



Equality Screening Template

Attendance Policy and Attendance Booklet (revised)

Belfast City Council -Equality Screening Template

The Council has a statutory duty to screen. This includes our strategies, plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as – the introduction, change or end of an existing service, grant funding arrangement or facility. This screening template is designed to help departments consider the likely equality impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Before carrying out an equality screening exercise it is important that you have received the necessary training first. To find out about the training needed, contact – gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk

The accompanying [Screening Guidance](#) note provides straightforward advice on how to carry out equality screening exercises. Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties¹ and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission's website.

The screening template has 3 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - asks you to provide details about the policy / decision that is being screened.

Section B - has 4 key questions that require you to outline the likely impacts on equality groups, and all supporting evidence.

Section C - is the formal record of the screening decision.

Section A

Details about the policy / decision to be screened

Title of policy / decision to be screened:- Attendance Policy and Attendance Booklet (revised)

¹ ECNI 'Section 75 of the NI Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities' April 2010. www.equalityni.org

Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:-

(Explain - Is this a new, revised or existing policy? Are there financial / legislative / procurement implications?) Attendance Policy and Attendance Booklet has been under review since January 2011. The purpose of the policy is to support a culture in BCC in which everyone works together to maximize productive attendance. Some minor changes have been suggested in consultation with management and the trade unions

Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be screened:-

(What is the policy trying to achieve?)

The policy and booklet aims to ensure that all sickness absences are treated fairly and sympathetically across the council. The Council agreed to review the policy one year after its' implementation and ensure it is providing appropriate support and encouragement to all employees who are absent and to take all reasonable steps to assist employees return to work. It is designed to balance the requirements of the service with the interests of individual employees and encourage all employees to meet the high standards of attendance normally achieved by the vast majority of BCC staff.

On whom will the policy / decision impact?

Consider the internal and external impacts (both actual or potential)

- Staff x
- service users
- other public sector organisations
- voluntary / community groups / trade unions x (trade unions)
- others, please specify

Are there linkages to other Agencies/ Departments?

N/A

Section B- **Consultation and Available evidence**

Outline consultation process achieved or plan

When the Attendance Policy was introduced in January 2010, there was a provision that Human Resources would review the policy in consultation with management and the trade unions.

Compliance with the policy is monitored at corporate, departmental, service and individual level in line with the Framework for Reporting, Monitoring and Managing Absence to ensure a consistent approach across the organisation.

Fortnightly compliance meetings with Employee Relations and Departmental Human Resources are carried out to ensure that the policy is applied fairly and consistently. Absence reports from BCC computerized reporting system (AMS) identifies causes of absence and management actions taken to control absence levels.

Consultation with management and the trade unions began in January 2011 in relation to the review of the policy. Advice was sought from Good Relations and Equality Commission NI during the process.

The policy/booklet was screened out in May 2013. Changes have been made to the booklet as a result of consultations with trade unions since then. This screening document is essentially the same as the 2013 document with only a few minor changes made where 'quotes' have been taken from the booklet.

Available Evidence

It is important to record information gathered from a variety of sources such as:

- **Monitoring information**
- **Complaints**
- **Research /surveys**
- **Consultation exercised and other public authorities**

What evidence / information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Set out all evidence below along with details of the different groups you have met and / or consulted with to help inform your screening assessment.

Impact on all Section 75 groups considered in original Screening of Policy and Booklet. There are no major changes to the Attendance Policy or Attendance Booklet. Following consultation with the trade unions some concerns were raised as outlined in the table below:

Section 75 category	Details of evidence / information and engagement
Religious belief	
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	Absence information including age profiles is collated on BCC computerized absence management system (AMS). The legislation on the removal of the default retirement age was considered.
Marital status	
Sexual orientation	
Men & women generally	Absence information including gender make-up is collated on BCC computerised absence management system (AMS). Maternity related absence is identified separately to other absences. The Attendance Booklet acknowledges: “ If an employee with maternity

	related absences falls outside the minimum standards of attendance it may be appropriate not to issue warnings or to set lower standards of attendance in recognition of the fact that the absence is maternity related and therefore may be treated differently to other absences.”Trade unions raised concerns that the management of some redeployments may have an adverse impact on male employees, in particular drivers, who are temporarily redeployed when they are unable to undertake driving duties. This may involve a reduction in grade where there are no suitable temporary redeployments at the employee’s grade.
Disability	Absence information is obtained from BCC computerized absence management system (AMS). Disability related absence is identified separately to other absences. The Attendance Booklet acknowledges: “If an employee with disability related absences falls outside the minimum standards of attendance outlined above, it may be appropriate as a reasonable adjustment, to set lower standards of attendance or not to issue warnings until the reasonable adjustments have been tested out”.
Dependants	

Likely Impact- equality of opportunity

- 1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? What is the level of impact?**

Section 75 category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None
Age	BCC is aware of removal of default retirement age, the changes to pension regulations and the probability of an increasingly older workforce. All reasonable adjustments will be considered to help employees attain the standards of attendance .e.g. employees who are no longer fit to undertake heavy manual work will be considered for medical redeployment or adjustments to their job.	Minor

Marital status		None
Sexual orientation		None
Men and women generally	<p>BCC is aware of the issues relating to maternity related absences, affecting only women and have made special provision for this as outlined above.</p> <p>Work Life Balance options are considered to help employees attain the standards of attendance.</p> <p>Trade unions raised concerns that the management of temporary redeployments may have an adverse impact on male employees, in particular drivers, who are temporarily redeployed when they are unable to undertake driving duties. Trade unions want employees to be paid their substantive rate of pay for as long the temporary redeployment may last, which could be several months.</p> <p>If an employee is unfit to carry out their full range of duties for a temporary period, all reasonable adjustments will be considered in the employee's substantive post. However it may not be possible to consider adjusted duties in some cases. Analysis of those who have been temporarily redeployed from the implementation of the new Attendance Policy indicates that, apart from one female who wanted to be transferred to the lower graded post, 6 males were redeployed to a lower graded post. The details on the cases shows that in 4 of the 6 cases, there were other relevant issues and these were not straightforward medical redeployments.</p> <p>The male employees affected were drivers and due to lack of transferable skills and suitable vacancies, temporary redeployment at their substantive grade was not possible. They were redeployed and paid at the rate for the job they were redeployed into.</p> <p>The Council does not accept that this is a gender related issue. The provisions are applied consistently regardless of gender. However, in order to reach agreement and show that the council has carried out meaningful consultation, when Occupational Health recommends a temporary redeployment for no longer than four to six weeks, it is now proposed that the employee is paid at their substantive grade when only lower graded posts are available, in accordance with the provisions of a</p>	Minor

paid phased return. The Attendance Booklet will be changed as follows to reflect this proposal:

“Paid phased returns supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling:

All paid phased returns, restricted duties or temporary redeployments should be supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling, who will propose review periods until full fitness is achieved. The arrangements for phased return, restricted duties or temporary redeployment can vary, depending on the individual case but will usually be for no longer than six weeks. Consideration may be given to extending the maximum six week period in very exceptional circumstances.

Phased returns and restricted duties or temporary redeployment will only be recommended by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling if the employee is regarded as not being fit to fulfil their normal hours of work or range of duties, and the phased return, restricted duties or temporary redeployment will facilitate an earlier return to work which can be accommodated by management. Any such arrangements must be agreed and arranged prior to the employee returning to work.

The situation should be reviewed subject to operational needs.

In order to encourage staff to return to work at the earliest opportunity, employees on paid phased returns will not be regarded as sick during the periods of absence which occur during phased returns.

It is also proposed to add the following to the Attendance Booklet in the section on ‘Redeployments’:

“Redeployment for reasons of ill health may mean that the employee has to be demoted. However, where as a result of a recommendation from Occupational Health or Employee Counselling an employee has to be temporarily redeployed to a lower graded post for no longer than six weeks (unless there are very exceptional circumstances), the employee will be paid at their substantive grade, in accordance with the provisions of a paid phased return”.

Disability	<p>BCC is aware of the obligations to consider making reasonable adjustments in the case of disability related absence. Special provision has been made for this as outlined above.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments are made where appropriate e.g. adjustments to workstation or equipment, altering hours, retraining for suitable vacancies, homeworking or flexible working. The Council will also consider extension of normal time frames specified in the policy/booklet when a disabled employee is waiting for the Council to implement a reasonable adjustment such as those outlined above. Where a disabled employee requires permanent redeployment and does not possess the necessary qualifications for clerical work, they would be offered the opportunity to undertake a 'skills check' to enable a move to a clerical post (where such a post is available).</p>	Minor
Dependants	Work Life Balance options are considered to help employees attain the standards of attendance.	Minor

2. Opportunities - equality of opportunity **Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?**

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	No	Policy applicable to all groups
Political opinion	No	As above
Racial group	No	As above
Age	Yes – BCC aware of removal of default retirement age and the changes to pension regulations and the probability of an increasingly older workforce. All reasonable adjustments will be considered to help employees attain the standards of attendance e.g.	

	employees who are no longer fit to undertake heavy manual work will be considered for medical redeployment or adjustments to their job.	
Marital status	No	As above
Sexual orientation	No	As above
Men and women generally	<p>Work Life Balance options are considered to help employees attain the standards of attendance.</p> <p>Trade unions raised concerns that the management of temporary redeployments may have an adverse impact on male employees, in particular drivers, who are temporarily redeployed when they are unable to undertake driving duties. Trade unions want employees to be paid their substantive rate of pay for as long the temporary redeployment may last, which could be several months.</p> <p>If an employee is unfit to carry out their full range of duties for a temporary period, all reasonable adjustments will be considered in the employee's substantive post. However it may not be possible to consider adjusted duties in some cases. Analysis of those who have been temporarily redeployed from the implementation of the new Attendance Policy indicates that, apart from one female who wanted to be transferred to the lower graded post, 6 males were redeployed to a lower graded post. The details on the cases shows that in 4 of the 6 cases, there were other relevant issues and these were not straightforward medical redeployments.</p> <p>The male employees affected were drivers and due to lack of transferable skills and suitable vacancies, temporary redeployment at their substantive grade was not possible. They were redeployed and paid at the rate for the job they were redeployed into.</p> <p>The Council does not accept that this is a gender related issue. The provisions are applied consistently regardless of gender. However, in order to reach agreement and show that the council has carried out meaningful consultation, when Occupational Health recommends a temporary redeployment for no longer than four to six weeks, it is now proposed that the employee is paid at their substantive grade when only lower graded posts are available, in accordance with the provisions of a paid phased return. The Attendance Booklet will be</p>	

changed as follows to reflect this proposal:

“Paid phased returns supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling:

All paid phased returns, restricted duties or temporary redeployments should be supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling, who will propose review periods until full fitness is achieved. The arrangements for phased return, restricted duties or temporary redeployment can vary, depending on the individual case but will usually be for no longer than six weeks. Consideration may be given to extending the maximum six week period in very exceptional circumstances.

Phased returns and restricted duties or temporary redeployment will only be recommended by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling if the employee is regarded as not being fit to fulfil their normal hours of work or range of duties, and the phased return, restricted duties or temporary redeployment will facilitate an earlier return to work which can be accommodated by management. Any such arrangements must be agreed and arranged prior to the employee returning to work.

The situation should be reviewed subject to operational needs.

In order to encourage staff to return to work at the earliest opportunity, employees on paid phased returns will not be regarded as sick during the periods of absence which occur during phased returns.

It is also proposed to add the following to the Attendance Booklet in the section on ‘Redeployments’:

“Redeployment for reasons of ill health may mean that the employee has to be demoted. However, where as a result of a recommendation from Occupational Health or Employee Counselling an employee has to be temporarily redeployed to a lower graded post for no longer than six weeks (unless there are very exceptional circumstances), the employee will be paid at their substantive grade, in accordance with the provisions of a paid phased return”.

	<p>Where former manual employees have been recommended for redeployment by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling, employees may be offered the opportunity to undertake a 'skills check' to enable a move to a clerical post.</p> <p>Recent outreach initiative's have targeted females to encourage their application for positions normally filled by males e.g. apprentice joiners/electricians/gardeners/painters.</p>	
Disability	<p>Yes – BCC is aware of the issues relating to disability related absences and our obligations to make reasonable adjustments where necessary. Special provision has been made for this as outlined above.</p>	
Dependants	<p>Yes – Work Life Balance options are considered to help employees attain the standards of attendance.</p>	

Likely Impact - Good Relations

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? What is the level of impact?

Good relations category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None

Opportunities – Good Relations

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		No – review of policy has no impact
Political opinion		No – review of policy has no impact
Racial group		No – review of policy has no impact

Monitoring Arrangements

Section 75 places a requirement on the Council to have equality monitoring arrangements in place in order to assess the impact of policies and services etc; and to help identify barriers to fair participation and to better promote equality of opportunity.

Outline what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.

Equality	Good Relations	Disability
HR monitoring of attendance including management actions	BCC Section 75 return	BCC Section 75 return. Disability related absences are recorded separately on the absence management system. Reasonable adjustments are made for employees. These are

		<p>stored on a database. HR runs reports to monitor compliance with the Attendance Policy and to ensure appropriate adjustments are made.</p>
--	--	---

Section C

Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened

Review of Attendance Policy and Booklet

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for –

✓	equality of opportunity and good relations
---	--

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is –

***place an X in the appropriate box below**

<input type="checkbox"/>	*<u>Screened In</u> – Necessary to conduct a full EQIA
--------------------------	---

<input type="checkbox"/>	*<u>Screened Out</u> – No EQIA necessary (no impacts) Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached:
--------------------------	---

✓	* <u>Screened Out</u> - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached:• Explain what mitigating actions and / or policy changes will now be introduced: <p>Trade unions raised concerns that the management of temporary redeployments may have an adverse impact on male employees, in particular drivers, who are temporarily redeployed when they are unable to undertake driving duties. Trade unions want employees to be paid their substantive rate of pay for as long the temporary redeployment may last, which could be several months. Management cannot sustain payment at the employee's substantive post indefinitely where an employee is unable to fulfill the duties of the post. BCC has no authority from an audit perspective to pay employees for work they are not doing.</p> <p>If an employee is unfit to carry out their full range of duties for a temporary period, all reasonable adjustments will be considered in the employee's substantive post. However it may not be possible to consider adjusted duties in some cases. Analysis of those who have been temporarily redeployed from the implementation of the new Attendance Policy indicates</p>
---	--

that, apart from one female who wanted to be transferred to the lower graded post, 6 males were redeployed to a lower graded post. The details on the cases shows that in 4 of the 6 cases, there were other relevant issues and these were not straightforward medical redeployments.

The male employees affected were drivers and due to lack of transferable skills and suitable vacancies, temporary redeployment at their substantive grade was not possible. They were redeployed and paid at the rate for the job they were redeployed into.

The Council does not accept that this is a gender related issue. The provisions are applied consistently regardless of gender. However, in order to reach agreement and show that the council has carried out meaningful consultation, when Occupational Health recommends a temporary redeployment for no longer than four to six weeks, it is now proposed that the employee is paid at their substantive grade when only lower graded posts are available, in accordance with the provisions of a paid phased return. The Attendance Booklet will be changed as follows to reflect this proposal:

“Paid phased returns supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling:

All paid phased returns, restricted duties or temporary redeployments should be supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling, who will propose review periods until full fitness is achieved. The arrangements for phased return, restricted duties or temporary redeployment can vary, depending on the individual case but will usually be for no longer than six weeks. Consideration may be given to extending the maximum six week period in very exceptional circumstances.

Phased returns and restricted duties or temporary redeployment will only be recommended by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling if the employee is regarded as not being fit to fulfil their normal hours of work or range of duties, and the phased return, restricted duties or temporary redeployment will facilitate an earlier return to work which can be accommodated by management. Any such arrangements must be agreed and arranged prior to the employee returning to work.

The situation should be reviewed subject to operational needs.

In order to encourage staff to return to work at the earliest opportunity, employees on paid phased returns will not be regarded as sick during the periods of absence which occur during phased returns.

It is also proposed to add the following to the Attendance Booklet in the section on ‘Redeployments’:

“Redeployment for reasons of ill health may mean that the employee has to be demoted. However, where as a result of a recommendation from Occupational Health or Employee Counselling an employee has to be temporarily redeployed to a lower graded post for no longer than six weeks (unless there are very exceptional circumstances), the employee will be

	<p>paid at their substantive grade, in accordance with the provisions of a paid phased return”.</p> <p>BCC absence figure (10.3) is much higher than the CBI national average figure (6.5 days 2010) and it is a key corporate priority to reduce absence in BCC. In offering phased returns and temporary redeployments, BCC can secure an earlier than expected return to work, which ensures that employees avoid action under the attendance policy, including dismissal.</p> <p>The Efficiency Agenda for BCC has identified the need to reduce organisation costs and the trade union proposal would only serve to increase costs. The current management proposal will allow management to control the cost of absence and plan appropriate service delivery.</p> <p>BCC proposals for paid phased returns and temporary redeployments is over and above what is legally required.</p> <p>Management considers their new proposals for handling temporary redeployments to a lower graded post are legitimate and proportionate in the circumstances as outlined above. Management has also taken into account all the circumstances of the previous cases where employees were temporarily redeployed to a lower graded post. Trade unions also had concerns over the application of phased returns and the management of some cases which they believed should be managed under the long term absence provisions rather than under the standards of attendance in the Attendance Booklet. The booklet has been changed regarding the use of phased returns, separating, ‘paid phased returns supported by Occupational Health or Employee Counselling’ and ‘other phased returns arranged with management’.</p> <p>Management did not agree that the cases highlighted by the trade unions should be managed under long term. However, management agreed to add further detail to the booklet to allow discretion to be applied whilst managing such cases under the standards of attendance. The following has been added to the Attendance Booklet regarding the use of discretion (section 9):</p> <p>“Managers should consider applying discretion where an employee has ‘one off’ illnesses which result in a significant absence (over 20 days) e.g. in cases of planned surgery or broken limbs. In such cases managers should not consider issuing warnings during the normal hospitalisation and recovery period indicated by Occupational Health.</p> <p>The trade unions have accepted the above changes to the booklet.</p>
--	--

Formal Record of Screening Decision (cont)

Screening assessment completed by (Officer level) – PO4

Name: Sharon Steele

[Redacted] Date: 17 December 2015

Department: Chief Executive's

Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature below

Screening decision approved by -

Name: Catherine Christy

[Redacted] Date: 17 December 2015

Department / Job Title: Human Resource Manager, Chief Executive's

Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature below

Please save the final version of the completed screening form and forward to the Equality and Diversity Officer – gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk. The screening form will be placed on the BCC website and a link provided to the Council's Section 75 consultees.

For more information about equality screening contact –

Stella Gilmartin
Equality & Diversity Officer
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS
Telephone: 028 90270511
[Gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk)