

Managing Attendance Policy

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0.3	10 May 2017	Policy Statement incorporated into Rationale for Policy following SMT feedback.
0.4	June 2017	One minor change following PPC. Bullet point added under Section 5 - Policy Principles (4 th bullet point).

Alternative Formats

This documentation can be made available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio tape or in an ethnic-minority language upon request. Requests for alternative formats can be made to the Probation Board using the following contact information:

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MANAGING ATTENDANCE POLICY

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1 Application of Policy

1.1 Definitions

Employee – An employee is any person under a current contract of employment with PBNI, including temporary and fixed term contracts.

2 Rationale for the Policy

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) recognises the benefits of having a healthy and committed workforce whilst at the same time having a robust, clearly understood procedure for managing sick absence. It is recognised that a certain level of absence due to ill health may occur. It is also recognised that there will be occasions where, after consideration, individuals cannot attend work due to ongoing health problems and may not be able to continue working. The PBNI is committed to supporting staff wherever possible under these circumstances

PBNI staff have a critical and important role in delivering against organisational objectives and services. A high level of attendance at work is essential to enable PBNI to meet its aims and objectives and reflects shared interests in contributing to the effective performance of the organisation. Additionally high sickness absence rates involve costs for PBNI in terms of sick pay, covering for absent colleagues, lower standards or disruption to its work and can adversely affect morale. PBNI consequently must ensure that sickness absence is effectively managed.

The responsibilities placed on PBNI by the Disability Discrimination Act and employment legislation will be observed at all times and reasonable adjustments made where appropriate.

Abuse of the sickness absence procedures is a disciplinary matter. Staff should be aware that the misuse of the provision of sick pay by reporting themselves sick when this is not the case will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

3 The Overarching Aim

The purpose of this policy and the Managing Attendance Procedure is to assist managers and employees to address sickness absence levels to support managers in managing attendance effectively, and encourages employees to work with their manager to achieve and/or maintain a satisfactory level of attendance. It is imperative that this policy is utilised in a consistent, fair and supportive manner for all employees of PBNI.

4 Policy Objective

The policy objective is to set out clear procedures on matters of sickness absence and capability related to ill-health in PBNI, the arrangements for dealing with such matters and the rights and obligations of those involved.

5. Policy Principles

PBNI's sickness absence policy is based on the following principles:

- Generally, being in work is good for physical and mental health and well-being
- PBNI is committed to reducing the number of working days lost through sick absence and the impact this has on the business and other employees
- Employees should take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance
- Employees should recognise the impact their sick absence has on their colleagues
- Attendance will be managed fairly and effectively in a clear and transparent way
- Action will be taken when health and well-being are at risk or when absence levels are unsatisfactory
- We will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence
- We will use the services of Occupational Health Service where appropriate
- We undertake to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness, as long as required conditions are met
- We may engage another Board Policy (including Disciplinary Policy and Procedure) if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming, is not thought to be satisfactory, or where someone has abused the system
- PBNI reserves the right to withhold payment of Occupational Sick pay where an employee fails to co-operate or comply with reasonable requests or enquiries to ascertain his/her medical condition
- We are committed to maintaining the highest standard of service provision
- We respect the confidentiality of all information in relation to an employees sickness
- We will recognise our responsibilities under the DDA
- Employees subject to formal processes under the Managing Attendance Procedure have the right to seek the assistance of a trade union representative

6. Occupational Health Service

PBNI's approach in cases of sickness absence will be one of support and understanding. Wherever possible, assistance will be given to help ill employees regain full health with Occupational Health Service (OHS) support as appropriate.

Assistance will be offered as appropriate to disabled employees including provision of reasonable adjustments as appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

7. Responsibilities

This sub-section sets out the responsibilities of employees, managers, Human Resources and employee representatives under this Policy.

Employees

- Maintaining regular attendance at work
- Being aware of and understanding this policy and the standards of attendance expected of them
- Talk to their manager at the earliest opportunity about any health issues which might affect their attendance or performance
- Following the absence reporting procedures
- Maintaining regular contact with your line manager throughout any absence and keep him/her up-to-date with progress
- Submitting appropriate medical certificates within the timescales set out in the Managing Attendance Procedure
- Participating in return to work interviews after any period of sickness absence

Managers

- Understanding their corporate responsibilities in managing staff resources and cost management.
- Managing sickness absence within their area of responsibility, reviewing sickness absence levels on a regular basis and addressing any areas of concern
- Should focus on early intervention and be proactive in addressing health issues which may affect attendance or performance
- Ensuring that all employees, including new members of the team/department are aware of and understand this policy and the absence reporting procedure
- Ensuring absence reporting procedures are followed
- Liaising with Human Resources for support and guidance when appropriate
- Maintaining regular and reasonable contact with employees during periods of absence, ensuring that they are aware of the individual's progress and likely duration of absence
- Supporting employees in achieving a satisfactory level of attendance by helping them continue in work or return to work as soon as possible following sick absence
- Conducting return to work interviews with employees after any period of sickness absence
- Holding absence review meetings and managing attendance meetings as per the procedure

- Recording accurate individual absence information and submitting it to HR on a timely basis
- Initiating appropriate occupational health referrals in conjunction with Human Resources

Human Resources

- Providing assistance, advice and support to managers and employees in the management of sickness absence, including Return to Work interviews
- Collecting, analysing and publishing (where appropriate) departmental and organisational absence statistics
- Notifying employees before occupational sick pay is reduced to half pay and when it expires
- Promoting the consistent application of the Managing Attendance Policy and Procedures.

Employee Representatives

Providing assistance, advice and support to employees regarding sickness absence issues.

8. Sickness Absence Recording and Monitoring

The PBNI has a responsibility to establish effective systems for recording and monitoring sickness absence in a consistent format. There are various reasons for this, including:

- Identifying possible health problems early resulting in effective management or occupational health support
- Fulfilling requirements under the Statutory Sick Pay Regulations
- Ensuring appropriate payment of Occupational Sick Pay
- Identifying attendance patterns, frequency and length of absences
- Enabling creation of statistical reports to key stakeholders

Regularly reviewing sickness absence rates, employee turnover, levels of redeployment and the number of terminated contracts and ill-health referrals will also contribute to the evaluation and audit of this Policy.

Employee absence records (for example, self-certificates, medical certificates, return to work interview forms and meeting notes) will be maintained in accordance with Data Protection Act requirements.

9. Linkages

This policy also links with the following

- Disciplinary Policy
- Performance Capability Policy
- Substance Abuse Policy
- The Equal Opportunities Policy
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Remote Working from Home and Other Non PBNI Locations Policy

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed one year from date of approval.

Interim reviews may be prompted by feedback, and/or identified changes in practice.