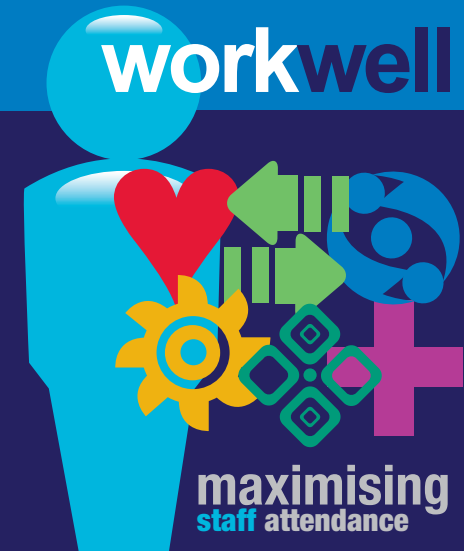


workwell

# Managing Attendance

A Guide for all Managers and Employees



## Short Term Sickness Absence and Frequent Absence

# Guide



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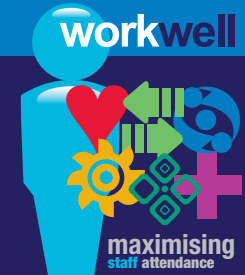


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# Managing Attendance

## A Guide for all Managers and Employees

### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

Short Term Sickness Absence and Frequent Absence 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.

For the purpose of this guide short term sickness absence will be classified as any absence under 28 consecutive days.

Employee Responsibilities		Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities	
This guide provides the answers to the following questions:		This guide provides the answers to the following questions:	
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### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

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## SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

### Employee Responsibilities

#### 1. What is short term sickness?

Short term sickness is the most common form of absence, and usually takes the form of minor one-off absences, e.g. colds, migraines, sprains and strains etc. Any absence under 28 days long will be considered as short term sickness absence.

#### 2. How do I report as absent due to sickness?

You must contact your manager on Day 1 of your absence. If you advise your manager that you have a Musculoskeletal, i.e. injuries and disorders that affect movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc) or Mental Health condition you may be referred to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit for an assessment.

If your absence continues you will be required to contact your manager on day 4, day 7, upon receipt of a fit note, day 14 and weekly thereafter.

The reason for these frequent notification periods is that evidence suggests that early support and intervention will assist your wellbeing and your return to work.

If you have not previously been referred for an Occupational Health assessment on Day 1, you may be referred on Day 14.

The purpose of referring you for an assessment is to support your wellbeing, for you to discuss your condition with a medical practitioner and for you to identify if you need support or workplace adjustments.

### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

#### 1. What is short term sickness?

Short term sickness is the most common form of absence, and usually takes the form of minor one-off absences, e.g. colds, migraines, sprains and strains etc. Any absence under 28 days long will be considered as short term sickness absence.

#### 2. How does the employee report as absent due to sickness?

An employee must contact you on Day 1 of their absence and if their absence continues they will be required to contact you on day 4, day 7, upon receipt of a fit note, day 14 and weekly thereafter.

The reason for these frequent notification periods is that evidence suggests that early support and intervention will assist the employee's wellbeing and their return to work.

If the employee has not previously been referred for an Occupational Health assessment on Day 1, they may be referred on Day 14.

The purpose of referring the employee for an assessment is to support their wellbeing, for them to discuss their condition with a medical practitioner and for them to identify if they need support or workplace adjustments.

# Managing Attendance

## A Guide for all Managers and Employees

### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

#### Employee Responsibilities

#### 3. What should I expect when I let my manager know I'm absent due to sickness?

You should expect your manager to ask you questions during your Day 1 notification, and subsequent telephone calls.

These may include:

- What is the nature of your illness?
- When did your illness start?
- Is your absence related to your disability?
- How long are you likely to be absent?
- Remind you that if your absence continues you will be required to contact your manager on day 4, day 7, upon receipt of a fit note, day 14 and weekly thereafter.
- Refer you to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit for an assessment and discuss the referral content with you.

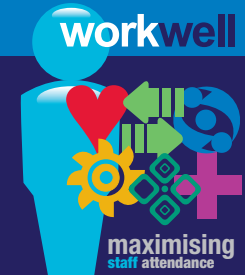
#### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

#### 3. What do I need to do when the employee reports in absent due to sickness?

You will need to determine:

- If the employee has a muscular skeletal, i.e. injuries and disorders that affect movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.) or mental health condition, for which they have not previously been referred to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit, they should be advised that they may be referred for a medical assessment. The employee should be advised that this will support their wellbeing and their return to work
- If their absence is disability related. If it is, it should be recorded as such in Vision
- If the employee needs any support or workplace adjustments to support their return to work
- How long they are likely to be absent? This will assist you in making cover arrangements
- If the employee needs any support or workplace adjustments to support their return to work
- Remind the employee that if their absence continues they are required to contact you on day 4, day 7, upon receipt of a fit note, day 14 and weekly thereafter.

You must ensure the absence details are recorded accurately on Vision.



## SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

### Employee Responsibilities

#### 4. Why does my manager ask these questions?

We are concerned about your wellbeing so at the earliest opportunity we want to establish if we can provide you with any support or workplace adjustments.

Sickness absence can be difficult for managers. This is because cover arrangements may need to be put in place, so managers need to establish the likely length of absence, to ensure appropriate arrangements can be made.

#### 5. What medical papers do I need to submit?

You must cover all sickness absence with certification from Day 1. If you do not do this it may affect your sick pay entitlements.

**Day 1 to day 7** – you must be covered by a self certification (SA3) form (available from your manager), if your absence is not already covered by a “fit note”.

**Day 8 onwards** – you must be covered by a GP “fit note”. You should contact your manager upon receipt of a fit note to inform them of the fit note details. Your fit note should be provided to your manager on time, with no gaps in dates, as again this may affect your sick pay entitlements.

### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

#### 4. Why must I ask these questions?

As a Council we are concerned about the wellbeing of every employee, so at the earliest opportunity we want to establish if we can provide the employee with any support or workplace adjustments.

Sickness absence can be difficult for managers. This is because cover arrangements may need to be put in place, so managers need to establish the likely length of absence, to ensure appropriate arrangements can be made.

#### 5. What medical papers does the employee need to submit?

The employee must cover all sickness absence with certification from Day 1. If they do not do this it may affect their sick pay entitlements.

**Day 1 to day 7** – the employee must be covered by a self certification (SA3) form (available from you), if their absence is not already covered by a “fit note”.

**Day 8 onwards** – the employee must be covered by a GP “fit note”. Upon receipt of the fit note the employee should contact you to notify you of the fit note details. The fit note should be provided to you on time, with no gaps, as again this may affect their sick pay entitlements.

# Managing Attendance

## A Guide for all Managers and Employees

### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

#### Employee Responsibilities

##### 6. Why will I be referred to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit?

The purpose of referring you for an assessment is to support your health and wellbeing. The assessment will be undertaken by a medically qualified practitioner. During the assessment you will discuss your ill health condition to identify an anticipated time frame in which you are likely to return to work and determine any support or workplace adjustments required.

Your manager may refer you to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit at the following stages:

- Day 1 – you may be referred for musculoskeletal disorders or Mental Health conditions
- Day 14 – for all other absences.
- When trigger points have been hit.

#### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

##### 6. Can I see the employee's Occupational Health and Wellbeing report and can I share employee medical reports with other managers?

You should ensure that the employee is referred on a timely basis and may refer:

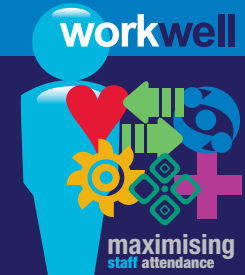
- On day 1 – you may refer for musculoskeletal disorders or Mental Health conditions
- On day 14 – for all other absences
- When trigger points have been hit.

Referrals should be submitted through the online referral form. (Please seek assistance from Human Resources where required). **Managers should be aware that any information contained within the referral may be shared with the employee and therefore should be detailed, factual and ideally already discussed with the employee.**

The referral will provide the personal details of the employee, the date they reported absent and the reason for the absence. You should also aim to give as much information as possible about the workplace, job duties, work patterns etc. Depending on your discussions with the employee you may want to ask some additional questions, such as:

- Would workplace adjustments assist the employee return to work?
- Does the employee need any specific managerial support upon their return to work?
- When is the likely return to work date?
- Will the employee be fit to undertake all duties?





## SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

### Employee Responsibilities

#### 7. What support is available?

Depending on your medical condition you may be offered:

- Physiotherapy including acupuncture, ultrasound scans and injection therapy
- Counselling
- Work place adjustments
- Programmes such as Mind, Body and Balance, Mindfulness
- Recommendations for a rehabilitation programme
- Managing my life course
- Self help courses
- Ongoing manager support.

### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

#### 7. What support is available for the employee?

Depending on the employee's medical condition they may be offered:

- Physiotherapy including acupuncture, ultrasound scans and injection therapy
- Counselling
- Work place adjustments
- Programmes such as Mind, Body and Balance, Mindfulness
- Recommendations on a rehabilitation programme
- Managing my life course
- Self help courses
- Ongoing manager support.

# Managing Attendance

## A Guide for all Managers and Employees

### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

#### Employee Responsibilities

##### **8. How do I maintain contact with my manager when I am absent due to sickness absence?**

It is your responsibility to stay in touch with your manager on day 4, day 7, upon receipt of a fit note, day 14 of your absence and weekly thereafter and provide the documentation to support your absence. You and your manager should agree who will initiate the weekly contact after the 14 days.

If you do not contact your manager on any of these notification periods your manager will contact you by telephone to establish the reasons why you have not been in touch. Notification would usually be made by telephone calls however alternative methods may be agreed if there are particular circumstances that necessitate alternative methods of communication, these must be agreed with your manager in advance.

#### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

##### **8. How do I maintain contact with the employee on sickness absence?**

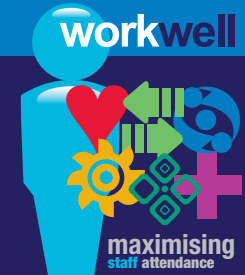
It is the employee's responsibility to stay in touch with you on day 4, day 7, upon receipt of a fit note, day 14 of their absence and weekly thereafter and provide the documentation to support their absence.

**The manager and employee should agree who will initiate the weekly contact after the 14 days.**

If the employee does not contact you on any of these notification periods you should contact them by telephone to establish the reasons why they have not been in touch. Notification would usually be made by telephone calls however alternative methods may be agreed if there are particular circumstances that necessitate alternative methods of communication, these must be agreed with you in advance.

You should be mindful that if an employee is in hospital they may not be able to contact you in person on the notification periods.

If you are unable to contact the employee by telephone or other agreed means you should contact HR for further advice.



## SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

### Employee Responsibilities

#### 9. What happens when I am ready to return to work?

You need to contact your manager giving them notice of your return to work.

Your manager will undertake a return to work interview with you upon your return. The return work interview is a vital meeting to discuss your well-being, workplace adjustments that may be required or support that may be needed, as well as being the most effective measure in reducing absence levels.

**There is a separate guide on Returning to Work which you should refer to for more information. The return to work interview is also known as Stage 1 of the Absence Management Policy.**

### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

#### 9. What must I do when the employee is ready to return / returns to work?

The employee must notify you of their intention to return to work, as you may need to put supportive measures in place.

Where possible, you should undertake the return to work interview on the first day of the employee's return to work, or at least within the first 7 days of their return to work. It is your responsibility to arrange the return to work interview and record all details on the Vision system.

The return work interview is a vital meeting to discuss the employee's well-being, workplace adjustments that may be required or support that may be needed, as well as being the most effective measure in reducing absence levels.

Preparation for the meeting is important as it will give you an opportunity to identify whether the employee has reached a trigger point or whether there are any patterns to their sickness absences.

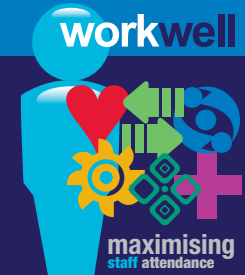
**There is a separate guide on Returning to Work which you should refer to for more information. The return to work interview is also known as Stage 1 of the Absence Management Policy.**

# Managing Attendance

## A Guide for all Managers and Employees

### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

Employee Responsibilities	Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities
<p><b>10. What is frequent absence?</b></p> <p>If you have a number of short term absences within a short period of time, or if there are patterns to your short term absences e.g. all Mondays, or all Fridays etc, your manager will review your sickness absence levels.</p> <p>They will do this because frequent absences can have a very negative effect on the service area and the team, and due to their unpredictability they are difficult to manage, particularly if cover is required.</p>	<p><b>10. What is frequent absence?</b></p> <p>If the employee has a number of short term absences within a short period of time, or if there are patterns to their short term absences e.g. all Mondays, or all Fridays etc, you will review their sickness absence levels.</p> <p>You will do this because frequent absences can have a very negative effect on the service area and the team, and due to their unpredictability they are difficult to manage, particularly if cover is required.</p>
<p><b>11. What are trigger points?</b></p> <p>The Council has set trigger points to help managers deal with frequent absence. The trigger points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 or more instances of sickness absence in any 12 month period</li> <li>• 10 or more days sickness absence within any 12 month period</li> <li>• Any other recognisable patterns such as frequent absenteeism on a Friday, Monday or weekends.</li> </ul> <p>On reaching the trigger points, your manager will take into account if any of your absences were due to disability related sickness absence, or if you are receiving ongoing support from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit, and any other matters that need consideration.</p>	<p><b>11. What are trigger points?</b></p> <p>The Council has set trigger points to help you deal with frequent absence. The trigger points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 or more instances of sickness absence in any 12 month period</li> <li>• 10 or more days sickness absence within and 12 month period</li> <li>• Any other recognisable patterns such as frequent absenteeism on a Friday, Monday or weekends.</li> </ul>



## SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

### Employee Responsibilities

#### 12. What happens if I reach a trigger point?

Your manager will identify if you have reached a trigger point and discuss this with you at your return to work interview (also known as **Stage 1**), following your period of absence. At previous return to work interviews you will have had the opportunity to discuss your reasons for absence and whether any support has been needed.

This meeting may result in a range of outcomes such as monitoring levels of further absence, referral for an occupational health assessment or referral to a Stage 2 interview.

### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

#### 12. What happens if an employee reaches a trigger point?

You need to discuss this with the employee at their return to work interview (also known as Stage 1). You will need to consider if any of the absences are disability related sickness absences, or if the employee is currently undergoing medical treatment or is receiving ongoing support from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit.

You will identify what trigger has been reached, and what action you will be taking. Actions could include:

- referral to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit (if not already done)
- workplace adjustments or managerial support
- monitoring levels of further absence
- referral to Stage 2.

# Managing Attendance

## A Guide for all Managers and Employees

### SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

#### Employee Responsibilities

##### 13. What is Stage 2?

Stage 2 involves referring you to a designated officer for review. This will be a senior officer within your service area. You will be asked to attend an interview with the designated officer, who will usually be accompanied by a HR representative. You will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

During the meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss your reasons for absence, and whether you think your absence levels can be improved or not. You will be asked if support has already been provided and if further support is needed. You may be warned of the consequence of no improvement. As a result of the discussion, some or all of the following outcomes may be reached:

- You may be required to submit a fit note from your GP for every instance of absence (any cost incurred will be reimbursed by the Council)
- You may be referred to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit (if not previously done).
- Other support mechanisms may be identified and put in place.
- Reasonable adjustments such as changes to your workload, work practices or work patterns may be identified.

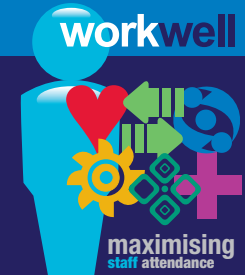
#### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

##### 13. What is Stage 2?

Stage 2 involves referring the employee to a designated officer for review. This will be a senior officer within your service area. The employee will be invited to attend an interview with the designated officer, who will usually be accompanied by a HR representative. You will not be needed to attend this meeting however you will be required to provide relevant information prior to the meeting.

During the meeting the employee will have the opportunity to discuss the reasons for absence, and whether they think their absence levels can be improved or not. The senior officer should enquire what support has already been provided and whether further support is needed and the employee may be warned of the consequence of no improvement. As a result of the discussion, some or all of the following outcomes may be reached:

- The employee may be required to submit a fit note from their GP for every instance of absence (costs may be reimbursed by the Council)
- They may be referred to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit (if not previously done)
- Other support mechanisms may be identified and put in place
- Reasonable adjustments such as changes to the employee's workload, work practices or work patterns may be identified.



## SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE

### Employee Responsibilities

The designated officer will set you a target for improvement in your attendance levels. The main points of the meeting will be forwarded to you by letter.

If you do not make sufficient improvement to your sickness absence levels you may be referred to Stage 3.

#### 14. What is Stage 3?

Stage 3 means you will be referred for disciplinary action in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure.

All correspondence and documentation will be the same as used in all other disciplinary cases.

 **Please refer to the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.**

### Manager / Supervisor Responsibilities

The designated officer will set targets for improvement in the employee's absence level. You will be provided with the target levels to ensure that you are able to continue monitoring.

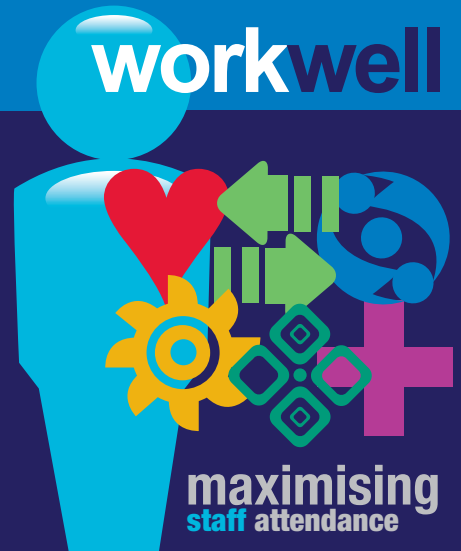
If during the monitoring period, there is no improvement to an employee's level of sickness absence, and there is no reasonable explanation or medical support for this, then you should refer the employee to Stage 3 of the process. You should advise the employee at their return to work interview that you intend to do this.

#### 14. What is Stage 3?

Stage 3 means you will refer the employee for disciplinary action in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure.

All correspondence and documentation will be the same as used in all other disciplinary cases.

 **Please refer to the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.**



# **Managing Attendance**

## **A Guide for all Managers and Employees**

### **SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE AND FREQUENT ABSENCE**

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