PRESCRIPTION PRICING AUTHORITY

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The PPA recognises the contribution of its employees and is committed to providing good working conditions and health and safety standards.

1.2 It is the responsibility of the PPA to make the most effective use of its employees and the absence management policy contributes to that objective.

2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 This procedure enables managers to address absence issues, both short and long term, in a fair, consistent and equitable manner. It is recognised however that all cases must be dealt with on an individual basis because of differing circumstances therefore this procedure gives an outline of the principles to be observed.

2.2 This procedure will be invoked where management has cause for concern regarding an employees short term persistent or long term absence.

2.3 The PPA recognises that everybody is sick or subject to emergencies from time to time, however regular attendance at work is a contractual requirement.

2.4 Short term absenteeism refers to a series of illnesses that are often unconnected which result in frequent, short periods of absence.

2.5 It is acknowledged that occasions do arise when people are away from work on a long term basis as a result of chronic or acute ill health. Although each case will be dealt with on an individual basis this policy outlines certain principles that will always be observed. Long term absence would normally be classed as at least 6 weeks continuous absence.

2.6 This procedure will not apply to employees currently in their probationary period.

2.7 Advice should be taken from the Human Resources Department at all formal stages of this procedure to ensure the consistent application of this procedure throughout the PPA.

2.8 The policy and procedure will be reviewed periodically by the Human Resources Department and UNISON giving due consideration to legislative changes.

2.9 In accordance with the PPA's Equal Opportunities policy, this procedure will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, religious

beliefs, age, union membership, disability, offending background or any other personal characteristic.

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3. PROCEDURE

General Points

3.1 The PPA's procedure for managing absence MUST be followed. It is the responsibility of every employee to report any absence and only in exceptional cases should this procedure be carried out by someone else on their behalf.

3.2 If an employee knowingly gives any false information or makes false statements about their sickness it may be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken. In proven cases of gross misconduct it could lead to dismissal (e.g. absent on sick leave and working elsewhere).

3.3 If employees go on holiday during any periods of sickness absence they are not entitled to Occupational Sick Pay. In such instances employees must ensure that their Doctor has signed them off from the sick and has certified them fit to go or has provided a written statement to the PPA advising that the holiday would be beneficial to their condition or recovery. The PPA may also choose to obtain a medical opinion from the Occupational Health Unit. Employees must also inform their Line Manager. Once an employee is on holiday this is regarded as a return to work and they will be expected to report for work after the holiday. If an employee is physically unable to return to work after a holiday they must submit a medical certificate which covers them from the day on which they were expected to return to work.

3.4 Where necessary, the PPA will reimburse the cost of such letters.

3.5 The PPA reserves the right to request a Doctor's Certificate for periods of absence of less than 7 days in cases of short term persistent absence. Where a cost is incurred, this will be reimbursed by the PPA.

3.6 Any employee who unreasonably fails to comply with the PPA's Absence Management policy and procedure may have their occupational sick pay withheld.

3.7 The PPA has the right to dismiss employees whilst they are receiving sick pay entitlement. Any decision to dismiss will be subject to medical advice. Employees who are dismissed are entitled to receive the full amount that would be equivalent to their occupational sick pay entitlement, plus the relevant notice and leave entitlement.

Employee Entitlements

3.8 The amount of paid sickness leave employees are entitled to depends on their length of service, as outlined below:

During 1st year of service	1 months' full pay 2 months' half pay (after 4 months service)
During 2nd year of service	2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay
During 3rd year of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay
During 4th and 5th years of service	5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay
After 5 years of service	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay

Employee Responsibilities

Reporting Absence

3.9 All employees must contact their line manager as early as possible, and no later than 11.00am on the first day of absence. The employee must make this call. The only exception is where it is clearly not possible for employees to ring personally – such as admission to Hospital.

3.10 Employees must talk directly to their line manager and not leave messages with anybody else. If the line manager is unavailable a message must be left with their immediate manager giving the reason for the absence.

3.11 If an employee does not have a telephone at home alternative arrangements for reporting sickness must be made.

3.12 When reporting absence employees must give the following information:

- ✓ the reason for the absence (if known)
- ✓ the expected length of absence (if known)
- ✓ whether a visit will be made to their GP, and if so, the date of the appointment

3.13 In cases of continued absence, employees must contact their line manager again on the fourth day of absence to provide them with up to date information.

Sickness Certification

3.14 If an absence lasts for **7** calendar days or less, on the first day back at work, employees will be required to complete a Sickness Self-Certificate giving the reasons for absence. The Certificate will be countersigned by a senior officer and subsequently will be kept in a confidential file.

3.15 If an absence exceeds **7** calendar days a doctor's medical certificate must be submitted to the line manager, no later than the **tenth** day of absence, covering the absence from the **eighth** day. The medical certificate will be forwarded to the Salaries Department for processing.

3.16 If an absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial medical certificate, further medical certificates must be submitted to give continuous cover for the period of absence. On eventual return to work employees must complete the PPA's Sickness Self-Certificate in respect of the first **7** days or less not covered by a doctor's medical certificate.

3.17 If the doctor's medical certificate does not specify the period of absence covered, it will be classed as covering a period of **7** calendar days only.

Return to Work Interview

3.18 On returning to work employees will be required to attend a return to work interview with their line manager to discuss their absence.

3.19 The discussion should allow for an exchange of information and be as frank and as open as possible as this will prevent any misunderstandings concerning the nature of the absence.

3.20 This will also enable the line manager to discuss any assistance that may be given to enable an employee to return to work or prevent further absence occurring.

3.21 A record of the interview should be kept by the line manager.

Short Term Persistent Absence

Monitoring and Consultation

3.22 The PPA operates an accurate method of recording and monitoring levels of absence. If the amount of time being taken off for illness is giving cause for concern, managers will discuss this with employees at the return to work interview.

Continued Absence

3.23 If absence levels continue to cause concern, then employees should be referred to the PPA's Occupational Health Service for an independent medical examination.

3.24 If the absence is the consequence of an underlying medical condition then medical advice would be sought to identify any reasonable adjustments or assistance that the PPA can provide.

Disciplinary Action

3.25 Continued non-attendance may result in disciplinary action being taken if no underlying medical condition can be identified. This may be in the form of either a verbal, written or final warning, and could ultimately lead to dismissal. As part of the disciplinary process employees will be given the opportunity to improve their attendance.

3.26 Prior to formal disciplinary action being taken advice should be sought from an HR Adviser.

Long Term Absence

Consultation and Discussion

3.27 In cases of long term absence line managers must arrange to conduct regular 'care and concern' interviews to discuss possible courses of action should the absence continue (these interviews should be recorded and notes sent to the employee concerned). Employees may choose to be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative, a friend or family member. The line manager may also choose to be accompanied, normally by a HR Adviser.

3.28 If employees are too ill to travel line managers may choose to conduct a home visit at a mutually convenient time.

Medical Advice

3.29 In cases of long term absence, regular Occupational Health assessments must be sought.

3.30 Where there is doubt regarding an employees ability to return to work on a permanent basis advice must be sought from the Occupational Health Service Provider (see Medical Retirement Policy).

3.31 Employees must make themselves available to attend Occupational Health referrals (this includes home visits by an Occupational Health representative). The Occupational Health Unit will then provide a written report to management. In order for Occupational Health to contact a 3rd party for a medical opinion e.g. GP, Consultant etc. consent must be obtained from the employee concerned. Consent does not need to be given by employees for Occupational Health to release their report to management.

Returning To Work

3.32 Wherever possible the PPA will aid a return to work on a permanent basis. To establish the most effective way of doing this the PPA may seek further medical advice.

3.33 This may include making reasonable adjustments to the employees job, allowing a phased return to work, or by allowing the employee to return to work on a reduced or alternative hours basis.

3.34 Where a phased return to work is recommended by the Occupational Health Unit, the employee will be able to return to work on a part time basis and receive their full pay. This will be for a maximum period of four weeks, after that the employee must substitute their annual leave for days not worked or receive payment only for the hours worked.

3.35 Where an employee requests a phased return to work themselves, annual leave for days not worked or receive payment only for the hours worked.

Redeployment

3.36 If medical opinion is that an employee is unfit to return to their former employment, the possibility of alternative employment must be considered. (Please refer to the Redeployment Policy).

Ill Health Retirement

3.37 Should the medical opinion indicate that an employee is permanently unfit, employees have the option for applying for early retirement on the grounds of ill health, in line with the provisions of the NHS Pension Scheme. This option is only available to employees who have two years continuous pensionable employment. This option should be discussed with individuals in full at the appropriate time (Please refer to the Ill Health Retirement Procedure).

Resignation

3.38 At any time during this process an employee may choose to resign from their employment. They are required to give their contractual notice and any outstanding accrued holiday entitlement will be paid in lieu.

3.39 Payment in lieu of notice may be agreed by the line manager.

Dismissal on the grounds of incapability

3.40 Should the dismissal of an employee be the only appropriate option (i.e. all other options as outlined above have been investigated and found to be inappropriate) a dismissal meeting must be held with the employee in question, their line manager and a Human Resources Adviser.

3.41 At this meeting the employee has the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or a member of their family, a friend or colleague.

3.42 Following the meeting the employee will be given a letter confirming the reason for dismissal, the date of dismissal, their right to appeal, any payment in lieu of contractual notice and any other outstanding payments to which they are entitled e.g. annual leave.

3.43 Where an employee is dismissed during the paid sick leave period they will be entitled to payment equivalent to their total sick pay entitlement (full and half pay), plus payment in lieu of contractual notice and any outstanding annual leave.

Sick Pay Regulations

3.44 The sick pay regulations are financial provisions and indicating an entitlement to sick pay and in no way indicate the amount of absence to which an employee is entitled.

Data Protection

3.45 All information relating to an individuals absence will be handled in line with Data Protection principles and will be used purely to carry out the management of their employment.