

HR Policy Handbook

Feedback

Italic – unison feedback/query

Initial query:

Overall: this is a very brief and slight document. Is the HR team confident that it covers the legal principles applying, without leaving holes and edge cases which can cause uncertainty for individuals and make casework more difficult for HR and Union?

We can confirm that the policy handbook has been reviewed by Andrew Brett of NPLaw for an additional legal perspective to mitigate any risk. With regard to ensuring certainty for staff and ensuring ease of management for HR and Unions, procedure details and additional information will be held within the procedure associated with each policy.

Policy 1:

Very positive end to first paragraph (friend/family member)

Advertising – what happened to the 5 days internal advertising?

It was concluded that in order to reduce recruitment time, all adverts will therefore be external from the outset- we will continue to communicate all vacancies internally and advise 'at risk' staff of said vacancies.

All appointments subject to 6 month probation – no mention of current exception for continuous service here.

Given that we are not legally entitled to put anyone with continuous service under probation, the policy does include the statement: "Employees with continuous service will be required to have regular 1:1's with their line manager, but probation will not apply."

Policy 2:

Exclusion of transsexual medical interventions from sickness very positive.

Bullet point 1: reporting of sickness – yes this will be included in induction and should also be reminded by the manager

Bullet point 7: we have added "Phased returns are agreed between the manager and the returning individual."

Sickness in relation to holiday periods – this is a considerable tightening of current principle which treats sick leave and annual leave differently. This should revert to current practice. Conceivably someone could spend 2wks ill and have it all counted as holiday in spite of being unable to leave their bed – some holiday!

We are not saying that holiday will take precedence but that if an employee is poorly before, during or after arranged annual leave, they would need to provide a doctors note in order to reclaim their leave and take it at another time.

Medical reports – first bullet point rather threatening. Perhaps the author needs to reflect on how frightening many employees find dealing with occupational health and HR, powerful bodies which they may never normally come into contact with.

Acknowledged and we have sought to soften this wording. I suppose this really comes down to a. a view of the case itself and b. the way in which it is managed – which would be in a sensitive and compassionate manner; if this isn't the case – HR should be informed so we can address the matter with the manager and advise/coach them in dealing with such matters in a 'softer' way.

Para 2 – currently employees cannot be compelled to attend OH appointments, this should be retained, or a period of time specified before OH can be forced upon an employee – at least 3mths.

The procedure and guidance will provide more detail on timescales/triggers etc. but with such high absence levels it is the thinking of the Council that we should be addressing either consistently sporadic absences or long term sickness quickly and obtaining objective advice on the best way to support individuals back to work with reasonable adjustments.

There is a strong perception that OH is simply there to get you back to work whether ready or not - threat of being compelled to return to work before health has improved can be a significant source of stress for unwell employees, particularly those with mental health conditions.

We acknowledge that this can be a perception, but believe there is a learning exercise here for staff to have an explanation of why we have OH and that as professional independent specialists, they will not advise a return to work if they feel it's not appropriate. But it does provide us with the indication of what, if anything, we can do as an employer to either support the employee while off sick or support the employee in their return to work.

How long after return to work will a return to work interview be undertaken?

Where possible, return to work interviews should be undertaken on the employees first day back to work; or at least within the first two days. (this detail will fall within procedure)

Policy 3

Can we consider short period of permitted paid absence i.e. 1 day for less close relations, such as aunt uncle niece nephew cousin, foster/adoptive parent?

Foster/adoptive parent would fall within the same rights as biological parents.

While additional paid time off for any relative out of those listed in policy would be to the managers discretion, we will put your query to EMT for discussion.

Policy 5 – do you mean repayment of disturbance allowance? If so, in the 2008 policy (the most recent I can find), this is 2 years.

Under Principles point 1 can suitable alternative be defined – This will be defined in procedure and guidance

Point 2 Why limit to current grade or below if appropriate training can be given. Amended Sentence before TUPE – where is the guidance on relocation – might be helpful to signpost it. Added

Principles point 1 recognised union is UNISON. Amended

Redundancy point 5 is this ad hoc or agreed each time? Again UNISON. Amended

Page 15 para 1 footnote add comma after Trade Unions (and change to UNISON) Amended Principles page 15 where an what is the Modification Order? Details in procedure/guidance

Policy 7: one of the paragraphs has 'personal liability' in the heading, but no mention is made in the text. – Amended

Policy 8, Informal discussions, is it really informal to tell employee that verbal warning may be outcome but not mention being accompanied

While an employee has no statutory right to be accompanied at an informal meeting, the offer will always be there in practice. And it would be best practice to advise that verbal warnings can be issued as a view of transparency.

There is nothing about timescales for anything preceding the Appeal.

The policy states appeals should be put in writing within 5 days of receipt of the outcome letter. More guidance will be included in procedure.

Policy 9 Principles – aren't all grievance formal – possible the procedure is formal or informal but that should be made clear.

Not necessarily, some grievances can be dealt with informally, particularly where an individual raises the concern verbally.

Final bullet point ACAS does not specify "not involved" normal wording is "of their choice" risk of having to define not involved and this adds to stress and could potentially exclude most colleagues.

Practically, there would be an element of confidentiality if someone involved in any investigation were to be present at a meeting of another involved; we need to make every effort to maintain confidentiality.

Policy 10 – no comment except for the requirement to notify HR of Union reps 24hrs in advance – where has this come from and why has it been introduced when it's not been the practice in the past?

In order that we can support the arrangements for the meeting should a case arise where a line manager refuses time for the companion/rep to attend (rare, but it may occur).