

# **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Personnel Committee - 15 August 2005

**REPORT ON:** Sickness Absence Management

**REPORT BY:** Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

**REPORT NO:** 485-2005

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides Committee with statistics and information relating to sickness absence within the Council and provides details of actions agreed recently by the Council Management Team to tackle this problem.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the statistics and information contained within this report;
- 2.2 notes the contents of the action plan (attached as Appendix A) which was formally approved by the Council Management Team in June 2005;
- 2.3 notes that a further report on absence levels will be submitted to this Committee in August 2006;
- 2.4 notes that the Director of Education and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) are consulting with the teaching trade unions on the Dundee Negotiating Committee for Teachers on the introduction of the same processes and procedures for teaching staff.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The cost of sickness absence to the City Council in terms of direct expenditure was £5.75 million in 2004/05. The City Council, like most other public sector employers, pays employees (depending on length of service) full pay when they are off ill for periods up to 6 months and, therefore, the cost of £5.75 million is budgeted for as gross pay. What is not budgeted for is the cost of temporary cover and overtime cover, and the adverse effects on service delivery.

## **4 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

## 5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

## 6 BACKGROUND

6.1 For a number of years, sickness absence management has been a standing item on the agenda of the Council Management Team. Due to high levels of absence in some areas of the Council, it was agreed at a meeting of the Council Management Team that the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) should carry out a review of sickness absence management processes and procedures in conjunction with representatives from all Council departments. The review did not include teaching staff, who are subject to different arrangements.

6.2 The review included gathering information on the levels and costs of sickness absence as outlined in the following paragraphs 6.2.1 to 6.2.5.

### 6.2.1 Absence Statistics

In 1999/2000 Audit Scotland introduced a new statutory performance indicator for sickness absence which required the Council to provide details of Council-wide sickness absence as follows:-

“the number of days lost through sickness absence expressed as a percentage of the total working days available for the following groups of employees: Chief Officials/APT&C employees; Craft and Manual employees; and Teachers.

The percentages were as follows:-

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Chief Officials/APT&C	4.7	4.9	5.7	5.6
<b>Scottish average</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Craft and Manual	5.4	6.0	6.8	7.1
<b>Scottish average</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.3</b>
Teachers	5.0	4.8	5.0	5.1
<b>Scottish average</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>
All Employees	4.9	5.2	5.8	5.8
<b>Scottish average</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.3</b>

In 2004/05, the definition of the employee groups changed with the percentages being as follows:-

Chief Officials/APT&C/Manual	5.9
Craft	7.5
Teachers	5.0

This produces an estimated percentage of 5.8% for all Dundee City Council employees.

### 6.2.2 Cost of Absence

During the financial year 2004/05, Dundee City Council made payments of £5.75 million in respect of statutory and occupational sick pay. The City Council, like most other public sector employers, pays employees (depending on length of service) full pay when they are off ill for periods up to 6 months and, therefore, the cost of £5.75 million is budgeted for as gross pay. What is not budgeted for is the cost of temporary cover and overtime cover, and the adverse effects on service delivery. Another factor to be considered is the impact on morale of employees whose workloads increase due to their colleagues' absences.

### 6.2.3 Reasons for Absence

Long term absences (4 weeks or more) account for approximately twice (63.5%) as much absence as short term absences (36.5%).

Approximately 23,000 days were lost from what would be described as stress related reasons (anxiety/tension, debility/nerves, depression, etc). This equates to 22.2% of total absences.

Backache, back injury and other musculoskeletal conditions also account for a significant percentage (approximately 19.1%) of total absences.

A recent Chartered Institute of Personnel Development survey (June 2003) indicated that in the public sector stress was cited as the biggest single cause of absence. For the survey as a whole, back pain and musculoskeletal injuries were more frequently cited as the leading causes.

### 6.2.4 Occupational Health

Over the last 3 years, the cost of referrals to the Council's occupational health providers was as follows:-

<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
£32,365	£41,478	£53,714

In addition, 91 employees were referred for counselling in 2002 (cost £5,694), 181 in 2003 (cost £16,053) and 217 in 2004 (cost £19,302). Most employees attend a number of sessions following assessment by a counsellor.

### 6.2.5 Ill Health Retirals/Dismissals

Over the 4 years referred to below, the number of ill health retirements and dismissals for capability/undue interruption to the service within the Council were as follows:-

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ill Health Retirement</b>	<b>Dismissal</b>	<b>Total</b>
2000/01	53	8	61
2001/02	35	11	46
2002/03	24	20	44
2003/04	34	25	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>210</b>

While there was an increase in ill health retirements in 2003/04, the figures reflect the national downward trend in ill health retirements in both the public and private sectors. The latest CBI survey confirms this and concludes that this is as a result of more prudent management of pension funds which, for example, has led to the stricter criteria for ill health retirements introduced into the Local Government Pension Scheme. The number of dismissals on the grounds of capability/undue interruption to the service has also increased during this period.

### 6.3 The Way Forward

- 6.3.1 The Council recognises the significant financial cost of sickness absence and also the effect on service provision and productivity, but also the impact on the people affected, their families and colleagues. The Management Team recognises that current absence levels are unacceptable and that action must be taken to reduce these.
- 6.3.2 The Council recognises the crucial role of the trade unions and their representatives in sickness absence management. The Chief Executive and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) met the trade union officials on 9 August 2005 to discuss this issue and it was agreed that a joint approach to reducing absence levels is essential. A key component of this joint approach will be the joint training of managers/supervisors and shop stewards/departmental representatives. Regular meetings will also be held between the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive (Management) and trade union officials to discuss progress.
- 6.3.3 The action plan (attached as Appendix 1) developed as a result of the review referred to earlier outlines how the Council is tackling the problem of sickness absence. The effectiveness of these measures will be closely monitored over a 12 month period and a further report will be submitted to this Committee at the end of that period.
- 6.3.4 A recent review of managing sickness absence in the public sector (November 2004) carried out by the Ministerial Task Force for Health, Safety and Productivity and the Cabinet Office, identified three key factors for influencing attendance in terms of fundamental systems changes - top level commitment, tools to do the job and training and support for managers. The main recommendations in the action plan take cognisance of these key factors.

### 6.4 Top Level Commitment

- 6.4.1 The action plan has been adopted by the Management Team and sickness absence management is a regular item on departments' management team agendas.
- 6.4.2 Targets to reduce sickness absence will be included in Chief Officers' annual appraisals.

### 6.5 Tools to do the Job

- 6.5.1 Clear procedures are essential for sickness absence management to be effective. The Council's Procedure for Managing Sickness Absence has been revised as a result of feedback from departments and information from other authorities. The trade unions have been consulted and the procedure will be issued to all employees other than teaching staff prior to implementation on 1 October 2005.

- 6.5.2 It is essential that, to ensure consistency, standard processes and procedures are applied across all employee groups and, accordingly, the Director of Education and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) are consulting with the teaching trade unions on this issue to introduce the same processes and procedures for teaching staff.
- 6.5.3 The revised 'triggers' aim to ensure a more consistent approach to absence management across the Council and encourage earlier intervention. Health and Safety Executive guidance states that 'the sooner managers take positive action, the more likely that sickness, and in particular long term sickness, will be reduced and sick employees will successfully return to work.'
- 6.5.4 Successful sickness absence management also requires good data for line managers, staffing sections and corporately. The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) and departments have reviewed management information requirements and have put in place arrangements for providing line managers with meaningful reports. 'Trigger' reports produced by the new payroll/personnel system will be made available as soon as they are available.
- 6.5.5 It has also been agreed that departments will identify a senior officer who will have responsibility for auditing adherence to agreed procedures within departments. The Personnel Department will also carry out regular checks to ensure compliance.

## 6.6 Training and Support for Managers

- 6.6.1 Training material has been revised and sessions will, if necessary, be tailored to meet specific departmental needs.
- 6.6.2 The nominated senior officer in each department will receive regular support from the Personnel Team allocated to that department.

## 6.7 Promoting Health and Wellbeing

- 6.7.1 The Council also recognises that positive policies for improving working conditions and motivating staff can go a long way to reduce sickness absence levels and the action plan demonstrates a commitment to the promotion of flexible working, Scotland's Health at Work and health promotion.
- 6.7.2 Employees who are off for 4 weeks with musculoskeletal problems are referred to the Council's occupational health provider with a view to being referred to a physiotherapy service commissioned by the Council. At present, the Council is conducting a pilot scheme with 3 Dundee-based physiotherapy practices.
- 6.7.3 Similarly, employees who are off for 4 weeks with stress-related problems are referred to the occupational health provider with a view to being referred for counselling.

## 7 **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Council Management Team have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report. The trade unions were consulted on the changes to procedure referred to in this report and have been provided with a copy of the report.

8      **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1      None.

J.C. Petrie  
Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

**(DATE)**

**SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT - ACTION PLAN****1 RECOMMENDATION**

The Council's current sickness absence procedure states that:-

"an employee will be liable to be called to a formal interview to discuss their absence record:-

- i) when the absence record is significantly worse than those of comparable employees;
- ii) when the absence record creates a particular operational difficulty;
- iii) when the employee has been absent on 3 or more occasions, or for a total of 6 working days over a rolling 6 month period;
- iv) when the employee is about to go on half pay or no pay, in accordance with their sickness allowance entitlement."

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following amendments to the Council's sickness absence procedure subject to consultation with the trade unions:-

- add a further trigger of 5 absences or 10 days over 12 months to convene a formal meeting;
- add a further trigger of 4 weeks of continuous absence to initiate contact with an employee with consideration being given to convening a formal meeting;
- include as a potential course of action for dealing with persistent short term absence the removal of self certification;
- make it a requirement for a sickness absence meeting to be convened when a trigger is reached. Management discretion to remain, however, in deciding what action, if any, is required to be taken;
- include a monitoring period as an option for dealing with repeated periods of long term absence by inserting "provide the opportunity for improvement in the absence record over a reasonable period of time during which the record will continue to be assessed".

**ACTION**

**The trade unions have been consulted on the amended sickness absence procedure and following representation from departments the amended procedure will take effect from 1 October 2005. The procedure and covering letter are attached as Appendix 1 and will be issued to employees by 30 September 2005.**

**A Guidance Note (attached Appendix 2) outlining the changes will be issued to managers/supervisors with responsibility for dealing with absence.**

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

The Personnel Department will review the content of current sickness absence training in light of feedback received from focus groups. Sessions tailored to specific departmental needs.

**ACTION**

**The Personnel Department has revised the Sickness Absence training in light of amendments to the procedure and in line with Health and Safety Executive guidance. Training will be available from 1 September 2005.**

### 3 RECOMMENDATION

All departments to review their sickness absence reporting arrangements to ensure compliance with procedure. In particular, ensure that the employee reports, in person, the absence to his/her line manager (or nominated officer) within the appropriate timescale. Reissue the procedure to employees if necessary.

Amend the sickness absence reporting procedure in relation to sickness absence continuing for eight days or more from "In addition, where the illness extends beyond seven days, you should notify your line manager of the position at intervals of no more than seven days" to "... at intervals of no more than fourteen days".

#### **ACTION**

**Line managers to ensure that all employees fully understand the sickness absence reporting procedure.**

### 4 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to produce a corporate self certification form to ensure information is recorded consistently including that a return to work interview has been carried out.

#### **ACTION**

**With effect from 1 July 2005, departments are using the corporate self certification form attached as Appendix 3.**

### 5 RECOMMENDATION

Departments to ensure managers carrying out return to work interviews have access to information in relation to the employees' sickness absence levels.

#### **ACTION**

**With immediate effect, departments will ensure that the appropriate information is made available to line managers.**

### 6 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to produce guidelines for departments on the production of monthly management reports. All departments to provide managers with appropriate monthly absence reports to assist in managing absence.

#### **ACTION**

**With immediate effect, departments to review the availability of management information, including the standard absence report already available. Where necessary, arrangements should be put in place to provide managers with reports detailing absences over the last 12 months for all of their employees, highlighting if a trigger has been met.**



## 7 RECOMMENDATION

The management of sickness absence levels to be a regular item on Departmental management team agendas.

### ACTION

**Departments to put arrangements in place with immediate effect.**

## 8 RECOMMENDATION

All departments to nominate a senior officer who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations contained within this report at departmental level. This officer will 'audit' a random sample of absence cases on a monthly basis to ensure that the policy is being applied.

### ACTION

**Nominations have been forwarded to the Assistant Chief Executive (Management). The nominated officer in each department will also be the contact for the Personnel teams for the ongoing review of the effectiveness of the sickness absence policy.**

## 9 RECOMMENDATION

Consideration be given to the introduction of a self referral system for counselling on a 6 month pilot basis. Attendance at counselling to be in an employee's own time.

### ACTION

**A self referral system for counselling is not financially viable at present.**

## 10 RECOMMENDATION

Introduce a physiotherapy service. Appointments to be made by management referral. The service will be offered, where appropriate, to employees absent on sick leave or in cases where treatment would prevent an absence.

### ACTION

**A pilot physiotherapy service has been introduced. Pilot to be reviewed and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) will report to Council Management Team.**

## 11 RECOMMENDATION

Develop 'trigger' reports on the new payroll/personnel system to be made available to all departments.

### ACTION

**To be developed as part of transfer to new payroll/personnel system.**

## 12 RECOMMENDATION

Raise employees' awareness of the importance of good attendance by sharing information on costs, implications of absence, etc. Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to draft briefing note to be communicated to all employees at team meetings.

### ACTION

**Assistant Chief Executive (Management) working on guidelines/briefing note. Will be available in October 2005. A special edition of Feedback will be produced in 2005.**

## 13 RECOMMENDATION

Continue to promote flexible working practices including the development of a Home Working policy.

### ACTION

**Assistant Chief Executive (Management) producing a report on flexible working. Will be submitted to Council Management Team in August 2005.**

## 14 RECOMMENDATION

Continue to promote health promotion through the attainment of Scotland's Health at Work and continue to encourage sharing of good practice via Scotland's Health at Work Co-ordinators Group.

### ACTION

**Ongoing.**

## 15 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) in conjunction with the Public Health Improvement Officer to explore options for corporate health promotion for employees.

### ACTION

**Ongoing.**

## 16 RECOMMENDATION

Departments to set targets. Targets to be approved by the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive (Management).

### ACTION

**Include targets in Chief Officers' annual appraisals.**

**17 RECOMMENDATION**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to provide guidance to departments in relation to wording for inclusion in person specifications referring to absence levels.

**ACTION**

**Will be implemented by September 2005.**

**18 RECOMMENDATION**

Departments to review their current working arrangements, particularly shift working and the length of shifts.

**ACTION**

**Ongoing.**

If calling please ask for  
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Our Ref JCP/VR/DS  
 Your Ref  
 Date

Dear Colleague

### **SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURE**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) carried out a review of the Council's Sickness Absence Procedure in 2004. All departments participated in the review which considered ways of improving the levels of absence in the Council.

The recommendations arising from the review included making amendments to the current Sickness Absence Procedure. Other recommendations included a pilot Physiotherapy Service, ongoing Health Promotion and improved information for managers and employees.

The amended Sickness Absence Procedure has been the subject of consultation with the trade unions and will take effect from 1 October 2005 (copy attached).

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the changes to the procedure prior to 1 October 2005. The changes are as follows:-

- **Amendments to Trigger Points**

The revised procedure adds further trigger points as follows:-

- when the employee has been absent on 5 or more separate occasions, or for a total of 10 working days, over a rolling 12 month period
- when the employee has been absent for a continuous period of 4 weeks or more.

- **Short Term Absence**

The revised procedure states that, where a trigger is hit, an employee **will be** called to a formal interview ie there is no longer any element of discretion regarding whether to hold a formal interview, when dealing with short term absence.

The revised procedure allows a manager the option, at a formal interview, to require the employee to provide medical certificates rather than self certificates for absences during a formal monitoring period.

- **Long Term Absence**

The revised procedure allows for managers to use a monitoring period as an option for dealing with cases where there is a pattern of repeated periods of long term absence.

Yours sincerely

Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

**DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL****PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING SICKNESS ABSENCE****INTRODUCTION**

**High levels of sickness absence have a detrimental effect on the Council's effective operation. The Council's aim is to reduce the impact of employees' sickness absence on its service provision. However, it also recognises that, at times, employees may be unable to perform their jobs to an adequate standard because of the state of their health.**

**Council Policy**

- To monitor and control sickness absence in a consistent and equitable manner and ensure that employees are treated sympathetically and fairly;
- To minimise any effect which such absenteeism may have on service standards;
- To minimise any effect which such absenteeism may have on other employees at work;
- To ensure that employees and management co-operate fully and act responsibly within the agreed procedures for reporting, recording, monitoring and, where appropriate, taking action on sickness absence.

**Management Responsibilities**

- To maintain effective procedures for sickness absence reporting, monitoring and control, and to ensure employees are aware of procedures adopted;
- To ensure that working methods, procedures and workload do not cause employees sickness, injury or undue stress;
- To provide supervisors and managers with appropriate training in relation to their roles in the procedures adopted.

**Employee Responsibilities**

- To be responsible for ensuring that, so far as is reasonably possible, they protect themselves and other employees from the risk of infection, injury or undue stress whilst at work;
- To co-operate with measures to ensure promotion of good health and the minimisation of sickness and absence levels;
- To report their inability to attend work in accordance with the sickness absence reporting procedure.

**SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURE**

**In adopting this procedure, the Council recognises that any information gained concerning the medical condition of an employee will be regarded as confidential.**

The Council also recognises that, in addition to this formal procedure, it is good management practice to maintain regular contact with an employee during a period of absence, particularly where this is prolonged. The process of "keeping in touch" will be carried out sensitively and tactfully. Any meetings will be by prior arrangement and may take place on Council premises or, if the employee prefers, at home.

## **PROCEDURE**

- 1 The sickness absence record of all employees will be monitored and assessed on a continuous basis.
- 2 An employee will be interviewed by a Line Manager on return to work after each sickness absence, to ensure that:-
  - i) the employee is fit to return;
  - ii) the appropriate certification forms are completed/submitted;
  - iii) the employee is advised of what has been happening in the workplace during their absence.
- 3 A decision on whether to call an employee to a formal interview will be made following an initial assessment of the absence record, which will determine whether the absence record can be classified under one of two categories - Persistent Short Term Absence, or Long Term Absence. The triggers for each are outlined below:-

### **Persistent Short Term Absence**

An employee will be called to a formal interview to discuss his/her absence record:-

- i) when the absence record is significantly worse than those of comparable employees;
- ii) when the absence record creates a particular operational difficulty;
- iii) when the employee has been absent on 3 or more separate occasions, or for a total of 6 working days, over a rolling 6 month period;
- iv) when the employee has been absent on 5 or more separate occasions, or for a total of 10 working days, over a rolling 12 month period.

### **Long Term Absence**

An employee will be liable to be called to a formal interview to discuss his/her absence:-

- i) when the absence record creates a particular operational difficulty;
  - ii) when the employee has been absent for a continuous period of 4 weeks or more;
  - iii) when the employee is about to go on half pay or no pay, in accordance with the sickness allowance entitlement.
- 4 In operating this procedure it should be noted that:-
    - i) each employee must be treated in accordance with his/her own individual circumstances which may require a variation from these guidelines;
    - ii) interviews should be arranged only after discussion with the Personnel Department. A representative from that Department will be present at any interview which may lead to the dismissal of an employee and may be present at any other interview;

- iii) an employee will be given sufficient notice, in writing, of a formal interview and informed of his/her right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or fellow employee during the interview;
- iv) following the completion of each interview, a letter will normally be issued to the employee within 7 days confirming the outcome of that interview;
- v) a failure by an employee to attend an interview and/or agree to be referred to a Council Medical Adviser may result in a suspension of entitlement to sickness allowance and disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

5 Where the initial assessment highlights PERSISTENT SHORT TERM ABSENCE, the interview will aim to:-

- i) establish any underlying trends, the frequency of, and reason(s) for absence;
- ii) inform the employee that the absence record is unacceptable and impacts upon the efficient and effective operation of the service;
- iii) provide the opportunity for improvement in the absence record over a reasonable period of time, during which the record will continue to be assessed. The employee may also be asked to provide a medical certificate rather than a self certificate for all absences during the monitoring period.
- iv) explain what course of action may follow if the improvement sought is not achieved.

Based on any information which may arise during i) above, the interview may be adjourned to enable the employee to be referred to a Council Medical Adviser, to determine whether there is an underlying medical condition. Following receipt of the Medical Adviser's report, the interview will be reconvened and, should there be no underlying condition, will proceed along the lines of 5 ii) - iv) above. Should there be an underlying condition, reference should be made to paragraph 8 iii) below for possible outcomes.

6 Should the absence record not improve to a satisfactory level within the stipulated time period, a second interview will be arranged. This interview will follow the same format as the first interview and may result in the employee being granted one further and final opportunity and period for the absence record to improve to a satisfactory level and being advised that, if no such improvement is forthcoming, dismissal will be considered. The employee will have the right of appeal against this decision to give a final opportunity for improvement.

7 Should the absence record not improve to a satisfactory level following a final opportunity for improvement, a further interview will be arranged. This interview will follow the same format as previous interviews, and may result in the dismissal of the employee. The employee will have the right of appeal against such a decision.

Prior to any decision to dismiss, consideration will be given, if it has not already occurred earlier within the procedure, to referring the employee to a Council Medical Adviser to determine whether there is an underlying medical reason for the absence record. If so, reference should be made to paragraph 8 iii) below for possible outcomes.

Any improvement in attendance should continue for a sustained period and will be subject to ongoing monitoring. In the event that absences increase again thereafter, the Manager may wish to initiate a formal review period at the second interview stage. Reference should be made to paragraph 6 above.

- 8 Where the initial assessment highlights LONG TERM ABSENCE, the interview will aim to:
  - i) seek to establish/confirm the reason(s) for absence and its likely duration;
  - ii) inform the employee:-
    - a) that such absence impacts upon the efficient and effective operation of the service;
    - b) of the employer's responsibility to ensure the employee is capable of doing the job and/or that the work is not detrimental to the employee's health;
  - iii) refer the employee to a Council Medical Adviser, in order to establish the likely length of absence and the long term effect on capability in relation to job performance and attendance at work. Following receipt of the Medical Adviser's report, the interview will be reconvened and may result in:-
    - a) consideration of a phased return to work;
    - b) consideration of seeking alternative employment (see also the Council's Procedure for Retaining and Redeploying Employees with Disabilities);
    - c) the ill health retiral of the employee;
    - d) the dismissal of the employee - the employee will have the right of appeal against such a decision;
    - e) deferral of a decision for a period of time. Following the expiry of this period, and where the employee's absence record does not show significant improvement, or the employee is still unable to return to work, one of the courses of action outlined in a - d above would be followed.
- 9 In the event that the employee is advised that his/her contract of employment may be terminated on the grounds of capability unless he/she has returned to work by a specific date, the employee will be given the right of appeal against this decision.
- 10 Where the assessment of the employee's record shows a long term absence, ie absence period of 4 weeks or more; or repeated periods of long term absence, a formal interview may be held on the employee's return to work to achieve the aims listed in paragraph 5.
- 11 Appeals Against Decisions

An employee is entitled to appeal against the decision to dismiss him/her or against a Final Warning as described in paragraphs 6(i) and 9. An appeal must be lodged in writing with the Head of Department within 14 days of receipt of the letter which confirms the decision to dismiss; or gives a final opportunity to return to work or improve attendance in the case of persistent short term absences.



## SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURE

**In the event of sickness absence, you must report your inability to attend work in accordance with the following procedure. Please note that 'line manager' may include any other person identified as a contact by management.**

**On the first day of sickness absence** - notify your line manager as soon as practicable but, in any event, by no later than one hour after normal starting time, and advise of reasons for and estimated length of absence. If sickness begins on a non working day, notification should be as soon as practicable but, in any event, by no later than one hour after normal starting time of the next working day. If you are a shift worker, you should notify your line manager as soon as possible and at least one hour before your normal starting time. The first day of sickness is regarded as the first day of sickness absence.

**On return to work after one, two or three days of sickness absence** - obtain and fill in a Self Certified Absence Report form and return to your line manager.

**If sickness absence continues to fourth day** - notify your line manager on that day or, if that day is a non working day, the next working day and advise of likely duration of absence.

**On return to work after four, five, six or seven days of absence** - obtain and fill in a Self Certified Absence Report form and return to your line manager.

**If sickness absence continues for eight days or more** - by no later than the eighth day, obtain a medical certificate from your doctor, obtain and fill in a Self Certified Absence Report form and send both certificates to your line manager. Submit further medical certificates to cover any continued absence. In addition, where the illness extends beyond seven days, you should notify the line manager/office of the position at that time, and thereafter at intervals of no more than 14 days.

### **NOTE**

1. All seven days of the week count when calculating sickness absence for payment purposes, including non working days, eg if the first day of sickness absence is Friday, the fourth day will be the following Monday.
2. Failure to comply with the requirements for reporting may result in the cessation of sickness allowance and disciplinary action.

Should you be absent through sickness or injury for a continuous period exceeding three months during the leave year, your entitlement to leave will be limited to an amount equal to the period of actual service given during the leave year, subject to the provisions of the Working Time Regulations.

### **If sick during a period of annual leave**

An employee falling sick during a period of annual leave should report the sickness in the normal way and submit a doctor's statement to the Line Manager, by the earliest practicable date. The period of sickness absence will be treated as sick leave and not as annual leave.

**GUIDANCE NOTE****SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURE - REVISIONS 2005**

The Council's procedure for managing sickness absence has been revised, and the amended procedure will be effective from 1 October 2005. This briefing note summarises the changes made to the procedure. Managers and supervisors should note the changes and ensure the revised policy is implemented appropriately.

**Amendments to trigger points**

The revised procedure adds further trigger points as follows:-

- when the employee has been absent on 5 or more separate occasions, or for a total of 10 working days, over a rolling 12 month period
- when the employee has been absent for a continuous period of 4 weeks or more

**Short term absence**

The revised procedure states that, where a trigger is hit, an employee will be called to a formal interview. I.e. there is no longer any element of discretion regarding whether to hold a formal interview, when dealing with persistent short term absence.

In exceptional circumstances, eg where an employee has had a perfect attendance record for the preceding 3 years and then hits a trigger, the manager may give the employee the option to continue the return to work interview as the formal interview. The manager should contact a Personnel Officer to confirm that this is appropriate, and for advice on how to proceed.

The revised procedure allows a manager the option, at a formal interview, to require the employee to provide medical certificates rather than self certificates for absences during a formal monitoring period.

**Long term absence**

The revised procedure allows for managers to use a monitoring period as an option for dealing with cases where there is a pattern of repeated periods of long term absence.

**Return to Work interviews**

The procedure on carrying out return to work interviews remains unchanged, however there is a new corporate self-certification form which includes a section to be completed by the line manager confirming that a return to work interview has taken place.

# Self Certified Absence Report

Please complete the relevant sections

1. Name (Block Capitals) .....
2. Pay No ..... 3. Job Title .....
4. National Insurance No ..... 5. Division/Dept/Location .....
6. Contact Address .....

## Absence Details

7. Absence Notified to/when .....
8. First Day of Absence ..... 9. Last Day of Absence .....
10. Total Number of Days/Hours Absent .....
11. To be completed by those operating shifts or rota, where absence is 7 days or less.

*Please tick those days you were unable to work and indicate Rest Days and Days Off.*

Week/Rota No	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Week/Rota No	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

## Reason for Absence

12. (a) Self Certified Sickness (for up to 7 days) - Please explain reason .....
- (b) Medical Certificate - where relevant please attach last certificate (if available)
- (c) Other Absence - Please detail reason .....
13. (a) Is the absence as a result of an injury at work? YES/NO
- (b) If yes, have you completed an Accident Form and submitted it to your supervisor? YES/NO

## Employee's Declaration

I declare that the above statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that to give false or misleading information can result in disciplinary action which may amount to dismissal.

Signature ..... Date .....

## Supervisor's Comments

I confirm that a Return to Work Interview was conducted on ..... and any action taken is as follows .....

or recorded on Return to Work Interview Form.

If appropriate, date of follow up meeting .....

Signature ..... Date .....