

ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

FAQs

Purpose

The Council has a commitment to creating a fitter and healthier workforce, however there are currently inconsistencies in the management and recording of absence across the Services which makes it more difficult to produce meaningful reporting to allow effective analysis of absence data.

This document has been collated with the purpose of providing guidance to Managers on dealing with short- and long-term absences, covering how to process the reporting of the absence and the necessary steps to follow to ensure a consistent approach when dealing with absence and supporting employees throughout the process.

Set out below are some frequently asked questions (and case studies) setting out various scenarios in relation to absence.

How do I record sickness absence?

As soon as a manager receives notification of absence due to sickness, they must record the absence in 'My View' and submit this information to Payroll for the absence to be recorded in Resource Link.

How do I deal with recording absence when an employee has become ill during the working day?

Absence from work for part of a working day, which is less than half of their normal working day, is not recorded as sickness absence, however the manager should make a note of the absence so that it may be considered when discussing patterns of absence. For example, where an employee leaves after 4.5 hours of their standard working day of 7 hours, the absence of 2.5 hours is not counted as sickness absence. If the employee left after 2 hours, then the absence of 5 hours would be recorded as 0.5 days sickness absence.

Is it acceptable to contact an employee at home when they have been signed off work by their GP?

The manager should be mindful of the circumstances of each absence, but generally both line manager and employee have a responsibility to keep in touch. This would normally start when the first certificate is received and the line manager makes contact, at which point it would be agreed when and how contact will continue – this should be at least fortnightly. A home visit should only take place with the agreement of the employee.

An employee who is absent does not wish to attend OH. Can I insist on this?

If you require professional medical advice to support the employee back to work, you can find advice on the [Occupational Health page](#). Although each case should be dealt with on an individual basis, the employee should be aware that as their line manager, you can request that they attend the appointment. When an OH referral has been identified it is important that this is actioned without delay, especially in cases where stress is the reason for absence.

If Managers have any questions regarding completion of the referral form, please email hrattendancesupport@highland.gov.uk

Questions may be about the timing of the referral, whether the referral should be made or how to ask about medical conditions reported by employees.

What should I do if an employee does not turn up for work and does not phone in?

If you are not aware of any reason for an employee's absence, then clearly the main concern is their immediate welfare. If you are unable to contact them by phone or email, then you should consider using their emergency contact or carrying out a home visit (leaving a telephone message prior to doing so to advise them of this). There is further guidance available in the [Unauthorised Absence](#) guidance.

An employee's medical certificate has run out and there is no sign of a new fit note coming in – what should I do?

You should contact the employee to remind them that this is a requirement so that their sick pay can continue. It may be that due to their health they have been unable to collect a new fit note, but it is important that they contact their GP in good time to arrange this. If the employee is not responding to this, a letter can be sent to them to re-establish contact.

Can an employee come back to work before the end of their fit note, or must they be signed back fit for work by their GP?

Where there are no concerns relating to an employee returning to their role, the employee can come back to work at any time, even if this is before their fit note expires. It may be appropriate to conduct a risk assessment in such instances.

A member of my staff is persistently absent on a Monday. Who should deal with this and how?

The line manager has responsibility for dealing with this through attendance management and initially through the Return-to-Work meetings. At this stage the line manager would review absences over the past year, highlighting to the employee the number of occurrences, whether there is a pattern for those and exploring the reason(s) for this. The line manager should also discuss whether there are any work or personal issues which the employee feels is impacting on the absences and ascertain any support required to assist in improving attendance.

An employee has been absent self-certified but has now provided a GP certificate advising that they will be absent for 1 month due to stress. What action should I take?

Contact should be made with the employee to let them know that you have received their certificate and to discuss your concern that they are absent due to stress. Unless they have previously shared reasons with you, they may not be able to speak about this immediately, but you can agree on a time and date to have a discussion as soon as possible. You should also consider a referral to Occupational Health without delay.

Along with any OH advice, counselling can be offered (this does not require a referral to OH) and continued contact to support the employee is vitally important.

When are employees made aware that they have reached a trigger for attendance management?

An effective Return-to-Work meeting will have ensured that the employee is aware of the number of absences and that a formal process may be required should there be no improvement. At the Return-to-Work meeting, the line manager will discuss all absences over the last 12 months and can advise the employee that to support them in improving their attendance a formal process will start with Stage 1.

How long should an employee remain on formal attendance management?

We would recommend that each stage should be for a duration of 3 months, but some factors will change this, for example if an employee has 2 weeks annual leave, extend the timeline by 2 weeks, if the employee is term-time working, take into account the time that the employee will not be at work and extend the formal period.

Where can I find information online regarding attendance management?

The [HR Microsite](#) has an [Attendance Management page](#) with policy, guidance and templates. You can also use online learning – Please contact your line manager for further information.

Attendance Support Officer Contacts: HRAttendanceSupport@highland.gov.uk