

Attendance Procedure Guidance

Post Office Managers – for attention
Union Representatives – for information

Attendance Procedure Guidance

Issues have been raised concerning application of the jointly agreed attendance procedure and in particular in respect of mitigating circumstances. The Attendance procedure is designed to encourage the high standards of attendance normally achieved and maintained by the vast majority of colleagues and sets out minimum standards designed to ensure consistency, but flexible enough to be relaxed where the merits of the case can justify it.

Issue of Attendance Stage Warnings – Mitigating Circumstances

A current mistaken perception exists that only Maternity related conditions are to be taken into account as mitigating factors and that managers are issuing stage warnings without taking into account any other mitigating factors.

- Each case must be treated on its merits taking into account issues such as length of service and nature of work.
- An explanation for the absence(s) and any mitigating factors offered by the colleague during a stage warning interview must be considered by the interviewing manager when making a decision on issuing a Stage Warning. Where the interviewing manager does not accept mitigating circumstances reasons must be given.
- If absences caused by medical conditions covered by the Equality Act (previously DDA) are not to be discounted in a stage warning then:
 - 'reasonable adjustments' must have been previously made
 - the colleague must have been informed in advance, verbally and in writing, that absences relating to the condition may be included in the future
 - solid reasons why they are to be included must be provided and discussed with the colleague
 - a re-assessment of the 'reasonable adjustments' must be made at each stage of the attendance procedure.
- Absences which are incurred by employees who are disabled are treated in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and which, in the view of the Employee Health Service, are related to their disability, will normally be discounted. However this may not always be the case and the following should be noted:
 - These absences will still be recorded on the employee's sick absence record.
 - The line manager will still carry out return to work discussions, explain that the relevant absences have been discounted and discuss whether assistance from Employee Health Service or POL would help with disability-related attendance problems, including consideration of any reasonable adjustments.
 - Absences which are disability-related may be counted where this is justifiable to do so and in these circumstances the employee should be given advance warning that future absences will no longer be discounted.
- The decision to issue a stage warning rests solely with the interviewing manager however if a manager decides not to issue a warning an explanation of their reasoning should be given to their line manager.

Part Day Absences - Doctor's, Dental and Hospital appointments

If a colleague is scheduled to attend work on a particular day, but does not attend that day due to ill health, this would be recorded as a full day's sick absence, irrespective of the number of hours they were scheduled to attend.

However, if a colleague performed at least one hour's duty on a particular day, but was unable to attend for the rest of their scheduled hours due to ill health, this will not be recorded as a sick absence and therefore will not be counted towards the stage warning trigger points but should be noted and discussed with the individual where this type of absence becomes a matter of concern.

All medical appointments should be arranged in the individual's own time whenever possible. However, if this cannot be done, time off may be allowed for attending such appointments. The line manager may ask for evidence of the date and time of the appointment, e.g. appointment card/letter. The colleague should not be expected to make up the time lost and such appointments are not taken into account when monitoring under the Attendance Procedure.

General Guidance

Assistance for managers on stage warnings and the application of the Attendance procedure can be obtained from Managers HR Help 0844 210 2042