Controlling Absence Policy

Section 1
POLICY
It is recognised by the Company that from time to time staff may require to be absent from their place of work due to illness. The length of time lost by employees through illness must however be monitored to ensure that each member of staff is able to do their job, effectively and without putting themselves or others at risk. It is not the intention of the Company to penalise the genuinely sick, however it must be recognised that an employee who is medically unfit to carry out his/her contractual duties may not be able continue in that employment.

Managers will consider cases of sickness absence on an individual basis and ensure the provision of appropriate support, advice and Occupational Health / Company Approved Doctor input where appropriate. However, it is recognised that in some cases, patterns/levels of absence will be unacceptable and formal management action will be required.

Employees who become aware that they have an illness problem are encouraged to inform their manager at the earliest opportunity. All such requests will be dealt with as speedily and compassionately as possible.

Section 2
OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURAL STAGES
On return from absence all employees must be interviewed by their immediate line manager. At this interview the employee and the line manager must complete a ‘Return to work interview’ form agreeing the reason for the absence, the period of absence and, where appropriate, what course of action is required as a result of the absence. This form must be signed by both parties before being forwarded to the employees personnel file

Stage 1
In situations where an employee's sickness record is giving some cause for concern, then the employee's Line Manager will discuss those concerns with the employee, providing support and counselling where appropriate. It is essential that any message conveyed in this manner is clear and unambiguous.

Stage 2
If there is no obvious improvement in the health of the employee or any sign of patterns emerging in an employee's absence then the line manager would arrange for the employee to meet the next-in-line manager or Director of the Company as appropriate who would 'formally' review the employees case. At this formal stage the
employee must be offered the opportunity for appropriate
representation by a work colleague or trade union official.

The employee must be given the outcome of this meeting in writing
and where appropriate they must be given notice that their level of
absence is unacceptable and a period of time to improve.

**Stage 3**

If the employee fails to improve in the given time scale then a formal
second Review must be undertaken. If possible, a more senior
manager or Director of the Company not previously associated with
Stage 2 above as appropriate should chair this meeting. The
employee must be offered the opportunity for appropriate
representation at this time.

Prior to the meeting the employee must be seen by the Occupational
Health / Company Approved Doctor who will give his opinion on the
employee's health. The employee must be given the results of this
meeting in writing. Where appropriate they must be given notice that
their level of absence is unacceptable and that they are given a period
of time during which to reduce their level of absence. The employee
must also be informed at this stage if any further absences may result
in their employment being terminated due to incapacity.

**Stage 4**

If there is still no improvement within the laid down time scale a
Review will be held with a Director of the Company in the chair. The
employee must be offered the opportunity for appropriate
representation at this meeting. All the available evidence including the
Doctor's report will be reviewed.

If there are no special circumstances the employee will be dismissed
on the grounds of incapacity and their inability to meet the acceptable
standards of attendance required by the Company.

**Section 3**

**APPEALS**

Every employee has the right to appeal against the outcome of any
formal review stage of the absence procedure. The basis of an appeal
should normally relate to one of the following areas:

(i) that the Policy had not been followed correctly.
(ii) that the resulting action was inappropriate.
(iii) that the need for action was not warranted.

**Appeals against the formal stages of the Absence Procedure**

An appeal should be put in writing to the appropriate Director / Senior
Manager. The letter of appeal may be constructed by the employee or
their representative. The letter should contain the grounds for appeal
and should be lodged within 7 days of receipt of the issue of a formal
letter. An appeal hearing should be arranged within 7 days of receipt
of the appeal letter. An appeal against Dismissal will be considered in the same way, but should be heard by a Director of the Company who has not previously been involved in the case.
Section 4
PROCEDURES CHECK LIST
Stage 1
Return to Work Interview
This is an informal part of the Procedure, however in order to give the process credibility the following rules should be followed :-

- Every employee should complete a 'Return to work interview' form with their immediate line manager.
- Interviews should be carried out in an area where there will be no interruptions and where both parties may feel at ease.
- The employee should always be informed of the reason for the meeting.
- The meeting should be prefaced by an indication of concern for the employee as well as the need for the Manager to be aware of the health of his/her employees.
- The employee should be encouraged to discuss any problems they may be having with their health and to actively contribute to the solution to the problem.
- Any apparent problem or patterns of absence should be brought to the employee’s attention.
- All relevant absence documentation must be recorded on the employees personnel file.

Counselling
As the first step in procedure it is vital that the message conveyed is clear and unambiguous.

Prior to counselling, full details of the employees absence record along with reasons should be made available to both participants.

The employee should be made aware of the date and location of the Meeting and the reasons for it.

The employee should be given the opportunity to explain absence records and present any evidence required.

If there are medical problems it may be necessary to adjourn the Meeting for medical advice.

The Manager/Supervisor will advise the employee of the outcome of the meeting and where appropriate of the need for improvement of their current absence level. Written confirmation of the outcome of the meeting will be given to the employee and a copy recorded on their personnel files.
Stage 2

- Prior to calling a hearing, full details of absence record along with reasons should be made available to all participants.
- The employee should be made aware of the date and location of the Review and the reasons for it.
- In addition they should be informed of the right to be represented at the Review.
- The employee should be given the opportunity to explain absence records and present any evidence required.
- If there are medical problems it may be necessary to adjourn the Meeting for medical advice.
- The Manager should set out clearly the improvements expected and the time scale over which these improvements must be achieved.
- The employee should be informed in writing of the requirements and the time scale and advised if the warning is to be recorded on his record.
- Any warning letter should be copied to the Trade Union Representative if present at the hearing. The employee must be informed of their right to appeal against this decision.
- Any warnings issued will remain on the record for 12 months.

Stage 3

- If there has been no improvement in the absence record in the period set at the first Review or there has been a further breach of policy during the lifetime of a written warning then the employee must be informed and asked to attend a Second Review. In addition they should be informed of the right to be represented at the Review.
- Medical reports must be sought prior to the date of the Meeting and results made available to both parties.
- The employee should be given the right to present any evidence in mitigation.
- The employee should be informed of the need to improve their record and the possibility of dismissal if they do not do so. The employee must be informed of their right to appeal against this decision. (see Appeals). This should be confirmed in writing to the employee and held on their personnel file for 18 months.

Stage 4

- The employee must be given full details of the case and the possible consequences prior to attendance. The employee must also be informed of their right to representation at this
meeting.

- All medical evidence should be taken and considered before a final decision is taken.
- If the decision is taken to dismiss the employee then this should be done by giving full entitlement to notice (even if sick pay is exhausted).
- The employee must be informed of their right to appeal against this decision. (see appeals).

Authorised at a meeting of Directors on

Signed By                                       (Chair of Directors)