

# Attendance Management Policy

## Policy principles

The Department recognises the benefits of having a healthy and committed workforce whilst at the same time having a robust, clearly understood procedure for managing sick absence. This policy outlines our approach to managing attendance.

The Department understands that people will occasionally be unwell and respects that employees may need to be absent when they are not well enough to work. In line with all large organisations, the Department has developed a policy and procedure for managing sick absences. This is because high levels of sick absence make it difficult to deliver our services and meet our business priorities. They can also increase the burden on other employees who have to make up for the absences.

The Department takes a work-focussed approach to help minimise the impact of ill-health on an employee's attendance. Being ill or injured does not always prevent an employee from getting to, or undertaking some, work. A work-focussed approach involves:

- Early intervention to enable any help and support to be identified;
- A greater emphasis on the manager and employee working together to remove barriers to work.

Managers will support employees in achieving a satisfactory level of attendance by helping them to remain at work when they experience ill-health, or return to work as soon as possible following a period of sick absence.

During continuous sick absence, review meetings will take place to provide an opportunity for the employee and manager to identify any help needed to enable the employee to return to work as soon as they are well enough.

Where levels of sick absence cause concern, managers will take appropriate steps to improve attendance, which may include formal action. Managers will use Written Improvement Warnings to address unsatisfactory attendance.

Dismissal or demotion will only be considered as a final option where the level of sick absence cannot be supported.

The following principles and aims underpin the Attendance Management policy and procedure:

- Generally, being in work is good for physical and mental health and well-being;

- The Department is committed to promoting a culture of attendance where employees feel valued, supported and committed to the business and to their colleagues;
- Attendance will be managed fairly and effectively in a clear and transparent way. Action will be taken when health and well-being are at risk or when absence levels are unsatisfactory;
- Attendance discussions will focus on what the employee can do rather than what they cannot, enabling them wherever possible to remain at work instead of taking sick absence;
- The Department is committed to reducing the number of working days lost through sick absence and the impact this has on the business and other employees.

## **Scope of policy**

This policy applies to all employees who have passed their probation, including those on temporary contracts and fixed term appointments. Employees who are on loan to the Department and on secondment out of the Department are also included in the scope of the policy. It does not apply to agency workers or contractors.

The policy is based on fair and transparent treatment of all Civil Service employees, and complies with: employment legislation; Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) best practice; the Equality Act 2010; and the Civil Service Management Code. The policy also complies with the employers' duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

## **Policy summary**

Employees are responsible for managing their own attendance and should attend work unless they are unfit to do so. An understanding and supportive management approach can lead to good health, well-being and improved performance. This policy supports managers in managing attendance effectively and encourages employees to work with their manager to achieve and/or maintain a satisfactory level of attendance.

# Probation Policy (for employees starting on or after 17 December 2013).

Applicable from: 17th December 2013

Note: this Policy and Procedure should only be used for employees who joined AHVLA, Core Defra or VMD on or after 17 December 2013. AHVLA employees who started prior to 17 December 2013 should use the legacy policy and procedures on the AHVLA Intranet. Core Defra employees who joined prior to 17 December 2013 should use the legacy information on the [probation policy and procedure](#) page.

## Policy Principles

1.1 The aim of the Probation Policy and its procedure is to:

- a) Provide information, guidance and support to probationers about their duties as new employees;
- b) Outline actions managers need to take to help probationers integrate into and contribute to the Department;
- c) Outline the expected standards of performance, attendance and conduct before new appointments can be confirmed;
- d) Ensure that probationers are treated fairly and consistently;
- e) Promote Defra's values and better day-to-day management practices.

1.2 All probationers are expected to abide by the Defra Code of Conduct (or the relevant Agency's Values/Code of Conduct), perform against set objectives and provide reasonable attendance. They will be supported by their line managers who will provide induction and guide them to achieve their objectives and settle into their new role.

1.3 If there are any conduct, performance or attendance issues during the probation period probationers will be managed through the procedures set out in the Probation Policy.

In certain circumstances, as set out in the Probation policy procedures, Defra may terminate a contract of employment before the end of the Probation Period.

1.4 Confidentiality will be maintained at all times by everyone involved. Records of formal procedures containing personal information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who breaches confidentiality.

1.5 This policy is based on the fair and transparent treatment of all Civil Service employees, and complies with: employment legislation; Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) best practice; the Equality Act 2010; and the Civil Service Management Code.

## Scope of Policy

2.1 This policy and its procedures take effect from 17th December 2013: any probationers who started prior to this date should continue to use the legacy policy.

2.2 This policy applies to all new employees, including those on a Fixed Term Appointment (FTA) in the following Defra network organisations:

- a) Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA)
- b) Core Defra
- c) Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

2.3 This policy applies to all members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) whether they work in core Defra or any of its Agencies.

**2.4 All new staff joining Defra will be required to serve a Probation Period with the exception of:**

- a) Those who are re-instated and had previously been substantive Civil Servants;
- b) Those who are substantive Civil Servants who have transferred from another Government Department or have applied through an external recruitment process;
- c) Those who are promoted to a higher grade and have satisfactorily completed a Probation Period previously.

**2.5 How the policy applies in the parts of Defra with different management structures.**

Appendix 1 of the [Probation Procedures](#) details the translation procedure for the Defra Network Agencies with different management structures.

## Policy summary

Probationers and their Line Managers share a responsibility to ensure the probationer develops and is given every chance to succeed. Issues relating to attendance, performance and conduct should be dealt with swiftly and reasonably, following the processes laid out in the Probation Procedures and in line with the principles of the relevant policies.

Updated: December 2013