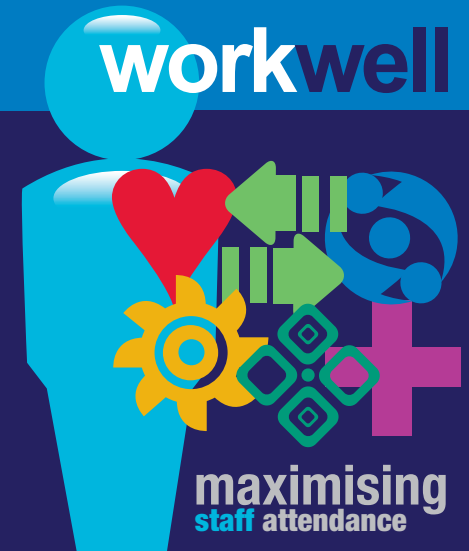


Managing Attendance

A Guide for all Managers and Employees



Welfare Visits Guide



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WELFARE VISITS

Welfare Visits is one of several guides that have been designed to provide practical advice and guidance to managers and employees around Managing Attendance. Each guide supports the Council's Absence Management Policy by answering the most common questions that both managers and employees have about their own sickness absence, and managing the absence of others.

Maintaining contact with colleagues and the workplace can have a positive effect on an employee's wellbeing, and can contribute to an effective return to work. Welfare visits provide another opportunity for this contact to be maintained. Further details about why this stage is important and what is included are detailed in the guide below.

Employee Responsibilities

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Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

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Employee Responsibilities

1. When would I need a Welfare Visit?

Welfare Visits must be carried out with an employee as soon as it is known that the absence will extend beyond 28 days and a report from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit has been obtained. As soon as the report from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit has been received by your manager a Welfare Visit can be arranged, and should take place before you have been off for more than 28 days.

Once you have been off work due to sickness absence for 14 consecutive days a referral will be made for you, by your manager, to attend the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit for assessment. Where the absence is related to a mental health or musculoskeletal condition i.e. injuries and disorders that affect movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.) the referral may be made on day 1 of the absence.

The purpose of this referral is to ensure you have access to supportive intervention early into your absence period, and also to help your manager determine the likely length of the absence and the support.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

1. When do I need to arrange a Welfare Visit?

Welfare Visits must be carried out with an employee as soon as it is known that the absence will extend beyond 28 days and a report from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit has been obtained. As soon as the report from the Occupational Health Unit has been received a Welfare Visit can be arranged, and must take place before the employee has been off for more than 28 days.

Once an employee has been off work due to sickness absence for 14 consecutive days you are responsible for referring them to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit for assessment. Where the absence is related to a mental health or musculoskeletal condition i.e. injuries and disorders that affect movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.) you may make the referral on day 1 of the absence.

The purpose of this referral is to ensure that the employee has access to supportive intervention early into their absence period, and also to help you determine the likely length of the absence and the support.

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2. What is the purpose of a Welfare Visit?

Welfare Visits provide you with the opportunity to keep in regular contact with your manager whilst you are not in work due to sickness absence. This meeting is needed to help your manager keep up to date with how you are feeling, how the absence is progressing, whether there have been any developments or improvements to your condition and also establish whether you may need any further support whilst on sickness absence, or when you return to work.

These visits are also important to keep you up to date with any changes or developments at work, to ask any questions you may have, to request support or adjustments, and also to ensure you continue to feel part of the team.

3. Where does the Welfare Visit take place?

Welfare Visits will normally take place at your place of work, or at a suitable location if your place of work is not suitable due to a medical reason. Your manager will discuss this with you when arranging the meeting.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

2. What is the purpose of a Welfare Visit?

The Welfare Visit provides you with an opportunity to keep in regular contact with your employee whilst they are on leave due to sickness absence.

The meeting will help you understand how the employee is feeling, how the absence is progressing, whether there have been any developments or improvements to the condition, and to establish whether the employee needs any further support whilst on sickness absence, or any support to make a successful return to work.

The visit is also a good time to update the employee of any workplace changes or developments that may impact upon their job role, or share team news that will help them continue to feel included and part of the wider team.

It is important to be sensitive to the nature of each individual case when arranging the meeting and determining where and when the meeting will be held.

Further advice can be obtained from your Human Resources representative.

3. Where should I hold the Welfare Visit?

Welfare Visits will normally take place at the employee's place of work, or at a suitable location if the place of work is not suitable due to a medical reason i.e. at a Trade Union premises. You will need to discuss this with your employee when arranging the meeting, ensuring you are sensitive to the nature of the condition.

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4. What will be discussed at the Welfare Visit?

The overall aim of the Welfare Visit is information sharing. It is a chance for your manager to have a conversation with you about your health to find out how your sickness absence is progressing. Your manager will want to discuss:

- how you are feeling
- how the absence is progressing
- whether there have been any developments or improvements to your condition
- whether you may need any further support whilst on sickness absence, or to enable a successful return to work
- the results of your Occupational Health and Wellbeing Report if you have provided consent to share this
- if the sickness is long term, any potential changes to your employment position
- details of sick pay dates

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

4. What do I need to discuss at the Welfare Visit?

The overall aim of the Welfare Visit is information sharing. It is a chance for you to have a conversation with your employee about their health – to find out how their sickness absence is progressing. You will need to discuss:

- how the employee is feeling
- how the absence is progressing
- whether there have been any developments or improvements to your condition
- whether the employee may need any further support whilst on sickness absence, or to enable a successful return to work
- the results of the employee's Occupational Health and Wellbeing Report if they have provided consent to share this with you
- if the sickness is long term, any potential changes to the employee's employment position
- sick pay dates

WELFARE VISITS

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It is also an opportunity for you to stay in touch with what is happening at your workplace and find out things from your manager, including:

- Have there been any changes that will impact upon your role
- Is there any news from the team – successes, celebrations etc.
- Are there any new programs or activities running in the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit that will support you in your recovery
- Are there any new job opportunities

The Welfare Visit should encourage a two-way conversation between you and your manager and you should be enabled to ask questions and discuss subjects that are important to you or any concerns you may have around your absence and return to work.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

It is also an opportunity for you to update the employee on what is happening at the workplace as this can help the employee continue to feel part of the team. This could include:

- Have there been any changes that will impact upon their role?
- Is there any news from the team – successes, celebrations etc.?
- Are there any new programs or activities running in the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit that will support the employee in their recovery?

The Welfare Visit should encourage a two-way conversation between you and your employee and you should encourage the employee to ask questions and discuss subjects that are important to them or any concerns they may have around their absence and return to work.

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5. How often will the Welfare Visits take place?

Once you have been off work due to sickness absence for 14 consecutive days a referral will be made for you, by your manager, to attend the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit. (Where the absence is not related to a mental health or musculoskeletal condition i.e. injuries and disorders that affect movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.)– in these cases the referral may be made on day 1 of the absence.)

Welfare Visits must be carried out with an employee as soon as it is known that the absence will extend beyond 28 days and a report from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit has been obtained. As soon as the Occupational Health Report has been received by your manager a Welfare Visit can be arranged, and should take place before you have been off for more than 28 days. Further visits will follow when required or once an Occupational Health update is received. Research suggests that continued contact and support significantly enables your return to work.

6. Can anyone accompany me to the Welfare Visit?

You have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague at all times, there is no provision for any other representation.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

5. How often do I need to arrange Welfare Visits?

Once an employee has been off work due to sickness absence for 14 consecutive days you are responsible for referring them to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit. (Where the absence is not related to a mental health or musculoskeletal condition i.e. injuries and disorders that affect movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.)– in these cases you must make the referral on day 1 of the absence.)

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6. Can the employee bring anyone with them to the Welfare Visit?

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague at all times, there is no provision for any other representation. You must ensure that the employee is aware of this.



WELFARE VISITS

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7. Will anyone else be at the Welfare visit besides my manager?

Your manager may be accompanied to the meeting by another officer from your department, or a HR Officer. This will be discussed and explained to you prior to the meeting.

8. How will the conversation from the Welfare Visit be recorded?

Your manager will bring the Welfare Visit Form (SA6) to the meeting and ideally this will be completed during the visit. This is purely a record of the discussion when you meet and may include observations on your general health and wellbeing, advice from your GP, observations and questions about the workplace or any other relevant notes. You will have the opportunity to read through the form and sign it prior to your manager leaving the meeting. Your manager may also complete the form immediately following the meeting if it is not convenient to do so at the meeting, and send this to you to check, sign and return. A copy of this form will be put on your record and shared with the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

7. Do I attend the Welfare Visit alone?

You may be accompanied to the meeting by another officer from your department of a higher grade than the employee, or a HR Officer if appropriate. You must communicate this to the employee prior to the meeting.

If you are attending the meeting to discuss employment options etc, you must ensure you are accompanied by your HR representative.

For further guidance on this please contact your Human Resources representative.

8. How do I record the conversation from the Welfare Visit?

Ideally you will need to take the Welfare Visit Form (SA6) along to the Welfare Visit and record your discussion on this form. You will also need to allow the employee to read over the form to ensure it is accurate and sign before the meeting closes. You may also complete the form immediately following the meeting if it is not convenient to do so at the meeting, and send this to the employee for them to check, sign and return. A copy of this form will be put on the employee's record and shared with the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit. Make sure that your notes reflect the main points of the conversation, anything relevant that the employee discloses or any actions that you have both agreed. All information should be purely factual.

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9. What if I do not want to meet with my manager?

It is always recommended that you meet with your manager at the Welfare Visit, however, if due to a relationship breakdown or work related issue this is not possible you would be advised to meet with a different manager, at the same or higher level, from your department.

If this is not possible an appropriate HR Officer may conduct the Welfare Visit.

Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

9. What if the employee refuses to meet with me?

It is always recommended that you meet with the employee at the Welfare Visit, however, if due to a relationship breakdown or work related issue this is not possible you would be advised to arrange for a different manager, at the same or higher level than you, from your department to conduct the visit.

If this is not possible an appropriate HR Officer may conduct the Welfare Visit.

Please speak to your HR representative for further advice and guidance.



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