

**To: The Chair of the Probation Board
The Chief of the Probation Board
(Copy enclosed for the Head of Human Resources)
Secretary of the Probation Board
Members of the National Negotiating Council**

7th March 2007

NNC CIRCULAR NO.3/2007

Dear Colleague

NNC SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

We are writing to advise that at the meeting of the National Negotiating Council for the Probation Service held on 8 December 2006 the attached National Probation Service Sickness Absence Management Policy and Guidance, together with Guidance on Managing Disability Related Absence was agreed. The Policy and Guidance were agreed after consultation with Probation Areas and the Staff Support Networks who were all given the opportunity to comment.

This Policy and Guidance is a model and is based on good practice from both within and outside the Probation Service and meets the requirements of the National Audit Office's (NAO) report 'The Management of Staff Sickness Absence in the National Probation Service 2006.' It applies to all staff.

The following are key features of the policy:

- A requirement for managers to undertake return to work interviews after every sickness absence and to actively monitor the sickness absence of their staff;
- The introduction of trigger points for issuing improvement notices;
- A greater emphasis on ensuring that staff with disabilities are treated in accordance with best practice.

The Policy and Guidance provides that Areas, if they wish, may adopt the Policy and Guidance in their entirety. Alternatively they are entitled to use their existing sickness absence management policy or develop a new policy, provided that policy includes the mandatory elements which are set out in Annex A to this letter. It is recommended that joint discussions now take place at local level with recognised trade unions with a view to reviewing existing sickness absence management policies and reaching agreement where possible.

There is a joint commitment by the parties to the NNC that the Policy and Guidance will be subject to review one year from issue. Internal Audit and/or the NAO may include sickness absence management in their normal follow up work in areas.

Any queries on the Policy and Guidance should be addressed to either the Joint Secretaries or to Nick Jones, PACU National HR Manager, Policy Development.

Yours faithfully

Martin Wargent
Judy McKnight

Joint Secretaries

NNC MODEL SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY & GUIDANCE

Mandatory elements

- deal with sickness absences fairly and with understanding and provide appropriate support through managers, HR and occupational health facilities;
- ensure that clear reporting and recording procedures are in place;
- maintain accurate records of absences attributable to illness or injury;
- regularly monitor trends, patterns and reasons for absence on a local basis;
- treat all matters relating to ill-health and injury confidentially;
- record disability related absence and sickness absence separately;
- hold return to work interviews after every sickness absence;
- use trigger points to consider whether issuing improvement notices are necessary;
- deal with short term and long term absences separately.