

GUIDELINES FOR ABSENCE COUNSELLING

The following guidelines are designed to clarify both the structure and the responsibilities at each stage of the counselling procedure.

Return to Work Interview

The Line Manager or Supervisor must acknowledge every incidence of employee absence in his/her department. This interview is informal and ensures that the employee is made aware that his/her presence has been missed as well as providing the first opportunity to identify any potential problems whereby the employee may need support e.g. problems at work. The employees will be asked to complete the self-certificate during this conversation.

Any of the following stages may be repeated depending upon the improvement of the employee's attendance and the desired outcome is that the employee's attendance improves such that they are not linked to any stage: -

Stage 1 – Oral Counselling

Applies to the initial identification of an unacceptable level of absence, *normally* three incidents of absence within a rolling one-year period.

- a) Notification Upon receipt of the counselling request form (see Appendix 1) the employee will be sent an Absence Counselling Notification Letter (see Appendix 2) and the meeting will take place no earlier than 2 working days after the date of receipt of this letter. The employee should be given the opportunity to have a person to accompany him/her at the meeting.

- b) Arrangements The counselling should be held in an office where there will be no interruptions and the employee can talk in confidence if appropriate. The counselling will be conducted by the Line Manager in the presence of the person accompanying the employee (if requested) using the checklist in Appendix 3.

- c) Confirmation of :-
Decision The absence form in Appendix 4 must be completed and returned to Personnel confirming the Line Manager's action.

Stage 2 – First Formal Counselling

Applies to cases of persistent unacceptable absence, normally further absence within a year immediately following the counselling at Stage 2 of this procedure.

- a) Notification Upon receipt of the counselling request form (see Appendix 1) the employee will be sent an Absence Counselling Notification Letter (see Appendix 2) and the meeting will take place no earlier than 2 working days after the date of receipt of this letter. The employee should be given the opportunity to have a person accompanying him/her at the meeting. Personnel should be notified of the date and time so that a representative can be present.
- b) Arrangements The Line Manager will conduct the meeting in the presence of the Personnel representative and person accompanying the employee (if requested) using the checklist in Appendix 3.
- c) Confirmation of
Decision The absence form (Appendix 4) must be completed with a letter (see Appendix 5) confirming the meeting. A copy should be given to the employee, Personnel and person accompanying the employee.

Stage 3 – Final Formal Counselling

Applies to cases of persistent unacceptable absence, normally further absence within a year following the counselling at stage 3 of this procedure.

- a) Notification See 3 a)
- b) Arrangements See 3 b)
- c) Confirmation See 3 c)

Stage 4 – Dismissal

Applies to cases of persistent unacceptable absence, normally further absence within a year immediately following the counselling at stage 4 of this procedure.

- a) Notification The employee will be sent an Absence Counselling Notification Letter (see Appendix 2) and the meeting will take place no earlier than 2 working days after the date of receipt of this letter. The employee should be given the opportunity to have a person accompanying him/her at the meeting.

- b) Arrangements The Personnel Director will conduct the meeting in the presence of the person accompanying the employee (if requested) and the Line Manager.

- c) Confirmation of Decision Following the discussion and before a decision is made, an adjournment may be necessary to consider the circumstances.

If the Personnel Director decides that the dismissal is justified, this decision will be confirmed verbally and in writing.

If dismissal is not viewed as justified, this decision will be confirmed verbally and in writing, specifying precisely the improvement expected, otherwise dismissal would follow

Appeal

The employee has a right to appeal the decision made at any Stage of the Absence Counselling Process, using the Appeal's Procedure.

ABSENCE COUNSELLING CHECKLIST

- Ask if the employee wants a person to accompany him/her for Stages 1- 4
- Explain purpose of the counselling.
- Effect of absence on dept/team.
- Satisfactory attendance level is their responsibility.
- Establish:
 - Past sickness record
 - Nature and length of recent illness
 - Likelihood of re-occurrence of some other illness
 - Patterns
 - Work/other factors affecting attendance
- Offer assistance, i.e. to see a medical advisor.
- If applicable, assess work activities, hours etc.
- State clearly level of counselling the employee has reached.
- State improvement required.
- State next stage of absence counselling procedure.
- Get employee to sign absence form for stages 1 - 3
- Follow up meeting with letter for stages 2 - 4