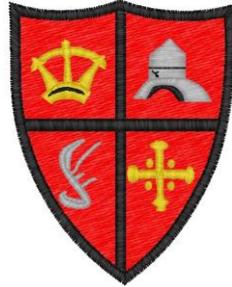


**NORHAM  
ST. CEOLWULF'S  
C OF E SCHOOL**



**Norham St Ceolwulf's**

**C of E First School**

**Absence Management Policy**

**2018-19**

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **1. The Council recognises that:**

- a clear policy and procedural framework will assist employees to understand the Council's absence management arrangements;
- the maintenance of high levels of attendance is essential in planning and providing cost effective and high quality services to the public, and in achieving high morale amongst employees;
- low levels of attendance can have an adverse effect on the organisation's image and effectiveness leading to poor service provision, lost contracts and low morale;
- adjustments need to be considered and, if reasonable, made for employees where illness or disability prevents them from performing the full range of duties associated with their post. This includes consideration of redeployment to a suitable alternative post where the employee is fit to undertake it. Where the illness is of a serious nature, the Council will be as supportive as possible.

### **2. EMPLOYEES ARE REQUIRED TO**

- attend for work unless unable to do so for genuine reasons,
- return to work as soon as possible following a period of ill health,
- comply with the requirements of the Sickness Reporting Procedure,
- comply with the provisions of the Occupational Sick Pay Scheme,
- not undertake any form of paid alternative employment, self-employment or voluntary work if in receipt of sick pay from the Council. (Any breach of this rule would be regarded as gross misconduct which could result in dismissal),
- co-operate fully with the management process and the Occupational Health services provided by the County Council.

### **3. TRIGGER LEVELS**

Where an individual's absence level meets one of the following trigger points (whichever comes first), the employee's manager will review the absence level with the employee through the first stage of the formal procedure:

- Three occasions in a rolling twelve month period
- An absence of 28 consecutive calendar days or more

### **4. WORK RELATED INJURIES**

Work related injuries will be included within a sickness absence record for an individual. Further advice and guidance is included in the Absence Management Guidance notes which are on the Council's intranet.

### **5. RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS**

A return to work interview will be held after every period of sickness absence. The interview will be recorded on the form attached as Appendix A to this document. Managers will mark the

interview as being completed through e-business and submit the form to Employee Services for entering onto the employee's personal file.

## **6. CALCULATING SICKNESS ABSENCE**

The Council calculates the number of days lost by looking at an employee's full time equivalent (FTE) hours and multiplying it by the number of days they have been absent. i.e. If a full time employee is absent for a normal working week (Monday-Friday), then the number of days lost will be 5 (5 x 1fte). A part-time employee who works 18.5 hours a week off for the same period would have lost 2.5 days (5 x 0.5fte). The average days lost for a team, department, service, group or the Council as a whole is achieved by adding up the number of FTE days lost and dividing by the total number of FTE staff (not just the staff that have been absent).

## **7. PROCEDURES**

The Flow Chart attached as Appendix D to this document will act as a reference document to managers and employees in their understanding of the process. Where the investigation identifies matters of concern the employee shall be invited to attend a formal hearing before the Nominated Officer.

## **8. NOMINATED OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATING OFFICERS**

The Nominated Officers and Investigating Officers referred to in this procedure are those designated by their Corporate Director under the Capability and Disciplinary Procedure. The notification to the employee and the steps taken by management before, during and after the hearing shall comply with the requirements of the "Procedures for Hearings and Appeals".

## **9. STAGE ONE PROCEDURE**

Once a trigger level has been hit, a stage one meeting will be held. The employee will be invited in to a formal meeting with the manager to discuss the events which have led to the relevant trigger being activated. A template letter to be used to organise this meeting is attached at Appendix B.

There are a range of possible outcomes including:

- Introduction of Management Support Plan
- Advice from occupational health
- Oral caution
- Fit note to be supplied for every period of absence (a template letter to send to a GP is attached at Appendix C).
- Referral for appropriate support
- Help with physical rehabilitation
- Other solution which may be appropriate

More than one outcome may be adopted as determined appropriate by the manager. After holding a stage one meeting with an employee, the e-business system should be updated to show the date on which it was conducted. A copy of the stage one meeting record sheet can be scanned and placed on the employee's absence record within ebusiness. If there is no acceptable improvement following this meeting, a formal investigation will be carried out by

an appropriate person appointed by the Nominated Officer, known as the “Investigating Officer”. The Investigating Officer shall present their report at a hearing under stage two of the procedure.

## **10. STAGE TWO PROCEDURE**

At the formal hearing, the Nominated Officer shall consider all the facts relevant to the case as detailed in the Investigating Officer’s report and shall give the employee an opportunity to make representations. Employees will be entitled to representation by a trade union official. If, having heard the case, the Nominated Officer considers that formal action is warranted, this will be confirmed in writing.

**11.** The following non exhaustive list of formal actions will be considered:-

- a formal caution (to allow time for improvement)
- a final caution (where insufficient improvement is made during the review period), where there is a serious problem or where a newly appointed employee is not meeting the required standards of attendance. (Please refer to Probationary Period Policy.)
- redeployment (where it is considered that the employee is suitable for another existing post; with or without reasonable adjustments)
- withholding incremental progression
- dismissal (where an occupational health physician certifies that the employee is permanently unfit or is unlikely to return to work in the foreseeable future or where insufficient improvement is made after a final caution)
- a combination of the above e.g. formal caution and withholding of incremental progression
- other solution which may be appropriate.

More than one outcome may be adopted.

**12.** Where a formal or final caution is issued or the employee is redeployed, and/or incremental progression is withheld, a clear timetable for support and supervision will be established detailing the targets to be met. If appropriate, following this period there shall be a further hearing with the employee concerned.

## **13. ELIGIBILITY TO APPEAL**

Details of eligibility and arrangements for appeal are set out in the Council’s “Procedures for Hearings and Appeals” which can be found on the Council’s intranet.

## **14. TIME LIMITS**

The time limits in this document shall be interpreted in accordance with the document entitled “Procedures for Hearings and Appeals” but may be varied in individual cases by mutual agreement.

## **15. LIFE OF CAUTIONS**

The normal life of a formal caution is one year. The normal life of a final caution is two years. Time starts to run from the date of issue of the caution. However, any prolonged period(s) of absence for reasons other than normal leave during the life of the caution will extend the end date of the caution by a like amount. Such extensions will be confirmed in writing.

**16.** A caution shall be disregarded for the purposes of the procedure after its end date unless a further absence issue originates before that date. If such a situation arises, a caution will continue to be “live” until the conclusion of any hearing that might ensue.

## **17. TRADE UNION OFFICIALS**

Where a sickness matter involves a trade union official, a senior official will be consulted by the Council.

## **18. INVOLVEMENT OF ELECTED MEMBERS**

Elected members will rightly be concerned about attendance issues relating to staff. However, they should ensure that they do not become directly involved in the management processes of the Council.

## **19. PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

Northumberland County Council is committed to providing services and having policies that meet the equality and diversity needs of staff within the framework of current legislation. Further advice and guidance on managing absence linked to protected characteristics is included in the Absence Management Guidance notes which can be found on the Council’s intranet.

## **20. PRINCIPLES**

These procedures are designed to encourage an improvement in an individual's attendance where this is necessary. Managers play an important role in the day-to-day counselling and supervision of their staff and, depending on the seriousness of the problem, they should seek initially to rectify problems through informal discussions and return to work interviews, possibly leading to oral cautions, without invoking the formal procedures.

Note that informal discussions, return to work interviews, and oral cautions are not part of the formal procedures. Where the matter cannot be resolved through the normal supervisory relationship or where the alleged problem is considered to be of a more serious nature, the formal procedure should be followed as outlined above. The County Council will continue to develop and review policies and procedures which encourage high levels of attendance and which reflect the following principles:

- acceptance that the best results will be achieved where there is a commitment to securing high levels of attendance by employees, trade unions and management;
- provision of appropriate information and training for employees and managers on relevant policies and procedures;

- provision of suitable occupational health support;
- provision of appropriate health education including policies on smoking and the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse;
- provision of welfare and counselling facilities;
- continuing co-operation with external agencies and specialists to explore and consider fully (and, if reasonable, secure) adjustments for employees where appropriate.
- a commitment to the provision of good working conditions and the maintenance of proper health and safety standards;
- ensuring that policies and procedures provide for fair, consistent and sensitive treatment of employees;
- providing a system that enables full consultation with employees and their representatives to explore ways of improving attendance.
- ensuring that managers act firmly but fairly where there are abuses of the system;
- provision to managers of prompt, accurate and comprehensive advice and information concerning attendance levels, trends and any problem areas.

## **21. EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS**

Executive Directors should ensure that employees and managers are aware of their individual responsibilities in relation to employee attendance.

**22.** Executive Directors are required to monitor the level, cause and cost of sickness absence within their Directorate.

**23.** The Council monitors trends and costs of sickness absence on a regular basis.

## **24. ILL-HEALTH RETIREMENT**

There is no minimum age requirement for the payment of an ill-health pension. If you have completed at least 2 years scheme membership and the Council terminates your employment before your Normal Pension Age because of ill-health and you are medically certified as being:-

- 1) permanently incapable of performing the duties of your employment;
- 2) not immediately capable of undertaking "gainful employment".

You would become entitled to an immediate ill-health pension. Any medical certification must be made by the Council's occupational health physician and not your own doctor.

There are 3 tiers of ill-health pension. Not capable of undertaking "gainful employment" means that you are not capable of undertaking paid employment for 30 or more hours a week for a period of 12 months.

### *Tier One Ill-health Pension*

Where the ill-health certification confirms that you are unlikely to be capable of undertaking gainful employment before you attain Normal Pension Age, your accrued pension will be paid plus additional pension equivalent to the pension which you would have earned from leaving

your employment up to your Normal Pension Age (ignoring any option to participate in the 50/50 section) e.g. a person aged 50 with a Normal Pension Age of 66 could get additional pension based upon 16 years. The pension for the additional period would be calculated on your "Assumed Pensionable Pay" i.e. would be based upon the annual equivalent of the average of your 12 weeks or 3 months earnings prior to your date of leaving or going on sick leave with reduced pay, if earlier.

#### *Tier Two Ill-health Pension*

Where the ill-health certification confirms that you are not likely to be capable of undertaking gainful employment within 3 years of leaving employment, but that you are likely to be able to do so before your Normal Pension Age, your accrued pension will be paid plus additional pension equivalent to 25% the pension which you would have earned from leaving your employment up to your Normal Pension Age e.g. a person aged 50 with a Normal Pension Age of 66 could get additional pension based upon 4 years i.e.  $16 \text{ year's} \times 25\% = 4 \text{ years}$ . The pension for the additional period would be calculated on your "Assumed Pensionable Pay" i.e. would be based upon the annual equivalent of the average of your 12 weeks or 3 months earnings prior to your date of leaving or going on sick leave with reduced pay, if earlier.

#### *Tier 3 Ill-health Pension*

Where the ill-health certification confirms that although you are permanently incapable of performing the duties of your current post you would be likely to be capable of undertaking gainful employment within 3 years of leaving employment, your accrued pension would be put into payment (without any additional pension) on a temporary basis for a maximum of 3 years. The pension would however be reviewed after 18 months and would be stopped if you were found on review to be capable of undertaking gainful employment. The pension would also stop, if during the 3 year period, you were to engage in gainful employment.

Where a tier 3 ill-health pension is stopped it becomes a deferred pension and again becomes payable at Normal Pension Age. It is possible for the Council, when conducting the 18 month review, to determine that your pension should be upgraded to a tier 2 ill-health pension provided the independent doctor advising the Council confirms that you now meet the health criteria for such an ill-health award.

## **APPENDIX A**

### Return To Work Interviews

Return to work interviews should be standard practice in controlling absence and will take place after every period of absence.

### **RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW CHECKLIST**

1. The manager or supervisor will arrange to see employee on the employee's first day back from sickness absence.
2. Choose an appropriate venue to speak to employee – away from their colleagues if possible.
3. Discuss the absence -
  - let the employee know they were missed and inform them of any developments which happened during their absence which concerned their job.
  - remind the employee of their absence record so far.
  - let the employee know what the required levels of attendance and performance are.
  - remind the employee that the management of sickness absence is taken seriously and that absence is monitored by the service, and the Sickness Management Board.
4. Keep a record of the interview – date and time and any relevant details that emerge on the attached Return to Work Interview Form.
5. Ensure that the absence has been recorded and ended in e-Business via manager self-service.
6. Record the date that the return to work interview was held in e-business.
7. Send the form to Employee Services for recording on the employee's personal file.

## RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW RECORD

Name :

Date :

Time :

Employee Reference no:

MATTERS RAISED	COMMENTS / ACTION POINTS
<p>Employees latest sickness absence (length of absence etc)</p>	
<p>Reason for absence and any resulting or underlying health issues  (Likelihood of absence occurring again? Is it necessary to refer to Occupational Health?)</p>	
<p>Employees sickness absence record &amp; impact on service</p>	
<p>Work issues that arose during absence  (discuss issues &amp; note)</p>	
<p>Any other relevant issues/comments  (e.g. personal issues)</p>	

affecting attendance; any support & guidance required)	
Is this absence related to a disability? (Are any reasonable adjustments required?)	

Ensure that the absence has been recorded and ended in e- Business via manager self service and the date of the interview noted.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

( Manager)

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

(Employee)

N.B. This record sheet should be sent to Employee Services for recording on Personal File.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Our Ref:  
Your Ref:  
Enquiries to:

Direct Line:

Fax:

E-mail:

Date:

Dear Employee

**ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES – INVITATION TO STAGE ONE MEETING**

I have recently reviewed your sickness absence record which shows that you have reached one of the agreed trigger levels for sickness absence << describe trigger level reached>>.

In accordance with the Absence Management Policy and Procedures, you are invited to attend a Stage One Meeting at << time >> on << date >> at << location >>.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and consider your recent periods of sickness absence as set out below, including any support and assistance the Council can give you in improving your attendance at work.

Date(s) of Absence	Number of days	Reason for absence

Please contact me to confirm your attendance.

Yours sincerely

<< Manager's Name >>

<< Job Title >>

To relevant GP/ medical professional

Our Ref: Stage 1 GP letter  
Your Ref:  
Enquiries to:

Direct Line:

Fax: 01670

E-mail: 01670

@northumberland.gov.uk

Date:

Dear GP/medical professional

Northumberland County Council has a drive to effectively manage sickness absence and maintain attendance. As part of this drive, line managers are expected to hold formal meetings with staff as part of our Stage 1 absence management procedure. This will take place if a member of staff has met the County Council's trigger level of 3 occasions of absence or more in a twelve month rolling period.

As this member of staff has hit this trigger level, to ensure any further sickness absence is genuine, I would be obliged if you could supply a fit note to the individual to support their absence from work from their first day of absence. If you cannot support the member of staff's absence as being genuine illness then please inform the individual of your decision.

I would be grateful if you could provide a receipt for any costs incurred in the production of this information.

If you have any concerns/queries please contact the telephone number above and an HR Adviser will be pleased to discuss the matter with you.

The County Council appreciates your help and support in their efforts to manage sickness absence.

Yours sincerely

# Absence Flowchart

APPENDIX D

