

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Attendance Management Policy

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust will consistently meet the ambulance needs of all people in Northern Ireland by:

- **Delivering high clinical standards and excellence in pre-hospital care**
- **Treating people at all times with dignity and respect**

In the provision of a high quality service the Trust is required to manage its resources in the most effective and efficient way.

The Trust recognises that the regular attendance at work of its employees is crucial to maintaining the highest standards of care.

It is the Trust's policy to ensure that sickness absence levels are managed to the minimum level possible. Any action taken to achieve this will be consistent with the need to have a fair approach and has regard to the needs of the individual as well as the service.

It is the responsibility of managers and staff to ensure optimum levels of service are maintained. Control of absenteeism therefore will be a major priority for all employees in the Trust.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set down the procedure to be followed when staff are absent from work due to sickness, including sickness as a result of an injury at work, in order to maintain optimum levels of service by managing sickness absence effectively.

This policy is therefore designed to:

- Provide a fair and consistent method of managing the absence of employees due to either repeated periods of short-term sickness or long-term sickness
- Give staff the opportunity to improve their attendance by providing a means for them to be formally advised of the effects of their absence and the potential consequences for their employment
- Ensure that every attempt is made to investigate the employee's ability to perform adequately in his/her post, involving the Occupational Health Department as appropriate
- Provide appropriate support to facilitate staff in the performance of their contracted duties.

3. Procedure

3.1 Notification and certification of sickness absence

If an employee is unable to attend work due to sickness they should notify their manager (or nominated deputy) as soon as possible before the expected starting time, preferably by telephone.

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that notification of sickness is done without delay. Wherever possible, notification should be made by the employee.

The Control Centre/Line Manager should be informed of:

- The nature of the absence
- The expected period of absence – (If known)
- Whether the employee intends to see a doctor
- Whether the condition is the result of an injury sustained at work

The above information is recorded on the notification of absence form Appendix A.

If due to the nature or sensitivity of the condition a member of staff is reluctant to provide details to the Control Officer, he/she will be contacted by their Line Manager to ascertain the nature of the absence. Alternatively, the employee may wish to discuss the nature of the absence with a member of staff from the Human Resources Department.

3.2 Certification

All employees must produce sickness certification after the third day of absence. The first seven days of absence will be covered by a Self-Certificate.

A Self-Certificate form must be fully completed and state the nature of illness and probable duration of the absence, and sent directly to their line manager (you will be required to submit a medical certificate, if you have already submitted 3 self certificates in isolation in any 12 month period).

Absence beyond 7 calendar days requires the employee to:

1. Submit a Medical Certificate provided by a General Practitioner.
2. Maintain contact with the Line Manager to advise of condition.

The responsibility for submitting Medical Certificates rests solely with the employee.

A signed statement of the reason for absence (Self-Certification/GP Certificate) is a necessary pre-condition for sick pay. Failure to notify your Line Manager/Nominated Deputy of non-attendance at work and/or produce required certification may result in loss of sick pay.

Summary of Certification Requirements

Calendar Days	Form of Certification
1-3 days 4-7 days	No certificate required Self-Certificate required to cover illness from first to seventh day.
8th day onwards Return Date	Medical Certificate required from GP Final signing off certificate from GP

In relation to part-time staff, if the absence exceeds 3 calendar days from the last working day, it is necessary to complete a Self-Certificate Form.

3.3 During Your absence

During the employee's absence it is essential that there is ongoing communication between the manager and the member of staff.

A formal home visit or meeting with the employee will be carried out by the manager and a representative from the Human Resources Department at the half-pay and no-pay stage. Depending on the individual's circumstances, additional meetings may be carried out at any stage at the request of either the employee or the manager.

When an employee knows he/she will be returning to work he/she must notify the Line Manager giving as much notice as possible. Staff must be aware that late notification causes operational difficulties.

4. Conduct of Employees During Periods of Sickness

Employees, when absent due to sick leave, must not be involved in any activity (including other employment) which could hinder their recovery or bring into question the genuineness of their illness. The employees should advise an appropriate manager (Station Officer/Head of Department) of any such activity or employment.

Where medical advice indicates that a holiday would be beneficial or contribute to recovery, employees should produce written evidence from their GP to their manager prior to going on holiday.

To ensure that the Trust complies with Government guidelines in relation to the payment of Statutory Sick Pay, the individual must::

- Advise the manager of the relevant dates and location
- Contact their manager on return from holiday.

N.B. SSP is not payable outside the EU.

5. Occupational Health

The primary purpose of the Occupational Health Department is to assist the Trust in protecting and promoting the health, safety and welfare of staff.

Staff are contractually obliged to undergo medical examinations. If a member of staff does not co-operate in assisting the Trust to establish his/her medical position, a decision may be made upon the matter of his/her employment on the basis of available information. A refusal, or failure to attend Occupational Health for assessment, without reasonable cause, may be regarded as failure to carry out a reasonable instruction, which may result in disciplinary action or suspension of Statutory Sick Pay.

6. Short Term Absence

For the purpose of this policy, a short-term absence is defined as any continuous absence of up to four weeks (28 calendar days) in duration, whether or not covered by a self-certificate or a medical sick note.

7. Long Term Absenteeism

This is defined as absence of more than 4 weeks. It is important that from a welfare point of view that the Station Officer/Manager maintains contact with any staff on long term sickness absence.

With long-term absence the medical input into decision making is important. Close co-operation between the Occupation Health Service and the General Practitioner, who is providing day-to-day care for the person, is vital for the management of long term absence.

In addition to the normal absence certification requirements, the following guidance should be actioned:

1. The employee should advise the Line Manager at the earliest opportunity if they believe they could be absent for four weeks or more
2. The Manager should advise the member of staff that they are being referred to Occupational Health for assessment and an appointment will be made. This may be in writing, by telephone, or in person, depending on the circumstances
3. The Manager (Station Officer/Grade 5) must complete the referral form from Occupational Health and state clearly the reason for the referral. It is essential that the manager is specific about the information being sought detailing precise questions where appropriate.

The above guidance should ensure that staff receive timely and appropriate support.

8. Return to Work Interview

Whenever an employee is absent, the line manager should arrange to interview the employee on their return from sickness to determine if there are any underlying causes for their absence and/or if any support can be given. The manager should give consideration to any request for assistance, including referral to the Occupational Health Department, and/or information about accessing the Staff Care Schemes. The interviewing of employees shall serve to highlight the employee's absence record and any subsequent stages in the absence policy.

9. Absence Trigger Levels

As a general principle, the appropriate manager should arrange to counsel an employee when they reach the trigger level of 3 episodes or 10 days in any 12-month period. The purpose of the counselling is to:

- Review the attendance record
- Set an appropriate monitoring period
- And identify the improvement required.

In addition the member of staff will be advised that further action may be taken under the Policy if there is no improvement. The Manager may, if deemed necessary, refer the employee to Occupational Health.

Following continued absences, the manager will consider what further action might be required in line with Appendix B.

Any hearing convene at which a formal warning might be issued shall be arranged in accordance with the procedure set out at Appendix B.

10. All Staff

All employees are vital to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and employees are expected to be in attendance at work to fulfil the duties and responsibilities of their posts.

This policy relates to medical absences only.

11. Information about the policy

Every new member of staff will receive a copy of the Attendance Management Policy with their Contract of Employment. They will be reminded of the policy and their duties within it during their induction programme. Furthermore, every station is required to have a copy of the policy displayed.

**Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE**

TO BE FILLED OUT BY DUTY MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

I am required as part of the Attendance Management Policy to ask questions in order to complete the 'notification of absence' form for you.

1. Name	2. Grade/Job Title
3. Department/Station <i>Where are you based?</i>	
4. Nature of Absence <i>What is the nature of your absence? Is this a result of an injury at work?</i>	
5. Approximate duration of absence <i>How long do you expect to be off? Have you arranged to see a Doctor?</i>	
6. 1st day of absence and start time <i>When are you next due to work? At what time does your duty/shift start?</i>	
7. If employee did not call in personally <i>Can I ask who you are? Why was the employee not able to call themselves?</i>	
8. Date and Time of call	

Advise caller:

- “Your Line Manager may be in touch in the next day or two to maintain contact as per the policy.”
- “When you are booking your return to work you must give as much notice as possible before the start of your shift or duty, and in the event of late notification you might be assigned to another station or duties.

Note: If caller is unhappy to discuss a personal matter advise them that the Line Manager will be advised and they will be in contact.

ONCE FORM IS COMPLETED INFORM THE APPROPRIATE STATION/RESOURCE MANAGER (EAST ONLY).

Informed: _____ **Date:** _____

ENSURE THAT THE FORM IS SAFELY SENT TO THE EMPLOYEE'S LINE MANAGER FOR FOLLOW-UP.

Sent to: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
Duty Manager/Supervisor

FORMAL ACTION UNDER ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Part One - General

- 1 Formal action under this procedure will not be instigated until the manager responsible is satisfied no other circumstances require consideration.
- 2 When it is decided that it might be necessary to take action, an employee shall first be notified in writing of the complaints against him/her and of the opportunity for preparing and stating a case. They may be accompanied by a TU or staff representative. They shall be given 14 days notice to enable him/her to discuss the matter with their Trade Union.
- 3 Normally no action beyond an informal warning should be taken against an employee who is a Trade Union Representative until a Senior Trade Union Representative or Full-Time Official has been advised of the circumstances of the case.
- 4 When determining the action to be taken, the manager will bear in mind the need to satisfy the test of reasonableness in all the circumstances taking account of any mitigating factors.
- 5 Where it is decided that action should be taken, the following forms of action are allowed for in the procedure:
 - No further action
 - Verbal Warning
 - A first written warning
 - A final written warning
 - Dismissal.
- 6 The individual must be provided with a notice signed by a duly authorised officer or member of the Trust detailing the action taken and containing a clear statement of the reasons for the action against the employee, together with an indication of the right of appeal.

4. **Formal Stage 4 – Dismissal**

If there is no sustained, marked improvement to the individual's attendance record during the review period or a failure to meet the required standard of attendance during the life of the final warning, a further formal interview will be arranged with the appropriate Director and the Director of Human Resources of his/her nominated deputy.

The reason(s) for continuing absence will be fully investigated including consideration of the employee's attendance record and all Occupational Health reports. The employee will have the opportunity to make explanation and/or submit any relevant information. This stage may result in dismissal.

The final stage will be fully documented and a letter issued to the employee confirming the outcome of the meeting, and the right to appeal.

5. **Appeal Stage**

The appeal stage, which should state the grounds thereof, must be lodged with the Director of Human Resources within seven working days of receipt of the written notice conveying the decision of the Disciplinary Authority. The hearing of the appeal normally should take place within 20 working days of the receipt of the appeal by the Personnel Department.

Only in exceptional circumstances will an Appeal Hearing be postponed.

Every reasonable effort will be made to arrange an agreed date for an Appeal Hearing. The employee shall be given at least five days notice of the date together with a statement of the right to make explanation in writing or appear personally and the right to be accompanied by either a Trade Union Representative or a work colleague.

The lowest levels of management responsible for appeals are as follows:

APPEALS AGAINST FORMAL STAGES 3 & 4	APPEAL PANEL
<u>Final Written warning</u>	Two managers at equivalent rank* or above to the manager who issued the final warning
<u>Dismissal</u>	Two Executive and one Non-Executive Director

* **A manager who has no previous direct involvement in the case.**

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE
RECORD OF RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW AND ACTION

Name	
Grade/Job Title	
Date	
Department/Station	
Date and Day of Return	
Duration of Absence	
Nature and Reason(s) for Absence	
Employee's feelings and general state of health on return to work	
Was notification process followed?	YES/NO
Was certification process followed?	YES/NO
Was the GP visited?	YES/NO
Were Occupational Health appointments kept?	YES/NO
Is an Occupational Health appointment required?	YES/NO
Date and follow-up action to be taken and date of appointment	Date:
Is there a pattern of absence emerging?	YES/NO
If YES highlight these to employee NOW .	Done (please tick and attach details)

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RECORD OF RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW AND ACTION

Is managerial intervention appropriate?	YES/NO
If YES , give date for this	Date: _____ (Keep separate record of this)
Is monitoring appropriate	YES/NO
If YES , give duration of monitoring period and date of follow-up meeting	From: To: Date of Review: _____ (keep separate record of this)
Is discipline appropriate	YES/NO
If YES , detail action	
Ask, "Are there any circumstances at home or work that may be contributing to your absence levels?"	
Identified individual problems	YES/NO
If YES , detail	
Action to be taken	YES/NO
If YES , detail	
Interviewing Line Manager's / Supervisor's comments	
Signature of Interviewer	
Follow-up interview required	YES/NO
If YES , give date of interview	Date: _____ (keep separate record of this)
Signature of Manager	
Date	

GREY AREA TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR/MANAGER INTERVIEWING

WHITE AREA TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWER AND THEIR MANAGER