



**NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION
COUNCIL FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY**

Attendance at Work Policy

February 2023

Any request for the document in another format or language will be considered

4th Floor James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JD
Tel: 0300 300 0066

<https://nipec.hscni.net>

Developed by:	Jill Jackson
Approved by / date:	BTM: 23 rd February 2021; 7 th February 2023; Council: 12 th March 2021; 15 March 2023; 13 th March 2024
Date of next Review:	March 2025
Equality Screened by / date:	Janet Hall / 2017

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1	Introduction and Key Aims	3
1.1	Introduction	3
1.2	Purpose	3
1.3	Key aims	3
2	Roles and responsibilities	3
2.1	Managers' responsibilities	3
2.2	Employees' responsibilities	5
2.3	Role of BSO's Human Resources Directorate	6
2.4	Role of Occupational Health	6
2.5	Role of Trade Union Representatives	7
3	Review	7
4	Equality Statement	7

DEALING WITH HEALTH AND SICKNESS ISSUES

1. Introduction and Key Aims

1.1 Introduction

The NI Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) recognises that the health and well-being of the workforce is critical to the effective functioning of the organisation. It is set in the context of the regional policy framework of best practice for managing attendance, compliance with employment legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act, the relevant terms and conditions and the NHS (AfC) Terms and Conditions handbook.

In developing this policy NIPEC recognises that it has a duty to support staff when they become ill, facilitating staff in so far as possible to safely return to work as early as they can. NIPEC has a responsibility to actively encourage a culture of health and well-being within the workforce while equally expecting employees to take personal responsibility for their own health and well-being. NIPEC also recognises that staff sickness exacerbates service delivery problems and places additional pressure on other staff, as well as carrying a significant financial cost.

1.2 Purpose

This policy applies to all staff and is aimed at supporting attendance consistently and fairly across the organisation. The policy sets out the way attendance will be supported in relation to sickness absence, our responsibilities and accountabilities, and how absence will be reported, recorded and monitored.

NIPEC is committed to improving the health and well-being and attendance of our staff and wants to ensure it is managing absences in a timely and supportive manner to enable colleagues to return to work as soon as possible.

1.3 Key aims

The key aims of the policy are to:

- Deal with absenteeism in a fair, consistent and proactive manner by providing clear and effective guidelines on the management and monitoring of absenteeism.
- Assist in the management of the cost to and the impact of absence on the organisation.
- Enable staff to return to work as soon as possible.
- Improve the health and well-being of all staff by facilitating and supporting initiatives, where appropriate, which enable staff to return to or remain in work.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to the management of attendance.
- Prevent and deal with instances of abuse of HSC Sick Pay provisions.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

All employees have a fundamental role to play in the management of attendance and it is expected that all staff will undertake their roles and responsibilities, in accordance with the Attendance at Work Policy.

2.1 Managers are responsible for:

- 2.1.1 To manage absence in accordance with this policy by recording, monitoring and investigating the absence levels of all employees for whom they are responsible and by taking appropriate and timely action when required to ensure that all staff are aware of their obligations under the policy and the importance of good management attendance.
- 2.1.2 To respect the confidentiality of any information provided to them through the operation of this policy.
- 2.1.3 To ensure that all employees are aware of their obligations within the Attendance at Work policy including the correct notification procedures when reporting sick for work and in particular to whom they should report.
- 2.1.4 To maintain regular and effective contact with employees who are on sick leave, the frequency of which will depend upon the circumstances of the absence and normally agreed with the employee.
- 2.1.5 To maintain accurate absence records which includes timely recording of absence on the Human Resources, Payroll, Travel and Subsistence (HRPTS) system, conducting return to work interviews and processing the appropriate medical certification.
- 2.1.6 To seek specialist advice from Human Resources (HR) and Occupational Health (OH) when appropriate.
- 2.1.7 Arrange and participate in case management meetings and all other relevant meetings with OH and HR, the employee and the employee's representative when appropriate. Further information on case management meetings can be obtained from NIPEC's HR Business Link within the Business Services Organisation (BSO).
- 2.1.8 To facilitate and support employees when possible in relation to adjustments and rehabilitation programmes as recommended by OH and other medical and allied health professionals.
- 2.1.9 To encourage participation in internal Health Promotion initiatives organised and co-ordinated by NIPEC's Health and Social Well-being Committee.
- 2.1.10 To ensure completion of Accident/Incident Forms when an employee has suffered an injury or other condition associated with their employment.
- 2.1.11 Where necessary, initiate action in accordance with the Disciplinary or Capability procedures to deal with poor attendance and/or failure to comply with the Attendance at Work Policy.
- 2.1.12 To reassure staff with medical conditions that, where possible, reasonable adjustments will be made to facilitate their ongoing employment.

Managers should note the importance of accurate and timely recording on HRPTS as this enables BSO's HR Information team to produce statistical analysis on both short and long term sickness absence within NIPEC. The information will also ensure employees are paid appropriately during their period of absence. Managers will be accountable for any

recording failures or anomalies. Failure to complete this may result in disciplinary proceedings.

2.2 Employees are responsible for:

- 2.2.1 To ensure regular attendance at work in accordance with their contractual obligations.
- 2.2.2 Notify their Line Manager of absence in accordance with notification procedures. Contact must be by telephone. Contact by text or email is not acceptable, nor is someone else to contact on their behalf except in very exceptional circumstances, ie. hospitalisation. If they are unable to make contact with their line manager, they should make contact with HR.
- 2.2.3 Agree a timetable for regular appropriate contact with their Line Manager during the period of absence
- 2.2.4 Ensure they are aware of and meet their obligations under the Attendance at Work Policy (and associated procedure) and recognise the consequences of poor attendance at work.
- 2.2.5 Ensure that relevant sick certificates and medical reports are forwarded without delay to their Line Manager for appropriate action, and that they cover the whole period of absence.
- 2.2.6 Comply with requests to attend Occupational Health Service on time unless for some exceptional reason they cannot attend. In those exceptional circumstances they must notify their Line Manager and BSO's HR Directorate who will re-schedule the appointment.

Failure to attend Occupational Health may result in salary being withheld and disciplinary proceedings may be initiated. Managers wishing to withhold pay for this reason should only do so following discussion with BSO's HR Directorate.

Staff who have to attend Occupational Health outside of their normal work location may claim travel expenses at public transport rate only.
- 2.2.7 Participate, when requested, in meetings relating to their absence and co-operate in the development of return to work and rehabilitation plans with their Line Manager, BSO's HR Directorate and trade union representatives as required.
- 2.2.8 Refrain from any activity (social or sporting) which may be prejudicial to recovery or be likely to bring into question the reason for continuing absence. There may be times when sporting activity/exercise is recommended by a GP as being beneficial to recovery. In these circumstances, advice from BSO's HR Directorate and/or Occupational Health should be sought.
- 2.2.9 Not working elsewhere in **paid or unpaid employment** whilst on sick leave unless prior permission is received from their Line Manager and BSO's HR Directorate. Staff who are found to be working elsewhere and have not complied with the above requirements may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

2.2.10 Understand that sick pay is for absence due to ill health and not for other purposes such as carrying out caring responsibilities which are covered by other policies.

2.2.11 On a strictly confidential basis to inform manager of any issue(s) which may interfere with their normal attendance at work.

2.3 BSO's Human Resources (HR) are responsible for:

2.3.1 Provide NIPEC and its Chief Executive, Business Team and Council with a suite of statistical information on a regular basis and as required, to assist the management of attendance within the organisation.

2.3.2 Provide specialist advice and guidance to Managers on overall absence levels and specific complex cases.

2.3.3 Participate in case management meetings with Managers to review and progress complex absence cases.

2.3.4 Assist in the development of rehabilitation programmes and reasonable adjustments as recommended by Occupational Health Professionals for staff returning from long term sick leave.

2.3.5 Meet with Managers, staff and, if requested, trade union representatives, relating to the procedures for ill health termination and/or ill health retirement.

2.3.6 Develop and deliver training sessions for Managers on all aspects of this policy.

2.3.7 Monitor the application of this policy on a regular basis.

2.4 Occupational Health (OH) are responsible for:

2.4.1 Assess employee health (the effects of) in terms of fitness for work considering the effects of work on health/health on work with the aim being to assist management and employees in (making plans to) facilitating/supporting a return to work.

2.4.2 Offer support and advice to employees reporting work related health and safety and well-being issues (affecting employees).

2.4.3 Provide advice to Managers on employees fitness for work for those who have health or attendance issues which may be affecting attendance, performance or behaviour in the workplace particularly for those staff covered by the Disability Discrimination legislation.

2.4.4 Provide reports to managers and BSO's HR Directorate following the employee's appointment at OH.

2.4.5 Advise BSO's HR Directorate of cases that require their specialist involvement such as complex health and work situations, ill health termination, re-deployment or retirements.

2.4.6 Provide appropriate advice to employees regarding their health. This will include guidance for support options such as counselling, stress management and health education to employees as required.

- 2.4.7 Provide advice to management regarding workplace adjustments in sickness absence cases, rehabilitation, re-deployment or modification of hours due to other work place.
- 2.4.8 Provide health awareness sessions/health improvement training in accordance with the NIPEC's Service Level Agreement with BSO.
- 2.4.9 Participate in meetings with managers, BSO's HR Directorate, employees and trade union representatives as appropriate.

2.5 Trade Union Representatives are responsible for:

- 2.5.1 Support the implementation of the policy and work with management, BSO's HR and Occupational Health and other health professionals that may be necessary when representing their members during the process.
- 2.5.2 Encourage employees to comply with this Attendance at Work Policy.
- 2.5.3 Provide support to the employee encouraging compliance with any recommendations made to assist individuals to obtain the maximum benefits from the agreed arrangements.
- 2.5.4 Participate in case conferences and rehabilitation reviews at the request of the employee
- 2.5.5 Participate in initiatives and work in partnership with management to reduce absence levels within the organisation.

3. Review

We are committed to ensuring that all policies and procedures are kept under review to ensure they remain compliant with relevant legislation and guidance.

This policy is based on a regional HSC policy and will be monitored and reviewed by NIPEC in January 2024, or sooner if a revised HSC policy is issued.

4. Equality Statement

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998.

As a result of these considerations the screening has identified some equality impacts for a number of groups and outlines the way these will be addressed.

The equality screening has been published and can be accessed at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2166.htm>