

APPENDIX 2



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

MANAGING ATTENDANCE POLICY



Corporate Personnel

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**MANAGING ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE
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MANAGING ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Purpose of Policy

- 1.1 Manchester City Council values the contribution of its staff in the delivery and maintenance of quality services to the people of Manchester. Whilst recognising that employees may be prevented from attending work through ill health, the authority has a duty to maintain service delivery and minimise disruption.
- 1.2 The City Council is, therefore, committed to managing attendance and sickness absence and creating a culture within which all employees work to maximise attendance for the benefit of both themselves, the community and other stakeholders.
- 1.3 The City Council will achieve this through:-
- promoting the health, safety and well-being of all employees;
 - monitoring levels of sickness absence for individuals, teams, departments, and the authority as a whole; and
 - implementing procedures to provide support for staff when absent, whilst addressing unjustified and/or high levels of sickness absence.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers the management of both short-term absences and long-term sickness absence.
- 2.2 This policy supersedes the earlier Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure issued in 2005, which should be discarded immediately.

3. Staff Covered

- 3.1 This Managing Attendance Policy applies to all staff employed by the City Council, including teachers in a centrally managed service.
- 3.2 The Policy will not apply to those in their probationary period of service (covered by the Procedure for Managing Probation) and teachers employed by schools, who will be covered by separate terms and conditions relating to their employment.

4. **Principles**

Within this policy the City Council will:-

- deal with sickness absence in a way that is non-discriminatory and in accordance with the City Council's Equal Opportunities Policy;
- ensure a fair and consistent treatment of all employees who are absent from work;
- seek medical advice from appropriate practitioners before reaching key decisions;
- make reasonable adjustments as appropriate to take account of any disability of an employee in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the related Disability Equality Duty and Code of Practice; and
- conduct sickness absence cases with respect for confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Access to Medical Records Act.

5. **Roles and Responsibilities**

5.1 Employees are expected to:-

- attend work and fulfil their contractual obligations;
- comply with the sickness absence reporting procedure (see Appendix 2);
- attend medical referrals/appointments/case conferences;
- attend Return to Work interviews and Attendance Monitoring Reviews;
- comply with safe working practices and procedures; and
- participate in treatment programmes, e.g. alcohol policy.

5.2 Managers/Supervisors will monitor, manage and control absence by:-

- conducting Return to Work interviews (see Appendix 3) and Attendance Monitoring Reviews without delay and arranging Attendance Management Hearings where appropriate;
- ensuring the preparation and completion of all documentation, including confirmation letters;
- initiating referrals to the Occupational Health Unit, attending case conferences and making provisions for agreed actions to be carried out; (advice on making a referral to the Occupational Health Unit can be found at)
- maintaining regular contact with employees;
- seeking advice where necessary and making reasonable adjustments to the Policy and Procedure where appropriate.

5.3 Personnel Advisers will:-

- provide clear, up-to-date guidelines about managing attendance and capability issues and other policies e.g. alcohol/drugs;
- provide relevant information as available;
- issue advice to managers as requested;
- advise on the employment aspects of managing long term sickness absence cases;
- advise on strategies to reduce sickness absence on an individual or overall basis;
- advise/assist managers on matters of dismissal when necessary;
- highlight any problem areas and bring to the attention of the appropriate senior manager.

5.4 Occupational Health Unit

5.4.1 The purpose of Occupational Health is, in the first instance, to prevent sickness absence. However, when sickness absence does occur, the aim is to facilitate an early, safe return and rehabilitation into the workplace.

5.4.2 Occupational Health Advisers will:-

- advise managers with regard to conditions falling under the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- assess the physical and mental fitness of employees and advise managers of the work constraints caused by the employee's medical condition(s), e.g. advise on work restrictions, modifications, redeployment etc.;
- seek to obtain medical information from GP's and Specialists and make onward referrals as appropriate (including Occupational Health Physician, physiotherapy, counselling);
- advise managers on how the ill health of an employee can best be resolved, to facilitate a speedy return to work;
- advise, when possible, on the expected length of recovery periods and/or return to work dates;
- advise Managers and employees at case conferences;
- advise on the need to seek consent to access medical records;
- advise managers of any failure to attend appointments;
- provide management reports;
- recommend management actions that are based on the medical circumstances of an employee.

6. Conduct Issues

Failure to comply with the provisions of the Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure, for example by:-

- providing false information;
- failing to comply with the reporting procedure;
- failing to attend medical appointments; or
- failing to provide medical certificates when due

may result in disciplinary action (up to and including summary dismissal) being taken under the City Council's Disciplinary Procedure. It may also lead to loss or suspension of pay.

7. Records Management

- 7.1 Each period of absence will be formally recorded and information on an employee's absence will be provided to supervisors/managers to assist them in promoting a high attendance culture.
- 7.2 The employee's absence records may be used as part of any review of absence or any other occasion where the supervisor/manager believes that the information is of material relevance to any decisions regarding the employee.
- 7.3 Absence records constitute confidential information and will be retained in accordance with the Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure and any other related statutory acts such as the Data Protection Act.

MANAGING ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

1. Notifying Absence

- In order for service delivery to be maintained, it is essential that an employee informs their supervisor/manager of their inability to attend work and the reason for this on the first day of absence - before 10:00 a.m. (or by the time they are due to commence work or an agreed time negotiated locally by the Department).
- 1.2 Staff should report the absence in person or by telephone. E-mails or text messages are not acceptable (unless previously agreed that it is not possible to communicate by telephone). Absence reports should not be made by other people (partners or family friends) unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. emergency hospitalisation.
 - 1.3 In order to assist management to assess the likely duration of absence and arrange the necessary cover, employees also need to specify the length of time they expect to be absent. If this is not possible the employee must follow the reporting procedure on each day of absence.
 - 1.4 If their supervisor/manager is not available then they must contact another designated supervisor/manager and leave a contact number. It is not appropriate to leave a message with a colleague.
 - 1.5 If for some reason their supervisor/manager is not available, the employee should expect the supervisor/manager to telephone him/her at home later to establish a reason for the absence.
 - 1.6 If the absence continues for more than seven days (including non-working days) then a Medical Certificate (Sick Note) is required from the employee's doctor and must be sent in to his/her supervisor/manager no later than four days after the expiry of the previous self-certified period, or the expiry of a previous sick note.
 - 1.7 In cases where an employee returns to work prior to the expiry of a Medical Certificate, then the employee must provide, before returning to work, a signing off note.
 - 1.8 **The full reporting procedure is set out at Appendix 2.**
 - 1.9 Failure to inform the supervisor/manager may lead to absence from work being considered as unauthorised, resulting in loss of pay and possibly disciplinary action.

2. Dealing with Short Term Absence

2.1 Triggers

2.1.1 The purpose of triggers is to alert supervisors/managers to undertake a review of an employee's record of absence and assess whether further action is necessary. They should not be used as a substitute for a full consideration of each individual's circumstances and the nature of their absences.

2.1.2 The following triggers will prompt a supervisor/manager to examine an employee's absence record:-

- five or more days of absence in the last three months;
- three or more occasions of absence in the last three months.

2.1.3 In addition, a supervisor/manager may decide to examine an employee's absence record where there is a specific cause for concern. For example:-

- recognisable patterns of absence e.g. on Fridays and/or Mondays, before or after Bank Holidays; or
- increase in absence following expiry of an Improvement Notice or an Attendance Monitoring Warning.

2.1.4 Modification of these triggers can be considered when reviewing an individual's personal circumstances (see Appendix 1).

2.2 First Attendance Monitoring Review

2.2.1 If triggers are hit or specific concerns arise (see para. 2 above), an Attendance Monitoring Review will be held as soon as possible to:-

- explore the reasons for absence;
- seek to identify any underlying cause;
- discuss and agree any support mechanisms needed;
- review previous attendance record and determine whether any further action is required (e.g. referral to the Occupational Health Unit);
- consider any reasonable adjustments (see Appendix 1);
- explain the impact of absence on service delivery and emphasise the importance of good attendance.

2.2.2 Possible outcomes of Attendance Monitoring Review:-

- **take no further action; or (Only in exceptional cases should no action be taken.)**
- referral to the Occupational Health Unit in order to:-
 - assess current medical position;
 - establish whether there is any underlying medical reason;
 - establish whether the reason for the absence(s) falls within the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act; and/or
- support mechanisms established; and/or
- reasonable adjustments agreed; and/or
- appropriate review/monitoring period established; and/or
- identification of improvement needed and Improvement Notice issued where considered appropriate (see para. 2.3 below).

2.2.3 *The manager/supervisor will write to the employee within 10 days of the meeting, confirming the points discussed at the Attendance Monitoring Review and any actions identified.*

2.2.4 *It is important to implement any actions identified as soon as possible.*

2.3 IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

2.3.1 Where it is considered appropriate to issue an Improvement Notice, the Notice will contain a caution that if the improvement identified at the Attendance Monitoring Review is not achieved and sustained for 12 months, then a further Attendance Monitoring Review may need to be held.

2.3.2 Should an Improvement Notice be issued, the employee will be informed of the right to appeal. (See para. 5.)

2.4 Second Attendance Monitoring Review (AMR)

2.4.1 A second Attendance Monitoring Review will be held if:-

- triggers are hit (see para 2.1 above); or
- insufficient improvement is achieved during the review period established at the first Attendance Monitoring Review; or

- a recurring, recognisable pattern of absence emerges e.g. Fridays and/or Mondays, before or after Bank Holidays.

2.4.2 The purpose of this meeting is to:-

- review the overall level of absence;
- review issues discussed at the first Attendance Monitoring Review;
- review any medical advice;
- review support/reasonable adjustments provided;
- discuss what further support may be appropriate;
- explain impact of absence on service delivery and emphasise the importance of good attendance;
- identify improvement needed; and
- warn of possible consequences if improvement is not achieved.

2.4.3 Possible Outcomes

- no further action taken; or
- referral to the Occupational Health Unit in order to re-assess medical position; and/or
- further review/monitoring period established; and/or
- identification of improvement needed and Attendance Management Warning issued where considered appropriate (see para. 2.5 below).

2.4.4 *The manager/supervisor will write to the employee within ten working days of the meeting, confirming the points discussed and actions identified.*

2.4.5 *It is important to implement any actions identified as soon as possible.*

2.5 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT WARNING

2.5.1 Should an Attendance Management Warning be issued, the employee will be informed of the right to appeal. (See para. 5.)

2.5.2 The employee will also be cautioned that if the improvement identified is not achieved and sustained for 12 months, then a further Attendance Monitoring Review may need to be held.

2.6 Third Attendance Monitoring Review (AMR)

2.6.1 A third Attendance Monitoring Review will be held if:-

- triggers are hit (see para 2.1 above); or
- insufficient improvement is achieved during the review period established at the second Attendance Monitoring Review; or
- a recurring, recognisable pattern of absence emerges e.g. Fridays and/or Mondays, before or after Bank Holidays.

2.6.2 The purpose of this meeting is to:-

- review the overall level of absence;
- review issues discussed at the first Attendance Monitoring Review;
- review any medical advice;
- review support/reasonable adjustments provided;
- discuss what further support may be appropriate;
- explain impact of absence on service delivery and emphasise the importance of good attendance;
- identify improvement needed; and
- warn of possible consequences if improvement is not achieved.

2.6.3 Possible Outcomes

- no further action taken; or
- referral to the Occupational Health Unit in order to re-assess medical position; and/or
- further review/monitoring period established; and/or
- identification of improvement needed and a Final Attendance Management Warning issued where considered appropriate (see para. 2.7 below).

2.6.4 *The manager/supervisor will write to the employee within ten working days of the meeting, confirming the points discussed and actions identified.*

2.6.5 *It is important to implement any actions identified as soon as possible.*

2.7 FINAL ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT WARNING

2.7.1 Should a Final Attendance Management Warning be issued, the employee will be informed of the right to appeal. (See para. 5.)

2.7.2 The employee will also be cautioned that if the improvement identified is not achieved and sustained for 12 months, then an Attendance Management Hearing may be held which may result in a decision to dismiss on notice.

N.B. Additional meetings (which must be documented) can be held at any stage, outside the formal Attendance Monitoring Review meetings, to discuss support mechanisms etc.

2.8 Attendance Management Hearing

2.8.1 The employee and his/her representative will, no later than 10 working days before the hearing, be informed in writing of the date, time and venue of the hearing. The letter will set out the detailed reasons for the hearing and copies of any documentation it is intended to rely on will be circulated with the written notification of the hearing. Additionally the written notification should caution the employee that the hearing might result in a decision to dismiss on notice.

2.8.2 The management case will be presented to a senior manager together with all documents relevant to the employee's health and attendance. Any representation made by the employee or the employee's representative, or any written submission made in the employee's absence will be given due consideration before any decision is taken.

2.8.3 The senior manager will consider:-

- the employee's overall absence record;
- whether the reason for the absence(s) falls within the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
- the management of the case;
- the impact of the level of absences on the service;
- the medical advice received;
- the support/reasonable adjustments provided;
- any further action that can be taken;
- options for redeployment on medical grounds;
- whether ill health retirement has been considered;
- representations from the employee.

2.8.4 Possible Outcomes of an Attendance Monitoring Hearing

- no further action taken;

- further medical evidence sought;
- consideration of further reasonable adjustments;
- consideration of alternative employment;
- further Attendance Management Warning issued with further review period established;
- dismissal with notice.

2.8.5 The senior manager will write to the employee within 10 working days of the meeting, confirming the points discussed and actions identified and, if a further Attendance Management Warning or dismissal is the outcome, informing him/her of the right to appeal. (See para. 5.)

3. Dealing with Long Term Absence

- 3.1 Absences of more than 20 consecutive working days are considered long term.
- 3.2 When an employee is absent from work due to sickness it is important that regular contact is maintained so that the employee does not feel isolated, vulnerable or out of touch. The manager may also need to reallocate work so that service delivery is maintained.
- 3.3 An Attendance Monitoring Review will be held after the first four weeks' absence, and then every four weeks in order to:-
- explore reasons for absence/identify progress;
 - seek to identify any underlying cause/whether the Disability Discrimination Act applies;
 - ask about treatment and/or specialist help being received
 - advise that an Occupational Health referral will be made;
 - establish if date for return to work can be given;
 - establish review periods;
 - bearing in mind any disability issues and medical advice received, consider:-
 - reasonable adjustments
 - other support mechanisms
 - redeployment on medical grounds
 - ill health retirement
 - structured/phased return to work
 - explain the consequences of continued absence.
- 3.4 The points discussed and actions identified at the Attendance Monitoring Reviews will be confirmed in writing to the employee within 10 days of the meetings.

3.5 Attendance Management Hearing

- 3.5.1 Where all options have been exhausted and ill health retirement has not been recommended, an Attendance Monitoring Hearing will be held.
- 3.5.2 The employee and his/her representative will, no later than 10 working days before the hearing, be informed in writing of the date, time and venue of the hearing. The letter will set out the detailed reasons for the hearing and copies of any documentation it is intended to rely on will be circulated with the written notification of the hearing. Additionally the written notification should caution the employee that the hearing might result in a decision to dismiss on notice.
- 3.5.3 The management case will be presented to a senior manager together with all documents relevant to the employee's health and attendance. Any representation made by the employee or the employee's representative, or any written submission made in the employee's absence will be given due consideration before any decision is taken.
- 3.5.4 The Attendance Management Hearing will be heard by a senior manager who will review the case and consider:-
- whether the reason for the absence(s) falls within the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
 - the support/reasonable adjustments provided and determine whether these were sufficient;
 - the overall absence record;
 - the management of the case;
 - the impact of the absence on the service;
 - the medical advice received;
 - any further action that can be taken;
 - options for redeployment on medical grounds;
 - whether ill health retirement has been considered;
 - establishment of a possible further review period;
 - representations from the employee;
 - options for redeployment;
 - dismissal.
- 3.5.5 The supervisor/manager will write to the employee within ten working days of the meeting, confirming the points discussed and actions identified and, if dismissal is the outcome, informing him/her of the right to appeal. (See para. 5.)

4. Return to Work

- 4.1 Upon return to work following a short term **or** a long term sickness absence the supervisor/manager should arrange to meet privately with the employee, ideally during the first day back or at least within two days of the return to work. (For guidance on how to conduct a Return to Work Interview see Appendix 3.)

5. Rights of Appeal

- 5.1 An employee issued with an Improvement Notice or an Attendance Management Warning will have the right to appeal to a nominated 2nd tier Officer (or their representative).
- 5.2 In cases of dismissal with notice, the employee will have the right to appeal to their Strategic Director (or their nominee). This will constitute a full rehearing of the Attendance Management Hearing. There will be a further right of appeal to Elected Members.

6. Sanctions

- 6.1 An Improvement Notice or a warning issued under the Managing Attendance Policy will remain live for 12 months and run parallel to disciplinary warnings. They will not be used for 'totting up' purposes should any disciplinary sanction be imposed under the City Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

7. Right to Representation

- 7.1 Employees may be represented, if they so wish by a trade union representative, friend or colleague at Attendance Monitoring Reviews and Attendance Management Hearings.
- 7.2 If the representative cannot attend on a proposed date for a meeting, an alternative representative should be nominated or the meeting re-arranged to a time and date which is **no more than five working days** after the proposed date, unless agreed by both parties.

8. Redeployment

- 8.1 Where the Occupational Health Unit recommends redeployment on medical grounds an employee will be covered by the provisions of the City Council's Redeployment Scheme. (Also see Appendix 1.)

9. Ill Health Retirement

- 9.1 Retirement on the grounds of ill health can only be considered after all other options have been exhausted and where an independent registered medical practitioner, qualified in occupational health medicine, determines that an employee meets the criteria for ill health retirement, in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations.
- 9.2 Where ill health retirement is pursued, this is effected by dismissal with notice. The employee is able to appeal against the decision (see para. 5), normally on the grounds of contrary medical evidence.

10. Dismissal

- 10.1 Where all appropriate options have been explored, the dismissal of an employee is one which will need to be considered. To dismiss fairly the employer has to show:-
- the reason (or the principal reason) for dismissal; and
 - that, in the circumstances, the employer acted reasonably in treating it as a sufficient reason for dismissal.
- 10.2 Where the decision to dismiss is made, the dismissal will be with appropriate contractual notice.
- 10.3 It is important to note that lengthy delays in dealing with long term sickness absence cases which end up in dismissal may lead to a successful unfair dismissal claim at Employment Tribunal.

Appendices

- 1. Disability Discrimination Act**
- 2. Notifying/Reporting Procedure**
- 3. Return to Work**

Appendix 1

Disability Discrimination Act

1. General

- 1.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 prohibits an employer from discriminating against an employee by dismissing or otherwise treating that employee less favourably because of his or her disability. There are few situations where discrimination can be justified under the Act.
- 1.2 Dismissal will hardly ever be justified unless an employer has obtained a detailed medical examination of the employee, to determine the full extent of the disability, in order to decide whether any reasonable adjustments are an alternative to dismissal.
- 1.3 The Disability Equality Duty 2006 places a duty on all public authorities to promote equality for disabled people in every area of their work.

2. Definition Of Disability

- 2.1 A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The impairment must be long term i.e. has lasted or likely to last at least 12 months.

3. Reasonable Adjustments

- 3.1 When a disability is identified, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, an employer has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to prevent disabled employees being placed at a disadvantage compared with staff who are not disabled.
- 3.2 The social model of disability reflects that, rather than the physical/medical limitations of an impairment, it is often environmental factors which unnecessarily lead to social restrictions. This principle underpins the duty to make reasonable adjustments and understanding this assists in avoiding discrimination. It is as important to consider which aspects of employment and occupation create difficulties for a disabled person as it is to understand the particular nature of an individual's disability.

3.3 Some examples of reasonable adjustments are:-

- modifying the triggers when reviewing an employee's record of absence;
- adjusting working arrangements;
- altering working hours;
- changing work location;
- changing duties;
- reallocating tasks;
- making adjustments to physical environment/premises;
- acquiring or modifying equipment;
- providing appropriate training;
- modifying instructions or reference manuals;
- providing supervision;
- allowing authorised absence for medical appointments, assessment, treatment, counselling or rehabilitation activities.

3.4 A reasonable adjustment may also involve transferring the employee to fill a suitable existing vacant post. It will be necessary to obtain advice from Occupational Health regarding the tasks which the employee is capable of undertaking and in all such cases advice must also be sought from a Personnel Adviser.

3.5 All decisions taken with regard to making (or not making) reasonable adjustments must be documented. The rationale for reaching such decisions should also be documented.

4. Short Term Absence

4.1 An employee's disability may have an impact on their attendance and cause intermittent short term absences.

4.2 In those cases where there is a known disability, as defined, Managers need to determine whether each absence may be attributed to that employee's disability. In many instances the employee will tell the Manager which absences are not directly related to their disability and this will assist the Manager in determining whether further actions need to be taken.

4.3 Where there have been a number of short term absences, meeting the Management Of Attendance triggers, and it is unclear which of those absences, if any, relate to the employee's disability Occupational Health advice must be obtained.

- 4.4 The referral must clearly identify full details of each absence including reason for the absence, dates and relevant information provided by the employee at the time of their return to work.
- 4.5 The Occupational Health Advisor will inform the Manager of those absences which, in their medical opinion, relate to the employee's disability. This information will enable the Manager to determine their actions.

5. Long Term Absence

- 5.1 When looking at dismissing employees with long term absence problems it is essential to consider the Disability Discrimination Act as well as unfair dismissal liabilities.
- 5.2 It is necessary that a manager makes proper investigations whenever an employee is absent for a significant period. Long term absence may indicate the likelihood of disability and therefore Occupational Health advice is needed to inform further management actions.
- 5.3 All Referrals made to Occupational Health, irrespective of whether absence has occurred or the length of any absence, will be given consideration in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act and wherever possible the Occupational Health Unit will indicate whether the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act apply. Managers will be informed of the medical opinion, on the basis of the information available at that time, in the Response Form.

6. Dismissal

- 6.1 The dismissal of a disabled employee, on the grounds of his or her disability, or subjecting an employee to any other detriment on the grounds of his or her disability is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act. However, where an employee's disability makes it impossible for him her to perform the main functions of their job, and all reasonable adjustments have been fully explored, termination of employment can be justified.
- 6.2 In addition to considering whether suitable alternative employment is available the case must be referred to Occupational Health for the consideration of ill health retirement.
- 6.3 In all cases a Personnel Adviser must be consulted before starting the dismissal process.

Appendix 2

NOTIFYING/REPORTING PROCEDURE

The reporting procedure outlined below is a generic procedure recommended for departments. However, some departments/divisions may find they have specific circumstances e.g. earlier start times that require a local approach to reporting absence. Departments are advised to develop local protocols to address specific problem areas.

Day 1

- 1 All staff must notify the designated manager on **the first day of absence before 10:00am. (This time may be different depending on the needs of a particular service).**
- 1 Staff should report the absence in person or by telephone. E-mails or text messages are not acceptable (unless previously agreed that it is not possible to communicate by telephone). Absence reports should not be made by other people (partners or family friends) unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. emergency hospitalisation.
- 2 If the designated manager is not available the employee must ask to speak to another manager. It is not appropriate to leave a message with a member of staff.
- 3 If for some reason a manager is not available, the employee should leave a contact number and expect the manager to telephone them at home to establish a reason for absence.
- 4 **Employees must give the following details:**
 - 5.1 **Cause of absence** - note confidentiality rule. If the employee is unable to discuss the reason for absence with their line manager the employee must speak to a designated Personnel Adviser. The Personnel Adviser will not divulge any confidential information but will advise the manager if the request for confidentiality is reasonable. (This would be in unusual circumstances only).
 - 5.2 **Likely date of return to work** - although this may change following a visit to the doctor for example the employee must inform their manager of a likely date or if they are intending to go to visit their doctor.

- 5.3 Any **appointments, outstanding work, deadlines, training** that will need re-arranging or reallocating.
- 5.4 Where an employee is not able to give an expected date of return they must ring each day to keep the manager updated on their health.
- 5.5 FAILURE TO REPORT ABSENCE IN THE MANNER DESCRIBED ABOVE MAY RESULT IN AN EMPLOYEE LOSING PAY.

Often managers are presented with a variety of reasons for absence. These notes may help managers in their decision making.

Unwell

This is not an acceptable explanation for absence. Managers should ask for more information about the symptoms and how they are affecting the employee's ability to work.

Out late, too much to drink

Again this is not an appropriate reason for absence. Employees should be reminded of their responsibilities to work. If this is often the case then you may need to discuss the alcohol policy with personnel.

Broken limb

You need to decide whether or not this prevents them from doing their job. Could they attend work doing other duties? Is short term job re-design an option?

Emergency child care, child sickness, death of close relative

Ask Personnel for advice on help the City Council can offer. Children's Services for instance operate an emergency childcare crèche. The employee can be granted special leave in certain situations e.g. death of a close relative. (See Special Leave policy guidelines.)

Relationship issues, stress in private life

You need to be sure that the employee was unfit to work. Has the problem caused a medical condition? You may need to access support, such as counselling, through the Medical Officer. Could the employee have taken some annual leave to sort problems out?

Stress and work-related reasons

This needs to be taken seriously. You need to consider what the employee is telling you. Look at the workload, environment, and location. Carry out a stress risk assessment. If this is an underlying cause of absence you must try to assist in finding appropriate remedies or resources. Record all offers of support.

Day 2

Employees who have not given a likely date of return must phone the designated manager every day.

Day 8 onwards

Employees must:

- 1 **Get a medical certificate (Sick Note) from their doctor** and tell their manager that they have this. They should state the date it has been signed as well as an expected date for return to work. If they have not got a medical certificate they should inform their manager of their GP appointment and arrange to make contact after this.
- 2 **Send the certificate to their manager.** It is essential that the certificate covers the whole period of absence. The manager must be contacted immediately when a new certificate has been issued. The new certificate must arrive within 4 days of the previous one expiring.
- 3 For the purpose of Medical Certificates all days including weekends and Bank Holidays are counted.

Managers must:

- Ensure they have all the relevant information from the employee.
- Send the original certificate by internal post to Payroll.
- Make a record of the key points of any discussion.

FAILURE TO PRODUCE A MEDICAL CERTIFICATE MAY RESULT IN AN EMPLOYEE LOSING PAY.

Appendix 3

RETURN TO WORK

1. Return to Work Interviews

- 1.1 After all periods of absence managers/supervisors must carry out a Return to Work interview. This should be done within 2 days of the employees return to work.
- 1.2 A Return to Work interview is the first opportunity managers/supervisors have of discussing the reasons relating to an absence with an individual employee, update them on work issues and express concerns regarding their absence.
- 1.3 Return to Work interviews should be:
 - Held on a one-to-one basis;
 - Be conducted in private;
 - Treated as confidential by both parties.
- 1.4 Managers/Supervisors should cover the following points in their Return to Work discussion with employees, depending on the circumstances of each case:-
 - Demonstrate an interest in the employee's welfare;
 - Check that the employee has followed the procedure for reporting sickness and all medical certification has been completed and received as per guidelines. Establish explanation/mitigation if appropriate. If procedures have not been followed the Manager/Supervisor should explain to the individual what action if any, is being taken in relation to non-compliance e.g. stoppage of pay, disciplinary action.
 - Reaffirm the cause of absence. Confirm with the employee the reason for their absence and help identify underlying causes and possible ways of avoiding recurrence - is sickness an excuse for another problem? Use open ended questions to draw out any issues or underlying factors, e.g. 'what were your symptoms?', 'what medical assistance have you had?', 'is there any further treatment required?'
 - Confirm that the employee has sufficiently recovered to return to work – if the employee is only partly fit to return to work, seek urgent advice from Personnel regarding the need for risk assessments (e.g. back pain).

- See whether a pattern of absence is emerging – if so, this should be raised with the employee.
- Ask whether there is anything the manager can do to support the employee and whether there is anything the employee can do to support themselves.
- Decide whether any further action is required, e.g. referral to Occupational Health Unit, Attendance Monitoring Review, disciplinary action.
- Explain the consequences of unacceptable levels of absence.
- Update the employee on work related issues arising in their absence.
- Emphasise the importance of good attendance and the effects absence has on team/colleagues/service delivery.

2. Completing the Return to Work Form

- 2.1 It is very important that the Return to Work form is completed fully and correctly.
- 2.2 Every time you have a meeting concerning an employee's absence it should be recorded. This may be a one-off incident or it may be the beginning of a problem. If you don't have a record of a meeting or Return to Work, you cannot include it in any future proceedings.
- 2.3 In cases that lead to action under the Attendance Monitoring Procedure, if the Return to Work form is inadequate or action stated has not been undertaken, this will seriously weaken the case and harm employment relations between the individual and the manager/supervisor.
- 2.4 The employee should sign the Return to Work form and be given a copy.
- 2.5 It is essential that managers follow up any recommendations for further action as soon as possible. Again, if action is taken under the Attendance Management Procedure and the manager/supervisor has failed to take the follow-up action agreed the case will be severely weakened and in all probability will fail.
- 2.6 Managers should consider the absence in relation to more serious problems and the occupation of the employee. In particular, short term absences i.e. stomach complaints may indicate an ulcer, muscular skeletal injuries may have longer term implications and therefore an early referral to occupational health may be beneficial.

3. If staff have not followed procedures

- 3.1 Managers must first confirm that the employee has had a copy of the procedures. If they have, the manager should inform the employee that they have not followed the procedure and warn them that this could mean loss of pay and/or disciplinary action. Managers should ensure that the employee is given a copy of the procedure and that this is recorded on the form. In cases where an employee persistently fails to follow procedures, they must be issued with a copy of the written procedure with a letter informing them that any further breaches will be likely to lead to loss of pay and/or disciplinary action. (Seek advice from Personnel as necessary).
- 3.2 It is not appropriate to challenge or dispute the employee's claim of sickness. Where any doubts exist or if further issues arise from the Return to Work interview which require investigation this should be highlighted to the employee. However, a separate interview should be then convened as part of the disciplinary procedure.

LINK TO RTW FORM

SPECIAL LEAVE PROVISIONS

1. Background

- 1.1 Special Leave describes paid, or unpaid, leave granted to employees for urgent personal or domestic reasons in circumstances **not** provided for by statute or already prescribed for within existing National and Local Conditions of Service.
- 1.2 Special Leave is granted at the discretion of individual managers who have been authorised by their Heads of Service to consider requests for Special Leave received from employees.
- 1.3 This document provides guidance to those managers who are authorised to grant Special Leave to assist them in ensuring that the City Council achieves an appropriate balance between meeting the needs of its employees' individual circumstances and maintaining services to the citizens of Manchester.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 Employees are not automatically entitled to Special Leave, rather it is granted at the discretion of individual authorised managers.
- 2.2 Where more than six days' special/authorised leave are sought in any twelve month period, the approval of the Head of Service (or other senior nominated officer) is required.

N.B. Each application for Disability Related Special Leave (see Para. 5.2 below) will be treated on its own merits and may exceed six days in any twelve month period. This accords with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Disability Equality Duty 2006.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of the Special Leave provisions the following definitions shall be used:-

- 3.1 Dependant

- Anybody living in the household of the employee who is directly dependent on the employee for financial or domestic support.
- Any person who lives separately from the employee but who at times of illness requires domestic support from the employee. This may include a close relative (e.g. children, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters) of the employee or partner with whom they are not living.

3.2 Partner

- Any partner in marriage, or within a common law relationship, or a lesbian relationship or a gay male relationship, who relies on the employee for domestic support during times of crisis.

4. Consideration of Requests

- 4.1 An authorised manager will consider the reasonableness of a request in light of all the individual employee's circumstances.
- 4.2 Normally documentary evidence should be provided in support of every application except where, in the judgement of the manager, this would be inappropriate or insensitive.
- 4.3 Any charges to the employee in respect of medical documentation which may be required will be fully reimbursed.

5. Circumstances where Special Leave may be granted

5.1 Leave to attend medical appointments

5.1.1 All prearranged hospital, doctor and dental appointments should be attended in the employee's own time. Where, in exceptional circumstances, or for reasons related to a reasonable adjustment under the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, this is not possible the employee shall be granted time off to attend subject to:-

- a) the production of a relevant appointment card or other documentary evidence;
- b) the employee, where practical, attending work prior to and/or after the appointment;

- c) the employee being credited only with the actual hours worked and in case of employees on fixed hours being worked on another occasion where this is practicable;
- d) Where appointments require an absence of a half day or more, the employee is expected to take annual leave, flex, TOIL or unpaid special leave.

N.B. The conditions outlined in c) and d) do not apply to:-

- appointments in relation to a pregnancy-related illness;
- appointments for a disability related reason; or
- hospital appointments where the employee can demonstrate that the appointment cannot be arranged outside of normal working hours.

In these circumstances time off with pay may be granted.

5.1.2 These arrangements and criteria also apply to situations where the employee needs to accompany a sick dependant on visits to the hospital, dentist or doctor.

5.2 Disability Related Special Leave

- a) Heads of Service should recognise the need to support disabled employees who need to be absent during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment. Disability Related Special leave is a reasonable adjustment under the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Disability Equality Duty 2006 and is aimed at enabling disabled employees to attend work and sustain long term employment.
- b) A manager receiving an application for Disability Related Special Leave will pay due regard to confidentiality and sensitivity in relation to the employee's self declaration of a disability or impairment.
- c) Each application for Disability Related Special Leave will be considered on an individual basis.
- d) Wherever possible, agreement will be reached in advance in respect of the amount of Disability Related Special Leave to be granted.
- e) Some examples of reasons for granting Disability Related Special Leave include (but are not limited to):-

- Hospital or doctor appointments
 - Hospital treatment as an outpatient
 - Assessment (i.e. a professional assessment by a medical practitioner or recognised body, to determine an appropriate course of action, equipment or other appropriate aids)
 - Counselling
 - Therapeutic treatment
 - Physiotherapy
 - Rehabilitation
 - Adjustment to new medication.
- f) The amount of Disability Related Special Leave will be determined by the manager following consideration of the individual's circumstances, the medical advice received (including due regard to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) and the impact of the absence on operational requirements and service delivery.

5.3 Leave to Care for Dependants including Child Care Arrangements

- a) Heads of Service should recognise and be sympathetic to the position of employees who need time off to care for dependants who are sick or where in an emergency normal care arrangements have broken down.
- b) Notwithstanding the above, managers will need to satisfy themselves that the circumstances for which Special Leave is requested represents a genuine emergency which could not reasonably have been foreseen. Where this is not the case the employee should be required to take annual leave, flex, TOIL or unpaid special leave.
- c) In cases where both parents/carers or dependants work for Manchester City Council only one employee will be granted leave except in circumstances of a serious operation, terminal illness or death of a dependant.
- d) Where time off is granted under these provisions the employee shall, where appropriate, provide written confirmation from the dependant's doctor showing that his/her presence is necessary to assist the dependant.
- e) Where an employee needs to take time off to care for a sick dependant it is not acceptable for the employee to take sick leave, they must in the first instance consider using annual, flex-leave or toil before applying for Special Leave.

5.4 Bereavement

Managers should grant paid leave to employees who require time off on the death of a close family member, partner or dependant to make funeral arrangements, including attendance at the funeral and to attend to probate matters. The number of days granted will depend on, for example the location of the funeral and the extent to which the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements.

5.5 Divorce, Separation Proceedings, Child Custody

Employees going through divorce or separation proceedings or contesting child custodial cases where attendance at Court is involved during the working day are required to take annual leave, flex, TOIL or unpaid leave.

5.6 Visits Abroad - Extended Leave

- a) Employees may be granted up to three months unpaid Special Leave in order to visit relatives or friends in other countries subject to departments being able to maintain service provision without need for temporary replacement.
- b) Where an employee requests that annual leave for that year be taken in one block for the purposes of visiting relatives or friends abroad, departments should accede to such requests where the operational needs of the department permit and subject to the employee stating clearly in writing the date on which they will return to work.
- c) **Where an employee requests in excess of three months unpaid special leave the Head of Service should discuss the application with the appropriate Executive Member before making a final decision.**

5.7 In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) treatment; and Gender Reassignment

- In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) treatment

Employees undertaking fertility treatment will need to undertake consultation with a medical professional, the fertilisation process entails both partners attendance at the hospital/clinic in the initial stages.

- Gender Reassignment

In the UK a person is allowed to change his/her personal details and to live as a member of the opposite sex to that recorded at birth. The majority of transsexual people also undergo medical treatment, which

can include hormone therapy and corrective surgery. This is only provided following careful assessment by medical professionals, and the inclusive process may take some time.

- a) With regard to both these categories, Special Leave may be granted, if requested, for medical appointments and counselling before and or after medical treatment, which should be treated as with any other application for special leave i.e. consideration of paid/unpaid leave, annual leave, toil etc. However, all pre-arranged hospital and doctor's appointments should, wherever possible, be attended in the employee's own time.
- b) It is important to approach each case on an individual basis and to clearly demonstrate to all involved the City Council's support for employees undergoing gender reassignment. It is paramount therefore that the manager seeks to support the wishes of the employee so far as is reasonable practicable. In the event that an employee makes their manager aware that they are contemplating gender reassignment the manager should deal with the issue in a confidential and sensitive manner.
- c) In such circumstances managers are advised to consult with the employee in an attempt to agree a timetable of events in an effort to determine the amount of time off required (absence due to surgery and post operation recovery would be treated and recorded as regular sickness absence).
- d) The Occupational Health Unit is available to provide the individual employee with confidential support and provide the manager with practical guidance on issues that arise from an employee undertaking gender reassignment.

6. Applications for Special Leave

- 6.1 Departments should ensure that all Special Leave requests are supported by a completed application form (copy of standard form attached) and signed by the appropriate manager and recorded on SAP and on the leave card of the employee.
- 6.2 It is recognised that in many cases the completion of documentation often follows the absence. In such circumstances the absence should initially be recorded as annual or flex leave and subsequently amended as appropriate. Where there is concern about veracity of a request the manager should ask for documentary evidence, but act with due sensitivity according to the employee's circumstances.

- 6.3 Where an employee takes sick leave coincidental with a period for which a Special Leave request has been declined, managers should specifically cover this coincidence at the return to work interview.
- 6.4 Managers when notified of a change in an employee's circumstances should review and discuss the changes and how they may affect the leave granted, with the employee.
- 6.5 Where Special Leave is taken for purposes other than those stated within the application, or circumstances relating to the application change during the period of Special Leave and are not notified to the line manager immediately, disciplinary action may be taken which, dependant upon the circumstances, could result in summary dismissal.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1 It is essential that monitoring information is maintained via SAP in all situations where paid or unpaid leave is granted. This will enable departments to assess consistency of application, together with the financial and operational impact of Special Leave. Heads of Service should periodically review the amount of paid and unpaid special leave granted to ensure consistency of practice across their Department.

----- DEPARTMENT

APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE

PART A (To be completed by employee applying for special leave)

SURNAME _____

FIRST
NAME(S) _____

CONTRACT No (on payslip) -----

SECTION _____ DIVISION _____

DATES REQUESTED AS SPECIAL LEAVE (inclusive)

FROM _____ TO _____

REASONS WHY YOU ARE REQUESTING SPECIAL LEAVE

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Note to all applicants

Taking Special Leave for purposes other than those stated within this application will be viewed as gross misconduct which, if proven, may result in summary dismissal.

If the circumstances relating to the application change during your period of Special Leave you **must** notify your line manager **immediately** to discuss with him/her your current status and the consequent need for the Special Leave to continue.

Continuing to take Special Leave for purposes other than those for which it was granted originally may result in disciplinary action and dependant upon circumstances could, if proven, result in summary dismissal.

PART B (To be completed by authorised manager)

ANNUAL LEAVE ENTITLEMENT OF EMPLOYEE _____

No OF DAYS TAKEN _____ **No of DAYS REMAINING** _____

No OF DAYS SPECIAL LEAVE GRANTED IN LAST 12 MONTHS _____

No OF DAYS SICK INCURRED IN LAST 12 MONTHS _____

APPLICATION APPROVED (paid/unpaid)/NOT APPROVED/REFERRED TO PERSONNEL OFFICE FOR ADVICE (delete as applicable)

Appropriate medical note/appointment card attached.

Appropriate medical note/appointment card seen by me but not attached.

COMMENTS _____

SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

PART C (To be completed by personnel office)

PERSONNEL OFFICE COMMENTS _____

SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

ENTERED ON SAP
SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

PLACED ON PERSONAL FILE _____ **DATE** _____