and consistently.

- 2. All employees and managers within their department or section adhere to the Managing Attendance policy and procedures at all times.
- 3. Statistics on attendance are a regular agenda item at team meetings.
- 4. Reports on attendance are monitored, reviewed and appropriate action taken.
- 5. Improvements in levels of attendance are achieved within their departments and sections through the effective application of the Managing Attendance policy and procedures.

## 4.3) Employee's Responsibilities

Employees have a responsibility not to abuse any procedures covering attendance at work. Employees are required to:

- 1. Attend work when fit to do so.
- 2. Report absence to line managers in accordance with the procedure and notification requirements as outlined in Absence Reporting Procedures section 2.
- 3. Attend a medical examination or interview by a medical practitioner nominated by the Council, for example Occupational Health when required.
- 4. Comply with all advice from Occupational Health which will facilitate a return to work.
- 5. Complying with any reasonable treatment of any medical condition to ensure a speedy recovery.
- 6. Refrain from any activity, which may be prejudicial to recovery or likely to bring into question the reason for the continued absence.
- 7. On return to work, attend and participate in a return to work interview with their line manager.
- 8. Co-operate with their manager to achieve an acceptable level of attendance, all reasonable attempts to facilitate a safe and full return to work including undertaking alternative duties.
- 9. Advise their line manager if they intend to go on holiday while they are away from work due to sickness absence; medical evidence may be required to support this.
- 10. Make their line manager aware if they believe their absence may be attributed to a disability or pregnancy related reason, and where appropriate, discussing potential adjustments that could be made to facilitate improved attendance at work.
- 11. Ensure they have read and fully understand the Managing Attendance policy and procedures and are aware of the provisions and requirements of the National Joint Council (NJC) sickness scheme.
- 12. Ensure compliance with the requirement to provide the relevant paperwork in connection with any period of absence, for example self certification or medical certificates.

#### 4.4) Human Resources Responsibilities

- 1. To provide appropriate training and support to the Council in managing attendance in line with the Managing Attendance policy and procedure.
- 2. To provide expert advice on legislative requirements in relation to this policy and procedure.
- 3. To provide and review appropriate policies and procedures, ensuring they are available for use by all employees and managers.
- 4. To co-ordinate the provision of Occupational Health services
- 5. To maintain comprehensive attendance records.
- 6. To complete the annual Absence Return to the Northern Ireland Audit Office.
- 7. To provide accurate and timely management information on absence.
- 8. Inform line managers when medical certificates have been received stating the reason(s) stated and the duration.

### 4.5) Occupational Health

- 1. To provide information to the Council which will assist with an employee's return to work.
- 2. To provide advice and guidance to help manage an absence.
- 3. To provide advice and guidance on measures to assist an employee's return to work for example, where appropriate, light duties or phased return.
- 4. To support pre-employment health screening providing advice and guidance where necessary.

- 5. Where required to support health surveillance for particular groups of employees.
- 6. To provide advice and guidance in relation to reasonable adjustments relating to applicants or employees with disabilities.

# 5.0) Support Mechanisms

Through the Council's aim to encourage full attendance it provides facilities to support this:

- 1. An 'in house' occupational health service provided through an external provider.
- 2. Level 1 health care insurance provided by:



Telephone 0800 072 0353

The BHSF Enterprise Health Cash Plan provided employees with financial contributions towards essential healthcare such as:

- Dental Checks and treatment
- Eye tests, payments towards glasses and
- Physiotherapy, Chiropractic and Acupuncture
- Private consultations and scans
- Confidential counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Employees can also access on line or telephone GP services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- 3. Subsidised access/use of leisure facilities operated by the Council.
- 4. Family Friendly policies to help employees manage their work life balance, and to help fulfil domestic responsibilities.
- 5. Appropriate training to ensure managers have the skills and knowledge to support employees when they are absent from work.
- 6. Training for all employees to advise them of their responsibilities.
- 7. Initiatives through external organisations for example health promotion aimed at improving employees' awareness towards their own health.

# 6.0) Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every four years in consultation with Senior Management and Trade Unions. However, the policy will be reviewed sooner in the event of any one or more of the following:

- a) Failure or weakness in the policy is highlighted
- b) Changes in legislative requirements
- c) Changes in Government/Council or other directives and requirements.

# 7.0) Equality Impact Assessment

This Policy has been "screened out" for Equality Impact Assessment. A copy of the equality screening is available from Human Resources.

# 8.0) Document Owner

**Human Resources** 

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Managing Attendance Procedure which is available on the 'R' drive and in paper format from the Human Resources Team.

## **Policy Approval:**

LCNF : 09 March 2020SPRC : 12 March 2020

Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas Serving Down and South Armagh

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