**Appendix 3**

**Guidance for Line managers**

The Trust wants to significantly improve the way attendance is managed, and to reduce sickness absence levels.

As a Line manager responsible for managing attendance, you are not only responsible for managing sickness absence levels, but also encouraging a working environment where people want to come to work and support each other.

You should familiarise yourself with this Policy to ensure that you follow the correct procedures to treat people fairly and consistently.

**Your Responsibilities**

You are responsible for:

* Ensuring that everyone on your team knows what to do to let you know that they are off sick, and by what time.
* Explaining to staff what attendance level is expected of them and what will happen if they do not meet the required standards of attendance.
* Treating people fairly whatever their gender, marital status, working pattern, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, religion, age, disability, HIV positivity, caring responsibilities, Staff Side activity or political beliefs.
* Keeping in touch with individuals who are off work ill as appropriate
* Considering requests for other forms of leave, such as annual leave, special leave, fairly and consistently and supporting work life balance.
* Ensuring that everyone you manage has a Sick Absence Monitoring Record and that it is completed after each absence.
* Conducting and recording Return to Work Discussions after every absence.
* Monitoring absence levels so you are able to identify potential problems at an early stage.
* Address unsatisfactory attendance as soon as it starts to become a problem.
* Supporting individuals who are off work ill, and offering support, where appropriate of Occupational Health Advisors, staff counselling and HR.
* Considering and making reasonable adjustmentsfor people with underlying medical conditions.
* Taking formal Unsatisfactory Attendance action where necessary.

**Return to Work Discussion**

* The Return to Work Discussion must be completed after every absence, even if it is only for a single or part day.
* The Return to Work Discussion should take place on the day the individual returns to work. If you are not available on that day you should arrange for your replacement/deputy to undertake the discussion.
* The discussion should be completed face to face
* The discussion should take place in a quiet corner or private office to safeguard any confidential issues, which may be discussed.

*Remember*: It is not the individual’s fault that they are sick, but it is their responsibility to be fit for work and return to work as soon as they have recovered from their illness.

**Before the discussion**

It is essential that the discussion is properly prepared and sensitively handled. Everyone and their circumstances are different, so before you meet you should consider:

* The individual’s sick absence record to establish the amount of and reasons for previous absence in relation to policy trigger points
* Whether the level of absence is unsatisfactory or if regular patterns are emerging (i.e. regular Mondays or Fridays);
* Whether the illness is as a result of an accident at work;
* Whether there are any tensions at work to do with colleagues or workloads;
* Whether the illness is one which may be covered by the Equality Act 2010;
* Whether domestic circumstances may have a bearing on the absence;
* Whether you have had any previous discussions about the individual’s attendance. If so, what was decided?
* Whether you need to take advice from HR.

**The Return to Work Discussion**

The meeting should be welcoming and friendly. Open the discussion by welcoming the individual back to work and check that they have completely recovered. Explain the reason for the discussion and explain that the discussion will be confidential. Discuss the period of absence and ask the individual to explain why they were absent. Where there is concern regarding sickness absence levels ensure the employee is made aware of this

Has the individual followed the correct procedure for notifying their absence? If not explain the correct procedure and why it has to be followed and that disciplinary action may be considered for breach of Trust policies.

Ask is there anything the individual wishes to discuss. If the employee identifies any issues that require support, offer support from yourself, HR, Staff Counselling or the Occupational Health Advisor.

Try to uncover any underlying health issues and ask what they are doing to ensure that they are fit for work in the future.

Update the individual on any work or social issues.

Record details of the discussion on the Return to Work Proforma (Appendix 7), show this to the individual and ensure that they sign it. The proforma should be kept in the individual’s personal file.

If the level of absence is giving cause for concern, the employee should be given a copy of the managing sickness absence policy. The stages and what action will be taken at each stage should explain to the employee.

**Format of sickness meetings**

The line manager should discuss the following points:

* Review the employee’s attendance record
* Determine the nature of the sickness problem, e.g. personal, work related, social or domestic problems and any possible support/solutions
* The employee should be informed of the standards of attendance required and they should be made aware of the consequences of their continued poor attendance at work.
* The employee should be offered a medical examination at the Occupational Health Department, it is not necessary to refer to OH in every case, this will depend on nature and length of illness.
* Advise the employee of what other support is available e.g. staff counselling service, flexible working options etc
* Inform the member of staff that their attendance will be monitored and if necessary another meeting arranged (Informal Stage)
* Agree a review period with the employee – normally 3 months but may be sooner depending on individual case if formal action is taken. (Formal Stage)
* Formal stage – line manager may use discretion to not authorise additional hours or overtime for those with poor sickness absence as working hours may be part of the underlying problem if formal action is taken.