1.0 Introduction

1.1 Staffordshire University is committed to the health and wellbeing of staff. The University has in place a comprehensive package of wellbeing measures including Occupational Health Services, an Employee Assistance Programme, a Stress Management Policy and a rolling programme of wellbeing and healthy lifestyle events. This holistic approach aims to work in partnership with staff to promote wellbeing, to prevent sickness absence wherever possible and to manage cases of sickness absence where they occur within a constructive framework of policy and procedures.

1.2 As part of the University’s commitment to provide the highest standards of learning and teaching experience to students, supported by high quality business services, Staffordshire University needs and values good attendance by staff. Sickness absence is costly to the University, both from a financial perspective and in terms of ability to provide and sustain the level of customer service we would all wish to provide.

1.3 The University is fully committed to supporting staff in achieving good attendance levels although it recognises that employees experiencing ill-health may require periods of sickness absence from time to time. It is also recognised that some ailments may not preclude individuals from working and making a valid contribution, albeit that it may not be at their normal level of performance. In these circumstances, the University will make all reasonable efforts to support employees whose performance may be reduced due to a health issue.

1.4 Sickness is defined as personal illness or injury which prevents an employee from pursuing normal working activities and attendance. It may also include, in certain circumstances, precautionary reasons or certified convalescence or periods in which an employee has been in contact with an infectious disease as certified by the Medical Officer for Environmental Health.

1.5 On occasions, an employee may need to be absent from the University, not due to his/her own personal illness or injury but for other circumstances – eg a dependent’s illness, bereavement etc. In these circumstances, an individual should consider the leave arrangements the University has in place, outlined in Section 6.0 of this document.

1.6 In order to meet and exceed customer expectations, Staffordshire University is endeavouring to improve its performance in relation to attendance levels. Consequently, the University is positively working towards the creation and maintenance of a culture in which staff, managers and trade unions share this responsibility and work together to achieve the desired levels of attendance.

1.7 The University has introduced this policy in order to meet the following aims:

- To provide a framework which will ensure consistent management and support of sickness absence throughout the University
- To describe the rights and responsibilities of staff who are absent from work due to personal illness or injury
- To ensure that the University’s policy and procedures relating to sickness absence are clearly defined and understood by all
- To describe the mechanisms available to staff for support and guidance in relation to sickness absence and related issues
- To clarify roles and responsibilities of the University and its staff within the context of this Policy and supporting arrangements
- To improve the quality of management information in relation to sickness absence
• To create a culture in which everyone works in partnership to achieve improvements in attendance levels across the University

1.8 This policy applies to all members of staff employed by Staffordshire University and has been implemented following consultation with the University’s recognised Trades Unions, UNISON and UCU.

2.0 Staffordshire University’s Responsibility to Staff

2.1 Personnel Services

The University, acting through the staff of Personnel Services, is responsible for:

• Informing all staff of the provisions of the Health and Wellbeing Policy and supporting arrangements
• Ensuring that the Health and Wellbeing Policy and supporting arrangements are applied consistently and fairly
• Training managers in the understanding and implementation of the Health & Wellbeing Policy and supporting arrangements to ensure consistency and equality in application
• Advising managers in the management of sickness absence and advising them in the use of the procedures that support the Health & Wellbeing Policy
• Managing the Occupational Health contract and arranging for referral to the Occupational Health Service, where appropriate, in order to inform decisions in relation to an individual’s health and absence
• Maintaining absence records and correctly applying sickness payments including statutory requirements
• Providing managers with access to information in relation to staff sickness absence to assist in the management and improvement of attendance
• Developing initiatives that further support a healthy workforce and improve attendance levels across the University

2.2 Managers

Managers within the University are responsible for:-

• Ensuring that, as part of induction, employees are made aware of the University’s Health and Wellbeing Policy and supporting procedures
• Ensuring that the Health & Wellbeing Policy and supporting procedures are followed and seeking appropriate advice from Personnel Services when necessary
• Providing accurate and timely information to Personnel Services in respect of employee sickness absence
• Ensuring that employees who are absent through sickness are treated in a fair and consistent way, with sensitivity and confidentiality
• Remaining in appropriate contact with staff who are absent from the University due to sickness
• Providing support and encouragement to facilitate the smooth return to work for employees after longer periods of absence
• Implement medical advice received from the University’s Occupational Health Adviser in order to facilitate a return to work on a sustained basis.
• Making all reasonable efforts to support employees whose level of performance at work may be temporarily reduced as a result of a health issue
• Sharing a commitment to effectively manage and monitor the sickness absence of employees in all areas of the University
3.0 The Employee’s Responsibility to the University

3.1 It is the responsibility of the employee to:

- Take personal responsibility for his/her attendance at work, recognising that full attendance is the standard expected
- Make him/herself familiar with the provisions of the University’s Health and Wellbeing Policy and supporting employee guides
- Personally inform their sickness absence coordinator who will notify their line manager as early as possible, in accordance with the guide, if they are unable to attend for work due to personal illness or injury
- Observe the University’s notification procedures including the prompt submission of medical certificates as necessary, as outlined in the employee guides
- Keep their manager informed of their progress and make him/her aware of any medical developments on a regular basis throughout a period of sickness
- Attend for an examination by the University’s Occupational Health Consultant, if required, in accordance with the contract of employment
- Follow any medical advice received from his/her own General Practitioner/Specialist or the University’s Occupational Health Advisor in order to restore good health as quickly as possible
- Take personal responsibility for his/her recovery and timely return to work.

4.0 Supporting Services

4.1 Programme of Health & Wellbeing Initiatives

The University is committed to the creation of a workplace designed to protect the health and wellbeing of employees and optimise the opportunity to help people to improve their own health.

A rolling programme of health and wellbeing initiatives are organised which are designed to provide staff with advice, guidance and resources to enable them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. These include:

- A bi-annual Healthy Lifestyle event - each event centres around a topical health related theme and provides staff with the opportunity to experience a range of services from health providers. These include free health checks, blood pressure and cholesterol testing, and general advice on health care, relaxation and nutrition.

- A range of other health related initiatives are also organised throughout the year – there is a regular opportunity for staff to undergo a health MOT with our occupational health adviser together with the opportunity to experience different types of health-care, such as alternative therapies.

- Additionally, a number of services are organised linked to national initiatives, for example, consultations with a health adviser is offered on ‘National No Smoking Day’ to provide advice on smoking cessation.

4.2 Occupational Health Service

The University’s Occupational Health provision is contracted out to a third party organisation that provides a wide range of health advice and related support to the University. The Occupational Health Service is beneficial to the University and its employees, providing independent advice about an employee’s fitness to work and rehabilitation needs together with advice on a range of general and other health issues affecting staff across the University.
4.3 **Employee Assistance Programme**

The University provides an Employee Assistance Programme. The aim of this service is to provide staff with a free, confidential source of advice on issues of concern to them. The Employee Assistance Programme is based on a telephone helpline staffed by specially trained advisors, who can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on a strictly confidential basis. Contact details are available from Personnel Services and are published on publicity materials displayed around the University. Callers to the helpline will be given support, advice and information to deal with any issues they may be facing. The helpline service can be complemented by face-to-face counselling.

4.4 **University Staff Disability Coordinator Role**

Staff with a disability related enquiry can access support, health and advice from the University's Staff Disability Coordinator. The Disability Coordinator is based in Personnel Services. In addition, if a member of staff would like to talk about disability equality issues generally, or would like to be involved in policy decisions around disability, they should contact the University's Equality and Diversity Team.

4.5 **Access to Work Scheme**

Access To Work is a government organisation providing advice and practical help for disabled people in or about to start work. Access to Work provides grants towards costs associated with helping people with disabilities to be able to function effectively at work. The University works closely with Access to Work in order to benefit from their specialist advice and to assist the University with costs of making reasonable adjustments to the workplace.

4.6 **Healthy Eating Options**

Staffordshire University provides nutritionally balanced food, with University catering outlets providing a range of salad bars and/or fresh fruits. All standard recipe University produced meals are provided on a daily basis containing reduced salt and skimmed milk. The University is ‘GM Aware’ and all suppliers provide GM free food.

4.7 **University Sports Centres**

The University has two sports centres located at each site – Stoke and Stafford. Members of staff are able to use these sports centres at reduced prices.

The Beaconside Sports Centre, Stafford is a registered referral centre which works in partnership with the local NHS organisation. Exercise referral has become an established method of not only promoting physical activity/exercise to individuals as a means of improving their health and wellbeing, but also encouraging regular, ongoing participation for long-term benefits.

Exercise referral is a means of preventing some medical related conditions (eg heart disease) as well as improving existing health-related conditions. The Sports Centre has appropriately qualified staff who, working in conjunction with the employees General Practitioner, can tailor an exercise programme designed specifically for the individual following medical advice.

As a University employee this General Practitioner referral scheme is available to you via a referral prescription from your General Practitioner.

For more information about the sports centres and the Exercise Referral Scheme, please contact Beaconside Sports Centre, or Personnel Services.
4.8 **A No Smoking Organisation**

In recognition of the need to provide a healthy working and study environment, to protect staff from the dangers of passive smoking and to comply with the law, the University has a No Smoking Policy which outlines in detail the ban on smoking in University premises. More details can be found on the University website. The University also actively supports national 'no smoking day'.

4.9 **Sick Pay Provisions**

The University’s scheme of sick pay provisions are designed to provide financial support during a period of sickness absence. These are detailed in the Contract of Employment, or in the document entitled Sick Pay Provisions, available from Personnel Services or on the University website.

5.0 **Health & Wellbeing Policy and Guides**

5.1 The Health and Wellbeing Policy defines the broad principles and commitments of the University. This document does not seek to define every possible circumstance that may arise.

Full details of the University’s guides and procedure to support this policy are as follows:

- Supporting You During Sickness Absence
- Supporting You During Longer Term Sickness Absence
- Managing Attendance
- Managing Longer Term Sickness Absence
- Sick Pay Provisions

These are available from Personnel Services on request, or on the University website.

6.0 **Reference to Other Policies**

6.1 On occasions, an employee may need to be absent from the University not due to his/her own personal illness or injury. In such circumstances, an individual may wish to consider the appropriateness of one of the other University policies:

- **Family Leave Policy:** Maternity Leave
  Paternity Leave
  Parental Leave
  Adoption Leave

- **Special Leave Policy:** Crisis Leave
  Bereavement Leave
  Court Service
  Public and Extraneous Duties
  Medical & Dental appointments
  Study Leave
  Interview Attendance
  Authorised Leave (Unpaid)

- **Annual Leave Policy**

- **Flexible Working Policy**
For further information, an individual should contact Personnel Services or their line manager in the first instance. The policies are also available on the Personnel Services website.

5.3 Attendance issues (not related to an illness or a disability) will be managed in accordance with the University’s Disciplinary Procedure and are not covered by this policy. Similarly, capability and performance issues will be managed in accordance with the University's Performance Improvement Procedure.

Operative Date

The Health & Wellbeing Policy and Supporting Procedures were approved at the Employment & Finance Committee, a sub-committee of the Board of Governors at their meeting on 19 November 2008. The Policy and Supporting Procedures come into effect from 1 February 2009.