



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Improving Attendance: Guidance for Staff

Leasachadh Frithealadh: Stiùireadh
airson Luchd-obrach

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What is the purpose of the Attendance Management Policy?

The purpose of the Attendance Management Policy is to ensure that:

- you are aware of the standards of attendance required of you;
- you are aware of the procedures that will be followed and the support that is available to help you to meet these standards; and
- attendance is managed in a fair and consistent manner across the organisation.

The policy tries to show managers and staff that early intervention is very important. For example, it can help your manager to:

- Identify whether there are any underlying causes which have an impact on your attendance;
- identify whether any reasonable adjustments are required to help prevent the necessity for sick absence in the first place; or
- find ways to support you to get back to work more quickly and lessen the chance of a medium-term absence becoming long-term.

What is the purpose of the Improving Attendance Procedures?

The Policy and Procedures for Improving Attendance aim to ensure that:

- if your attendance is considered to be unacceptable you are given the appropriate guidance and support to help it to improve to an acceptable level; and
- if no improvement is forthcoming, to give your manager a framework which will allow him or her to impose sanctions in a way that is fair and consistent throughout the organisation.

What is my manager responsible for?

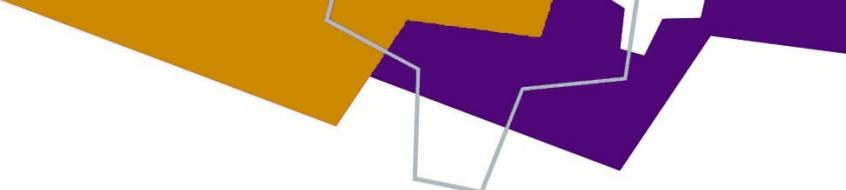
Your manager is responsible for:

- monitoring your attendance;
- taking early action in response to any issues he or she identifies;
- supporting you to achieve high levels of attendance;
- managing absence in accordance with the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure;
- ensuring that your duties are properly covered when you are absent;
- carrying out the return to work interview and submitting the form to the Human Resources Office to confirm that you have self-certified for any absence lasting from one to seven calendar days; and
- managing unacceptable attendance through the proper application of the Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Unacceptable Attendance.

Do I have any responsibilities?

Yes. You are responsible for:

- attending work in accordance with your terms and conditions of employment;
- contacting your line manager before 10:00am (or before your expected start time if you are on shifts, a rostered commitment, or operate a flexible working pattern), if you are unable to attend work because of illness;
- submitting any necessary medical certificates at the appropriate time;
- attending appointments with occupational health if required;
- complying with the terms of the Attendance Management Policy;
- keeping in touch with managers during periods of absence;
- co-operating with your manager at a return to work interview.



Why do we have return to work interviews?

Primarily to give your manager the chance to ensure that you are fit to return to work. In the case of frequent, short-term absence, it is an opportunity for your manager to:

- explore the reasons for your irregular attendance and identify any ways in which better attendance might be achieved, for example, a personal circumstance that might be alleviated by a change to working practices.

For long-term absence it allows your manager to:

- explore fully what he or she can do to facilitate your return to work (which is always difficult after a long period of absence). This might include refresher training or coaching, adjusting specific objectives and workloads or giving you extra practical support in the first few weeks.

The return to work interview is not part of the disciplinary procedures. It is part of performance management. It is about supporting people and getting the best from them. The interview will also help you to:

- feel welcome and valued on your return;
- confirm that you really are fit to return to work;
- explain to the reasons for your absence to your manager;
- provide your line manager with sufficient information to enable him or her to complete the Return to Work Form and submit it to the Human Resources Office. This form constitutes your self certification covering any absence between one and seven calendar days.
- appreciate how your absence has impacted on the business;
- let your manager know about any difficulties you have that may be causing or contributing to your absence; and
- agree priorities for the immediate future.

What will happen at a return to work interview?

When carrying out the return to work interview your manager will:

- discuss the reasons for your absence and any previous absences, in particular if there are any apparent pattern or trends, for example, if you are regularly absent immediately following weekends or rest days;
- discuss any issues that may be causing or contributing to your absence and any possible solutions or sources of support / help that might be available to you;
- discuss the impact that the absence has on work colleagues and on the organisation;
- confirm that you wish to self certify for any absence between one and seven calendar days, if appropriate;
- brief you on the events that occurred during your absence; and
- discuss the work that needs to be undertaken to catch up.

Will my manager keep a record of the interview?

Yes. Your manager will record the discussion on the return to work interview form and submit it to the Human Resources Office.

I have a disability. How will this affect how my absence is managed?

If you have a disability, we will consider any reasonable adjustments that we can make to support you to stay in work.

What do you mean by a reasonable adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment could be any number of things. We can make physical adjustments, for example, if you are partially sighted you may require a large screen PC monitor, or we can make changes to your working practices, for example you may need to have starting/finishing times adjusted to fit in with your medication/treatment.

How will my manager know what adjustments I need?

Your manager will discuss your needs with you and, if necessary, obtain advice from our Occupational Health Adviser (see paragraphs 16-18 below).

What are my responsibilities?

You have a contractual obligation to come to work on each and every day for which you are employed. You also have an obligation to co-operate in the application of any of the SPCB's policies and procedures, including the [Attendance Management Policy and Procedure](#).

Is there anywhere I can go for support?

Yes. You can go to your manager. You can also self-refer to:

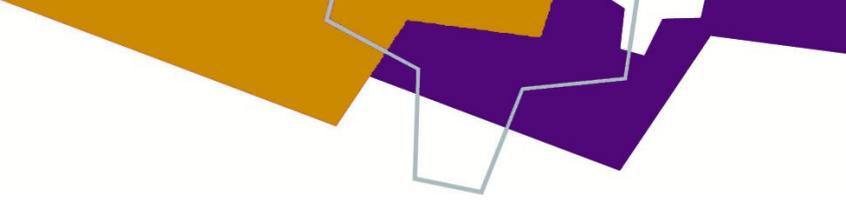
- the Occupational Health Adviser;
- [the SPCB's Confidential Counselling and Information Service](#);
- [the Civil Service Benevolent Fund](#); and
- your trade union.

However, you should always speak to your manager at the earliest opportunity since he or she will have to be involved in any recovery / support plan and it is better for them to be in at the beginning so that they can make any necessary adjustments right away.

What is the role of Occupational Health?

The Occupational Health Adviser operates independently of management and has a role as an impartial professional adviser. He/she has duties to individuals as well as to the employer and is responsible for:

- providing impartial advice, support and guidance to management and staff on health and well-being issues;
- conducting health assessments; and
- liaising with medical professionals as appropriate.



Will I be informed if my manager consults the Occupational Health Adviser?

Yes. We will let you see the referral form and ask for your consent to approach your GP. Under the terms of the Access to Medical Reports Act you have the right to see any medical reports in respect of your health and we need to get your express consent for the Occupational Health Adviser to gain access to your medical information.

What if I refuse to be referred to Occupational Health?

The purpose of consulting you in advance is not to seek your consent to make the referral; it is to seek your consent for our Occupational Health Adviser to access information from your GP or other medical practitioner, such as a hospital consultant, etc. If you refuse to give consent to this then our Occupational Health Adviser will base their advice to us on the information they have. You should also bear in mind that if you refuse to co-operate in the application of any the SPCB's policies or procedures, including the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure, this may be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the disciplinary procedures.

What can the Civil Service Benevolent Fund provide?

If you have personal difficulties which you require practical help with, the Fund can provide:

- information on voluntary and statutory organisations, nursing, residential respite and convalescent care homes anywhere in the UK;
- information on sheltered housing and community care services throughout;
- advice and possible financial assistance on short and long term care options; and
- other financial assistance depending on your particular circumstances.

Do I have to be a member of the Civil Service Benevolent Fund to access this service?

No. The Fund is run through subscription but the SPCB makes up any shortfall to the fund by paying a corporate subscription.



What is the role of my Trade Union?

Your trade union will provide you with personal support and guidance. If your attendance is ultimately considered to be unacceptable, then your trade union has a formal role to assist you as we progress through the formal process.

What should I expect if I have a long-term absence?

Your manager will need to gather sufficient information to allow him or her to manage it properly. This could come from a range of sources including Occupational Health and your General Practitioner or other medical specialist. Your manager will need to:

- seek advice from Occupational Health via the Human Resources Office on the likely duration of the absence; the prognosis; and whether or not it is disability related;
- arrange to keep in touch with you on a regular basis (this is not only a support mechanism for you, it also keeps them up to date with your progress);
- consider whether it is appropriate to put in place any reasonable adjustment within the workplace;
- consider whether a phased return to work might help you to get back to work earlier;
- consider whether ill health retirement is appropriate.

What should I do if I don't want my manager to keep in touch with me?

It is your manager's job to keep in touch with you during sick absence. If you have a legitimate reason for not wanting to keep in touch with an individual manager then you should contact your Head of Office/Group to discuss the situation. Your Head of Office/Group may be able to put alternative arrangements in place to ensure that regular contact is maintained.



What if I have a medical condition and this means that I have some short-term absence every year?

If you have a medical condition that causes you to have short-term absences, your manager will need to:

- seek advice from Occupational Health via the Human Resources Office to determine whether the condition constitutes a disability under the terms of the DDA;
- consider whether it is appropriate to put in place any reasonable adjustments within the workplace; and
- if appropriate, and in consultation with the HR Adviser set revised flags before they would consider taking management action.

If you have short-term absences and you do not have an underlying medical condition, your manager will:

- ensure that you are aware of the standards of attendance expected of you and give you the opportunity to meet these standards before taking any action under the Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Attendance.

But my absence is genuine. Surely you won't take management action when my absence is genuine?

The Attendance Management Policy is not in place to manage absence that is not genuine. If your manager suspects that your absence is not genuine, then this is a conduct issue and as such your manager would deal with this through the Disciplinary Procedures.

The Absence Management Policy will help your manager to ensure that you are given the right support and guidance to enable you to attend work. However, if your absence levels remain an issue, then your manager may have to consider taking action.



What if my absence is covered by a medical certificate?

Your manager will continue to follow the same procedure. As mentioned above, you are contracted to attend work and for that, you are remunerated. If you are unable to attend work, even through illness, then your manager must first of all try to put in place support measures to allow you to meet our standards (which may be adjusted to take account of medical advice). Ultimately however, he or she will have to consider taking management action if your absence levels remain an issue and do not meet the standards required.

What are the standards required?

If the absence has reached any of the flags set out in paragraphs 22 & 23 of the Absence Management Policy, your manager will seek advice from the Human Resources Office and the Occupational Health Adviser on how to proceed.

What is “management action”?

Management action can be informal or formal. Initially it is the process your manager will go through in considering whether to invoke the formal Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Attendance. This might include referring you to the medical adviser; giving you informal counselling or coaching on how to improve your attendance, set targets for improvements, etc. Formal management action is when the manager decides to invoke the formal Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Attendance.

What if I am sent home during the working day?

This will still be recorded and treated as sick absence. Your manager will authorise a FWH credit to take the day total up to 7 hours and 24 minutes (or to the number of hours scheduled to work as part of a shift pattern, for example, 10 hours for staff working 12 hour shifts in Security).



What should I do if my absence is pregnancy related?

You should let your line manager know this because pregnancy related illness is recorded but does not count towards the flags. However, certain conditions apply to pregnancy-related absence depending on the timing; for example, your maternity leave may have to start if your absence is within 4 weeks of your expected date of childbirth.

Improving Attendance: Guidance for Staff (English only)

For further information contact:

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