**Sickness Absence Management**

**Toolkit**

Contents

[Introduction 9](#_Toc208326020)

[Absence Reporting 9](#_Toc208326021)

[Return to Work Meetings 9](#_Toc208326022)

[Noticing a Pattern of Absence 10](#_Toc208326023)

[Template Letters 11](#_Toc208326024)

[Briefing Notes 11](#_Toc208326025)

[Forms 11](#_Toc208326026)

[Template Letter 1 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Invite Letter 12](#_Toc208326027)

[Template Letter 2 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Outcome Letter 13](#_Toc208326028)

[Template Letter 3 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Invite Letter 15](#_Toc208326029)

[Template Letter 4 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Outcome Letter 16](#_Toc208326030)

[Template Letter 5 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Invite Letter 18](#_Toc208326031)

[Template Letter 6 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Outcome Letter 19](#_Toc208326032)

[Template Letter 7 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Invite Letter 21](#_Toc208326033)

[Template Letter 8 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Outcome Letter 22](#_Toc208326034)

[Template Letter 9 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Invite Letter 24](#_Toc208326035)

[Template Letter 10 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Outcome Letter 25](#_Toc208326036)

[Template Letter 11 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Invite Letter 27](#_Toc208326037)

[Template Letter 12 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Outcome Letter 29](#_Toc208326038)

[Template Letter 13 – Extension of Review Letter 32](#_Toc208326039)

[Template Letter 14 – GP / Consultant Report – Employee Chase Letter 34](#_Toc208326040)

[Template Letter 15 – Medical Suspension Letter 35](#_Toc208326041)

[Template Letter 16 – Extension / Upgrade of Sick Pay Letter 36](#_Toc208326042)

[Briefing Notes 37](#_Toc208326043)

[Short Term Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note 37](#_Toc208326044)

[Short Term Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note 39](#_Toc208326045)

[Short Term Stage 3 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note 42](#_Toc208326046)

[Long Term Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note 45](#_Toc208326047)

[Long Term Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note 47](#_Toc208326048)

[Long Term Stage 3 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note 50](#_Toc208326049)

[FORMS 52](#_Toc208326050)

[SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – ACTION LOG – Strictly Confidential 52](#_Toc208326051)

[REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT AGREEMENT FORM 54](#_Toc208326052)

[RETURN TO WORK MEETING FORM 57](#_Toc208326053)

[ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – REVIEW CHECKLIST 61](#_Toc208326054)

[STRESS CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS 63](#_Toc208326055)

[EXTENSION / UPGRADE OF SICK PAY – BUSINESS WORLD E-FORM 7](#_Toc208326058)6

 PERSONAL SUPPORT PASSPORT…………………………………………………………… 77

[Hints & Tips 83](#_Toc208326059)

# Introduction

Attendance at work on a regular and consistent basis is one of the fundamental requirements of an employee’s contract. However, it is recognised that certain levels of absence may be necessary due to illness or injury. Where employee’s absence reaches set ‘trigger points’ as outlined in the Sickness Absence Policy, you will need to invoke and follow the sickness absence procedure outlined in the policy. The information in this toolkit aims to help you initiate and facilitate these procedures for your employees.

**Goals of the Sickness Absence Policy:**

* First and foremost, the intent of the procedure is to enable open communication between employees and managers about their absences, outline expected standards, timeframes to improve and consequences of failure to improve.
* Provide the required support to employees in order for them to attend work, whilst maintaining their health and wellbeing.

# Absence Reporting

All employees who are absent from work should ensure that they inform you. As a manager, and as an organisation the School has a duty of care to the employee. Therefore, it is important that we know our employees are safe. As such if you have not heard from someone it is important that you make every effort to reach them to ensure that you know if they are running late, unwell and unable to attend work or if you need to escalate. Refer to the Guide for Safe and Well Checks on what to do if a manager has concern about an employee's whereabouts.

It is important that your team understand the importance of keeping you informed. In accordance with the policy employees are required to call you to let you know they are going to be unable to attend work.

There are some instances where it isn’t feasible for the employee to speak with you directly – this should be by exception, as employees are required to make personal contact. Where this is not possible, you should also ask the individual you are speaking with the questions above in order to gain as much information as possible about the situation and understand when it may be possible for you to speak directly with the employee.

# Return to Work Meetings

Following all instances of an employee being absent from work due to ill health managers are required to conduct Return to Work meetings. Taking the time to conduct one also demonstrates that you value your staff and miss them when they are away. A return to work meeting may also provide you with valuable information you can then use to help support your employee to achieve good attendance. Ideally these conversations will be face to face but they can be conducted over the phone where an employee is not in the same location as their manager. You should aim to conduct the return to work meeting on the day the employee returns, or as soon as practicable after their return.

The return to work meeting needs to be separate to any formal meetings and you can use the Return to Work Meeting form to record the notes of your conversation.

It maybe useful to discuss creating a Personal Support Passport with the employee to explore what keeps the employee well and able to give their best, what affects their wellbeing, and how additional support can help. See Personal Support Passport in forms below.

# Noticing a Pattern of Absence

You may start to notice a pattern of absence e.g. it always falls on a Monday or Friday. If a pattern is apparent, speak to your employee about it. Do so in a factual way without making any accusations. Take care not to make assumptions and remain open minded. The simplest way to put the matter to the employee is first to state the facts, and second to ask them if they can explain the pattern. For example:

In order to support you throughout the sickness absence policy and procedure, all forms and letters required to conduct a fair and consistent process are provided for you in this section. **Please ensure you speak to an employee prior to any letter being sent – no letter should arrive with an employee without them being aware.**

**Extension/Upgrade of Sick Pay**

Employees are entitled to sick pay in accordance with the Local Scheme of Conditions of Service, and National Conditions of Service, where applicable. These provide entitlement to sick pay (both full and half pay) dependent upon the length of service. There is also provision for the school to exercise discretion to extend the period of sick pay in exceptional circumstances.

In considering whether to exercise this discretion it is essential that decisions are non-discriminatory and consistent with the operational needs of the school. Any decision to extend or upgrade entitlement will be taken by the Head Teacher with authorisation from the Chair of Governors, also in discussion with your Senior HR Advisor to ensure consistency and fairness. We accept that employee circumstances are individual and therefore need to be dealt with in a compassionate and confidential manner.

Sick pay may be extended or upgraded for between one to three months after which time a review will take place to consider whether further extension is appropriate. It is not expected that extensions will exceed a total of 12 months at full pay.

The following criteria should be considered to guide a manager’s decision on whether to recommend to a Head Teacher or Chair of Governors that sick pay should be extended or upgraded:

* Does the extension of entitlement have a direct, positive and demonstrable bearing upon the achievement of the schools objectives?
* Are there particular reasons why the ‘normal entitlement’ fails to reflect the record, contribution or circumstances of the individual employee involved?
* As part of the Schools duty of care, has the employee’s personal circumstances been taken into account and have they been kept informed and involved in discussions?
* Has medical advice from occupational health been fully considered?
* What is the likelihood and timescale of future return to work (usually based on medical or OH advice)?
* Is the employee likely to return within the next 3 months?
* Is a full return to work or phased return anticipated?
* Have all reasonable adjustments such as alternative duties been considered?
* Has there been consultation and discussion with the employee?
* Has the financial cost been considered in comparison to the cost of effect of not extending the entitlement on the school and the employee?
* Is the employee’s continued absence caused or exacerbated by work related issues?
* Whether an extension or upgrade of sick pay should be considered as a ‘reasonable adjustment’ for employees with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
* Has advice from HR been considered?

Refer to template letter 16 – Extension / Upgrade of sick pay – letter to employee

BW form – Extension / Upgrade of sick pay

# Template Letters

* [Template Letter 1 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Invite Letter](#Template_Letter1)
* [Template Letter 2 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Outcome Letter](#Tempalte_Letter2)
* [Template Letter 3 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Invite Letter](#Tempalte_Letter3)
* [Template Letter 4 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Outcome Letter](#Tempalte_Letter4)
* [Template Letter 5 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Invite Letter](#Tempalte_Letter5)
* [Template Letter 6 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Outcome Letter](#Tempalte_Letter6)
* [Template Letter 7 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Invite Letter](#Tempalte_Letter7)
* [Template Letter 8 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Outcome Letter](#Tempalte_Letter8)
* [Template Letter 9 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Invite Letter](#Tempalte_Letter9)
* [Template Letter 10 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Outcome Letter](#Tempalte_Letter10)
* [Template Letter 11 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Invite Letter](#Tempalte_Letter11)
* [Template Letter 12 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Outcome Letter](#Tempalte_Letter12)
* [Template Letter 13 – Extension of Review Letter](#Tempalte_Letter13)
* [Template Letter 14 - GP/Consultant Report – Employee Chase Letter](#Tempalte_Letter14)
* [Template Letter 15 - Medical Suspension Letter](#Tempalte_Letter15)
* [Template Letter 16 – Extension / Upgrade of Sick Pay – Letter to Employee](#Tempalte_Letter16)

# Briefing Notes

* [Short Term Stage 1 Absence Management Briefing Note](#Stage_1BF)
* [Short Term Stage 2 Absence Management Briefing Note](#Stage_2BF)
* [Short Term Stage 3 Absence Management Briefing Note](#Stage_3BF)
* [Long Term Stage 1 Absence Management Briefing Note](#Stage_1BFLT)
* [Long Term Stage 2 Absence Management Briefing Note](#Stage_2BFLT)
* [Long Term Stage 3 Absence Management Briefing Note](#Stage_3BFLT)

# Forms

* [Sickness Absence Management – Action Log](#Action_Log)
* [Reasonable Adjustment Agreement Form](#Reasonable_Adj_Form)
* [Return to Work Meeting Form](#RTW_Form)
* [Sickness Absence Management Review Checklist](#Review_Checklist)
* [Stress Checklist](#Stress_Checklist)
* [Extension / Upgrade of Sick Pay – BW form](#BW_extendSP)
* [Mental Health Risk Assessment](#Stress_RiskAss)

TEMPLATE LETTERS

## Template Letter 1 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Invite Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**INVITE - STAGE 1 Absence Management Meeting**

Following your return to work interview held on *INSERT DATE*, where we discussed and reviewed your absences from work, I advised you that you had met the trigger points for short term sickness absence as per the Absence Management Policy.

In accordance with the Absence Management Policy I am writing to invite you to a Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting, to discuss with you how we can work together to help you maintain regular attendance.

The meeting has been arranged for;

Date: *DATE*

Time: *INSERT TIME*

Venue: *LOCATION.*

I will lead the meeting and *<NAME>* will be in attendance to take notes.

You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, trade union official or fellow employee of your choice. Please note if you fail to attend the meeting without advance notification and without good reason it will proceed in your absence.

Please confirm your attendance and who, if anyone, will be accompanying you by not later than *<DATE>*

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions in the meantime regarding the meeting. I enclose the copy of the Absence Management Policy and Procedure for your information.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 2 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Outcome Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**OUTCOME - STAGE 1 Absence Management Meeting**

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting held on *INSERT DATE*. *(if applicable*: Also present were *INSERT NAME* as your representative).

At our meeting we discussed your absences, which have reached the short term absence trigger points. Your absences totalled *INSERT NUMBER* occasions, *INSERT NUMBER* days over the last *INSERT NUMBER* months, and I advised you that this level was not acceptable. I have enclosed details of your absences in this period, copies of the return to work discussions and the Occupational Health report (If applicable).

We discussed the reasons for your non-attendance and you advised me that (*outline any reasons given)*

I explained that your attendance is giving cause for concern and I asked if there was anything further we could do to support your attendance at work.

*(Outline any steps agreed, e.g. refer to OH if not already done so)*

You were referred to Occupational Health in *INSERT MONTH* (if applicable), and following your appointment we received a report, which advised that there is/is not an underlying medical condition. We are therefore managing your absence through the Short Term Absence Procedure.

In line with the procedure, your attendance will be monitored over the next *2, 3, or 4* months during which period I expect to see an immediate and sustained improvement in your levels of sickness absence, i.e. to below the School’s trigger point of 4 occasions or 12 days pro-rata to the monitoring period. Should you fail to improve your sickness absence to an acceptable level during this time, you will be invited to attend a Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting.

I hope that we will now see an improvement in your attendance. However, if there is a further deterioration in your attendance during the review period, this meeting will be brought forward in order to instigate Stage 2 of the procedure and, if after this Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting your absence still remains at an unacceptable level, you will be subject to a Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing the outcome of which may be dismissal.

Details of the policy and procedures can be found on the School’s Employment Manual. If you do not have access to this please let me know and I will arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

If you have any queries with regard to the content of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub service is also available and is a private and confidential service, please refer to the enclosed leaflet for contact details.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 3 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Invite Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**INVITE - STAGE 2 Absence Management Meeting**

I am writing to invite you to a Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting under the Absence Management Procedure. This meeting is following the Stage 1 meeting which was held on *INSERT DATE*.

Your level of short term attendance has not improved to a satisfactory level since the Stage 1 Meeting. I have enclosed details of your absences in this period, copies of the return to work discussions and the Occupational Health Report (if applicable).

The meeting has been arranged for *INSERT TIME* on *DAY*, *DATE* at *LOCATION*, and will be chaired by me.

You may, if you wish, be supported by a trade union representative, trade union official or fellow employee of your choice.

This meeting is in accordance with the Absence Management Policy and Procedure, a copy of which can be obtained from the School’s Employment Manual. If you do not have access to the Employment Manual then please request a copy from *INSERT NAME* (who has access)

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 4 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Outcome Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**OUTCOME - STAGE 2 Absence Management Meeting**

Further to the Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting held on *INSERT DATE*, I am writing to confirm the details of our discussion. Present at the meeting were *INSERT NAMES*.

As we discussed you attended a Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting with your Line Manager on DATE. At this meeting a *INSERT MONITORING PERIOD* month monitoring period was set in order to see an improvement in your attendance.

We discussed your absences, which total *INSERT NUMBER* occasions, *INSERT NUMBER* days during *INSERT YEAR*, and you were advised this was not acceptable because you failed to meet the level of improvement which was set at the Stage 1 meeting. We explained to you the Short Term Absence Procedure and the implications of failing to reach the required level of attendance.

You were referred to Occupational Health and we discussed the outcome of the report dated *INSERT DATE* which confirmed that ……………………………..

I advised you that I felt your absences were attributable to short term sickness absence. It was agreed at the meeting that:

* In line with the procedure your attendance will be monitored over a further *2, 3, or 4* month period with the objective to reduce the amount of absences by (*INSERT AGREED TARGET*).
* *OPTIONAL:* you will be required to submit a GPs fit note from the first day of any absences during the monitoring period. Any costs associated with this will be reimbursed.
* *OPTIONAL:* – Describe any further reasonable adjustments agreed or support provided.

During the meeting we discussed the option of the redeployment scheme which is operated by LCC and available to you should you wish to explore this. If you would like any further details of the redeployment process these may be obtained from Ady Clarke, LCC Workforce Development Strategy Officer, on 01522 553216 or by email at; [Ady.Clarke@lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://george/section.asp)

As discussed should your attendance fail to improve to an acceptable level during this time, you will be invited to attend a Stage 3 Formal Absence Management Hearing, the outcome of which may be dismissal. Details of the policy and procedures can be found in the School’s Employment Manual.

If you have any queries with regard to the content of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub is also available and is a private and confidential service that can be contacted on Phone: 01522 555440 or E-mail - thecounsellinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 5 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Invite Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**INVITE - STAGE 3 Absence Management Hearing**

As your short term absence has not improved to an acceptable level following the Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting which was held on *INSERT DATE*, I am writing to invite you to attend a Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing.

I am enclosing details of your absences in this period, copies of the return to work discussions and the Occupational Health report.

The meeting has been arranged for *INSERT TIME* on *DAY DATE* at *LOCATION*, at which time you will be asked for an explanation as to why your attendance has not improved to a satisfactory level. The meeting will be chaired by me. Also in attendance will be *INSERT NAME*, HR Advisor.

You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, trade union official or fellow employee of your choice, who must not be a potential witness. During the course of the meeting you will have the right to hear and question all evidence presented and the opportunity to present your own statement.

I would remind you that the hearing may proceed in your absence should you or your representative fail to attend without advance notification to me and without good reason.

This meeting is in accordance with the Short Term Absence Management Procedure within the Absence Management Policy. A possible outcome of this meeting is your dismissal on the grounds of ‘Some Other Substantial Reason’ or ‘Capability’ (if underlying medical condition).

I have enclosed all documents which will be presented at the meeting. Please note this does include the Occupational Health reports, as you will be aware you provided your consent to make these reports available to management during the early stages of the medical referral process.

If you wish to provide any documentation which is not included within pack, it must be received by me no less than 5 days prior to the meeting in order to avoid unnecessary delays.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 6 – Short Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Outcome Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**OUTCOME - STAGE 3 Absence Management Hearing**

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing held on *INSERT DATE*. The purpose of this meeting was to review your attendance at work following the Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting held on *INSERT DATE*. Present at the meeting was myself, HR Advisor (if applicable), yourself and Rep.

*Enter evidence and discussions here.*

In coming to our decision, all of the information available has been considered together with the evidence presented at the meeting and the decision in relation to your level of attendance is confirmed as follows:

*DISMISSAL - You are dismissed with notice on grounds of ‘some other substantial reason’ or ‘capability’ (if underlying medical condition)as the organisation cannot continue to employ you due to your poor attendance at work.*

*As advised you are entitled to INSERT STATUTORY PERIOD OF NOTICE notice and you will be expected to work your notice period. Any outstanding entitlement to annual leave (if applicable) should be taken during your notice period.*

*You have the right to appeal against this decision as detailed in the School’s Appeals Procedure, a copy of which is enclosed. (for Community Schools there needs to be a reference that the employee will receive notice from the Authority)*

*FURTHER REVIEW –*

*There is a period of further review, in order to consider the following:*

*The need for further involvement of occupational health.*

*Extend the review period and agree to meet again.*

*The employee has reached the required level of attendance and no further action is required but the decision will remain live for 1 year.*

*The final outcome of this Formal Managing Attendance Hearing will be determined in INSERT NUMBER months' time to conclude this process.*

The Counselling and Wellbeing hub is of course available by contacting them on 01522 555440 or E-mail - Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

*(If dismissing) If you object to the above proposal, I have a duty to advise you of your right to appeal against this decision. If you wish to exercise this right, you should do so by writing to me within ten days of receiving this letter, outlining your reasons for your appeal.*

If you have any queries with regard the content of this letter or the enclosed minutes please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Chair

## Template Letter 7 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Invite Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**INVITE - STAGE 1 Absence Management Meeting**

Further to our conversation on *INSERT DATE* where we discussed and reviewed your absence from work, I advised you that you had met the trigger point for long term sickness absence as per the Absence Management Policy. I am therefore, writing to invite you to a Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting to discuss your on-going sickness absence.

The meeting has been arranged for;

Date: *DATE*

Time: *INSERT TIME*

Venue: *LOCATION.*

I will lead the meeting and *<NAME>* will be in attendance to take notes.

You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, trade union official or fellow employee of your choice. Please note if you fail to attend the meeting without advance notification and without good reason it will proceed in your absence.

If you are too unwell to attend the meeting you may provide a written submission for me to consider and/or you may wish to ask your Representative, as outlined above, to attend on your behalf. Please note the meeting will proceed in your absence in this circumstance.

Please confirm your attendance and who, if anyone, will be accompanying you by not later than *<DATE>*

Please do not hesitate to contact if you have any questions in the meantime regarding the meeting. I enclose the copy of the Absence Management Policy and Procedure for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 8 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 1 Outcome Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**OUTCOME - STAGE 1 Absence Management Meeting**

Further to the Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting held on *INSERT DATE*, I am writing to confirm the details of our discussion. Present at the meeting were *INSERT NAMES.*

We discussed your absence from work, and your current health situation. *INCLUDE DETAIL.*

You were referred to Occupational Health in *INSERT MONTH (if applicable)*, and following your appointment in *INSERT MONTH*, we received a report, which advised that there is/is not an underlying medical condition. We are therefore managing your absence through the Long Term Absence Procedure.

During the meeting we discussed:

*The nature of your ill health*

*Your likely return to work date*

*any support we can offer in order to assist your return to work*

*if we could accommodate your returning to work in a different capacity until you are fully fit to resume normal duties*

*any reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities*

*Referral to Occupational Health for advice on fitness to resume duties* ***or*** *advice on on-going health*

*Pay status, i.e. when reduce to half/nil sick pay*

*Formal monitoring will take place during long term absence and this can ultimately lead to dismissal*

*Set a monitoring period of 2-4 months to review the employee’s absence*

*Where applicable, arrange follow up meeting on receipt of OH advice*

*Where applicable discuss creating a personal support passport*

In line with the long term absence procedure, we agreed a review period of *2, 3, or 4 (delete as appropriate)* months to monitor your absence from work. Should you be unable to return back to work during this period of time, you will be invited to attend a Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting. If after this Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting and a further monitoring period you remain unfit to return to work, you will be invited to a Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing. Should I be satisfied that your absence is attributable to long term sickness and everything has been reasonably undertaken, then the outcome may be your dismissal on the grounds of capability (where an underlying medical condition is identified).

If you have any queries with regard to the content of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*[Insert this paragraph only if your school pays for this service through Lincolnshire County Council]* the Counselling and Wellbeing hub is also available and is a private and confidential service that can be contacted on Phone: 01522 555440 or E-mail - Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 9 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Invite Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**INVITE - STAGE 2 Absence Management Meeting**

In accordance with the Absence Management Policy and Procedure I am writing to invite you to attend a Stage 2 Absence Management meeting. This meeting is following the Stage 1 meeting which was held on *INSERT DATE*.

The meeting has been arranged for;

Date:

Time

Location:

The meeting will be chaired by myself and at the meeting we will discuss your long term absence, why you are unable to return to work, your current health situation, and your continued absence from work and the options that may be considered*.* *NAME* will also be in attendance to minute take.

You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, trade union official or fellow employee of your choice. Please note if you fail to attend the meeting it will proceed in your absence.

If you are too unwell to attend the meeting you may provide a written submission for me to consider and/or you may wish to ask your Representative, as outlined above, to attend on your behalf. Alternatively the meeting can be conducted over telephone conferencing.

Please confirm your attendance and who, if anyone, will be accompanying you by not later than *<DATE>*

Please do not hesitate to contact if you have any questions in the meantime regarding the meeting. I enclose a copy of the Absence Management Policy and Procedure for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 10 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 2 Outcome Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**OUTCOME - STAGE 2 Absence Management Meeting**

Thank you for meeting with me on *INSERT DATE*, to discuss your continued absence from work. As advised, I am writing to confirm the discussion and the next course of action to be taken. At the meeting you were accompanied by *INSERT DETAILS.*

I advised you that we were following the Absence Management Policy, in line with the Long Term Absence procedure.

As discussed at the Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting held on *INSERT DATE*, we agreed a period of 2, 3, or 4 *(delete as appropriate)* months to review your absence from work. As you have been unable to return back to work during this review period, you were invited to attend this Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting.

We discussed the latest report from Occupational Health, *DATED*. The report stated *that you …….*

During the meeting we also discussed:

*<Insert details of the discussion, including any options posed by the school/individual and the individuals/schools responses surrounding the following topics;*

* *Any progress or improvements in your health*
* *A likely return to work date/phase return*
* *Any support available – ES & C, Access to work*
* *Where applicable discuss creating a personal support passport*
* *Reasonable adjustments*
* *Consideration for Pension scheme and permanent ill health retirement>*

During the meeting we discussed the option of the redeployment scheme which is operated by LCC and available to you should you wish to explore this. If you would like any further details of the redeployment process these may be obtained from Ady Clarke, LCC Workforce Development Strategy Officer, on 01522 553216 or by email at; Ady.Clarke@lincolnshire.gov.uk

We also discussed the option of ill health retirement. If you would like to be considered for ill health retirement please let me know and I can make arrangements for an occupational health assessment against the relevant criteria. Please note that there are strict criteria for the release of ill health retirement pension benefits and access to these benefits therefore is not guaranteed.

I advised that a further review period of 2, 3, or 4 *(delete as appropriate)* months has been set in order to review your absence from work. I explained that if you are unable to return back to work at the end of this review period then you will be invited to attend a Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing. Should I be satisfied that the absences are attributable to long term sickness and everything has been reasonably undertaken, then the outcome of this meeting may be your dismissal on the grounds of *‘capability’* where an underlying medical condition is identified. In this situation you would be entitled to *INSERT STATUTORY PERIOD OF NOTICE* weeks full paid notice. We very much hope that this will not be the outcome, but it is important that we advise you what the options are, and what is being considered.

We agreed a timescale of 2, 3, or 4 *(delete as appropriate)* months for a return to work and therefore discussed the possibility of redeployment with you.

We will arrange to meet with you again in 2, 3, or 4 *(delete as appropriate)* months' time to discuss concluding the situation, should you not have returned to work during this time.

If you have any queries about the content of this letter, or our meeting, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*[Insert this paragraph only if your school pays for this service through Lincolnshire County Council]* The Counselling and Wellbeing hub is also available and is a private and confidential service that can be contacted on Phone: 01522 555440 or E-mail - Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

In the meantime I would like to wish you well and hope that there will be an improvement in the state of your health in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 11 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Invite Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**INVITE - STAGE 3 Absence Management Hearing**

I am writing to invite you to attend a Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing, under the Absence Management Procedure. This meeting is following the Stage 2 Formal Meeting which was held on *<enter date>.*

The hearing has been arranged for;

Date; *Insert Date*

Time; *Insert Time*

Location; *Insert location*

The hearing will be chaired by myself. Also in attendance will be *INSERT NAME.*

The meeting is to discuss your current health situation, your continued absence from work, and the options that may be considered; these include termination of your contract with Lincolnshire County Council, on the grounds of capability*.* During the course of the meeting you will have the right to hear and question all evidence presented. This is in line with the Long Term Absence procedure.

I have enclosed all documents which will be presented at the meeting; this includes all Occupational Health reports, to which you gave your consent to be made available for appropriate meetings at the first stage of the absence management process. If you wish to provide any additional documentation which is not included within this pack, it must be received by me no less than 5 days prior to the meeting in order to avoid unnecessary delays.

You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, trade union official or fellow employee of your choice. If you are too unwell to attend the meeting you can provide a written submission and/or ask your representative to attend on your behalf. In this scenario the hearing will proceed in your absence.

I would remind you that the hearing may proceed in your absence should you or your representative fail to attend without advance notification to me and without good reason.

Please confirm your attendance and who, if anyone, will be accompanying you by not later than *<ENTER DATE>*

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions in the meantime regarding the meeting. I enclose a copy of the Absence Management Policy and Procedure for your information.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 12 – Long Term Sickness Absence Stage 3 Outcome Letter

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**OUTCOME - STAGE 3 Absence Management Meeting**

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the Stage 3 Absence Management Hearing held on *INSERT DATE*. Present at this meeting were ……

This meeting follows the Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting which was held on *INSERT DATE*, at which you were advised that if you were unable to return to work or find redeployment at the end of the 2, 3, or 4 *(delete as appropriate)* month review period then consideration would be given to terminating your contract on the grounds of capability.

During the meeting we discussed:

* *Any progress or improvements in the employee’s health*
* *A likely return to work date/phase return*
* *Any support available – ES & C, Access to work*
* *Reasonable adjustments*
* *Where applicable discuss creating a personal support passport*

During the meeting we also discussed the option of the redeployment scheme which is operated by LCC and available to you should you wish to explore this. If you would like any further details of the redeployment process these may be obtained from Ady Clarke, LCC Workforce Development Strategy Officer, on 01522 553216 or by email at; Ady.Clarke@lincolnshire.gov.uk Alternatively I would be happy to pass your details onto Ady if you would prefer. This support is available to you while you remain an employee of the school.

We also discussed the option of ill health retirement. Please note that there are strict criteria for the release of ill health retirement pension benefits and access to these benefits therefore is not guaranteed. You confirmed that this was not something you felt you wanted to consider further.

I considered all of the available information and having taken into account all of the evidence presented at the meeting, my decision is as follows:

DISMISSAL – As you remain unfit to return to your substantive post, and have not yet been successful in acquiring an alternative post through redeployment, I am therefore writing to confirm that it is proposed to terminate your appointment with the school on the grounds of capability *(if underlying medical condition). (for Community Schools – the notice that you will receive will come from Lincolnshire County Council)*

As advised you are entitled to *INSERT STATUTORY PERIOD OF NOTICE* notice to terminate your employment. This will be paid on full pay over the period *INSERT DATE* to *INSERT DATE*, as a salary, in line with salary deadlines and pay dates. (Any outstanding entitlement to annual leave will be paid as an additional amount on top of your notice pay – if applicable).

You should send in copies of your medical certificates in the normal way up to the last date of your employment.

*ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT*

As confirmed at the hearing you have been granted ill health retirement under the Teachers/Local Government Pension Scheme at the following level:

(Tiers only relevant for support staff, not teachers)

Tier 1 – unfit for any gainful employment before contractual retirement age (65).

Tier 2 – unfit for gainful employment for 3 years but able to work before 65.

Tier 3 – permanently incapable of current employment but could obtain other gainful employment with a reasonable period of time. A review of this decision will take place in 18 months' time in order to assess that this tier still applies.

The Pensions Manager will be writing to you towards the end of your period of employment giving formal notice of the Superannuation benefits to which you are entitled.

As advised you are entitled to *INSERT STATUTORY PERIOD OF NOTICE* notice to terminate your employment. This will be paid on full pay over the period *INSERT DATE* to *INSERT DATE*, as a salary, in line with salary deadlines and pay dates. (Any outstanding entitlement to annual leave will be paid as an additional amount on top of your notice pay – if applicable).

You should send in copies of your medical certificates in the normal way up to the last date of your employment.

*FURTHER REVIEW –*

There is a period of further review of 2, 3, or 4 *(delete as appropriate)* months during which time you are required to demonstrate a significant improvement in your attendance. Should you fail to improve your attendance during this time we will reconvene this Absence Management Hearing at which point your employment with the School may be terminated.

We need to seek further advice from occupational health. We are therefore extending the review period and we will meet again once this information has been received and reconvene this Absence Management Hearing to conclude this process*.*

*(Dismissal only)*

If you object to the above proposal, I have a duty to advise you of your right to appeal against this decision. If you wish to exercise this right, you should do so by writing to me within ten days of receiving this letter, outlining your reasons for your appeal.

*[Insert this paragraph only if your school pays for this service through Lincolnshire County Council]*  The Counselling and Wellbeing hub is also available and is a private and confidential service that can be contacted on Phone: 01522 555440 or E-mail - Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

I would like to express my appreciation for the work you have carried out during your service with the school and hope that there will be an improvement in the state of your health in the near future.

If you have any queries with regard the content of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 13 – Extension of Review Letter

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

***Stage 1/2/3 Extension of Review***

Further to the end of your 2 month review set at Stage *1/2/3 (please delete where appropriate)***,** I have reviewed your absences from work and your current health situation. I am writing to confirm the outcome of this review period.

Since the beginning of the review period, the following absences have occurred:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Reason**  | **Total Working Days** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

I therefore propose to extend the review period of an additional ***(X)* months,** ending on*(insert date)*. At the end of this extended review period, I will review any absences you have had in this time, review your current health situation and look at any supporting documentation before deciding on the next stage within the procedure.

In accordance with the Sickness Absence Management Policy, should your absence levels continue to be a concern prior to the review period ending, the review period may be brought to an end early.

I would like to ensure we were continuing to support you as much as possible in order to help you improve your attendance. If there are any further adjustments/support that you feel may be of benefit to you please discuss these with me.

If at the end of the review period, your attendance has improved you will enter a 12 months "live" period (commencing at the end of the review period) during which you are required to sustain the improvement. Should you have further absences during this "live" period and the absences, on a rolling 12 months basis, cause you to hit the trigger points once again, a decision could be made to proceed to a *(Stage 2 Meeting/ Stage 3 Hearing).*

However, if during this review period, your absence(s) remain at a level which is a concern you could be progressed through the absence management procedure where a *(Stage 2 / Stage 3 Hearing)* may take place. Please be aware a possible outcome of a Stage 3 Hearing could be dismissal.

***Redeployment***

***(Note to Managers: for employees who are offered redeployment please include the following:***

***Redeployment***

***As you remain unfit due to your underlying medical condition to return to your post of (Job Title) we discussed looking for redeployment, as recommended by OH. Due to your medical condition, Primary At Risk status applies, in accordance with the Redeployment Policy, and you will be considered for any relevant post you apply for, at or below your substantive grade, before any other applicant other than those in the same circumstances. Salary protection is not afforded when medically redeployed.***

***I enclose a copy of the Redeployment Policy, which details your entitlements and responsibilities. Please read this carefully. As detailed, you will need to create an online account via the e-recruitment system. If you do not have access to this you should let me know so I can provide you with paper copies of the forms.***

***Details of current vacancies within Lincolnshire County Council can be found on the LCC website, to access this please follow the guidance enclosed 'Creating a Job Alert' (Note to Manager please enclose*** ***Creating a Job Alert******). If you would like any assistance in completing an application form, or with preparation for an interview, please contact me and I will be happy to provide/organise support for you.***

We have previously provided you with a copy of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, when you were invited to the *Stage 1 / 2* Absence Management Meeting. However, if you would like another copy, details can be found on the Employment Handbook on the LCC website, or if you do not have access to the Employment Handbook, please let me know and I will arrange for another copy to be sent to you.

If you have any queries with regard to the content of this letter, or you would like to discuss any support offered further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*[Insert this paragraph only if your school pays for this service through Lincolnshire County Council]* The Counselling and Wellbeing hub is also available and is a private and confidential service that can be contacted on Phone: 01522 555440 or E-mail - Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 14 – GP / Consultant Report – Employee Chase Letter

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**Medical Referral: Difficulty/Delay in obtaining GP/Consultant Report**

As you are aware following your consultation with Occupational Health a report was requested from your GP/Consultant.

It is important to obtain information from your GP/Consultant in order to ensure that the report which Occupational Health provides to us is as complete and thorough as possible. The report will give Occupational Health details about your medical condition, prognosis for recovery and any adaptations or adjustments we may be able to make to assist your return to work. The report is sent to Occupational Health in confidence and they will only advise us of those matters of which we need to be aware in order to act in your best interests.

It has now been (no.) weeks since the report was requested and, despite regular chasing by Occupational Health, your GP/Consultant report has not been provided.

You may wish to contact your GP/Consultant to enquire about the delay.

If the report is not received within the next *(2)* weeks it may be necessary for me to instruct Occupational Health to produce their report based on the information they have. The report will be used to make informed decisions about your employment.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 15 – Medical Suspension Letter

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

**Re – Medical Suspension**

I refer to our meeting on (*insert date*) with you, *(representative if applicable)*, and myself at *(location)*.

The meeting was to discuss your fitness to return to work and a risk assessment that was produced following your recent period of sickness absence. The risk assessment highlighted the significant risk to yourself, colleagues at the *(location)* if you were to return to work.

In view of this, I informed you that we could not accept you back at work until you had been seen by our Occupational Health Provider. You were advised that you would not be able to attend work until the outcome of this appointment with Occupational Health is known.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you formally of your medical suspension from duty, which will be on full pay, pending the outcome of your appointment with Occupational Health. The effective date of this suspension is *(date)*. We are suspending you in the interests of Health and Safety and exercising responsibilities in terms of our “duty of care” to both yourself and your colleagues. If, following this medical referral to Occupational Health, it is found that you are fit to resume your duties the medical suspension will be lifted.

Once I have received Occupational Health advice as to your fitness to work, I will contact you again and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the way forward. You should not return to your work duties until you have been formally advised in writing to do so.

During this medical suspension should you receive a Fit Note your suspension from work will cease and you will be recorded as absent from work due to sickness.

*[Insert this paragraph only if your school pays for this service through Lincolnshire County Council]*

If you feel you would like to speak to an independent person in respect of this or other matters, we offer a confidential Counselling and Wellbeing service who can be contacted by telephone on 55440 (internal), 01522 555440 (external) or by e-mail to Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

In the meantime, should you require any further information and/or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me *(contact number)*.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Template Letter 16 – Extension / Upgrade of Sick Pay Letter

Name

Address

Date

Dear (Name)

Dear <Employee>

**Extension/Upgrading of Sick Pay**

I write to advise you that you will receive an extension of occupational sick pay. This has been approved by (Chair of Governors) and is applicable with immediate effect, for the time period confirmed below.

*(Insert details of the extension/upgrading granted)*

Yours Sincerely

Head Teacher

# Briefing Notes

## Short Term Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note

**1. Introductions**

* General introductions
* Confidentiality – everything discussed in the meeting will remain confidential. If information is going to be shared, inform the employee who with.
* The employee will receive a letter following the meeting confirming the outcome.

**2. Purpose of meeting**

* To discuss the employee's current level of absence,
* To understand the employee’s current health situation,
* Determine any support the school may provide with a view to facilitating improved attendance.
* Look at options available in line with the school’s short term absence procedure.

**3. Attendance over the last 12 months**

* The Head Teacher will provide the employee with a list of their absences, with reasons over the last 12 months.
* Inform the employee that their level of attendance has reached a trigger point for concern within the Absence Management Policy and the current level of absence cannot be sustained.

**4. Support**

* Explore other areas possibly associated with the absences e.g. are the absences caused by a disability or personal, family or work related problems.
* Where appropriate reference should be made to other supporting policies such as Disability Leave, Special Leave, Flexible working etc.
* If the employee informs you of an underlying medical condition, discuss whether there are any reasonable adjustments that the individual feels would assist them in improving their attendance levels. Discuss whether these can be implemented and how.

Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:

* Allocating alternative duties
* Altering hours of work eg phased return.
* Allocating a ‘buddy’ to support the employee.
* Providing specialist equipment.

**5. Occupational Health advice**

* Discuss the contents of the latest occupational health report – pick out the key extracts.

OR, if referral has not yet taken place;

* Once a full discussion has taken place about possible reasons why the employee has reached the trigger points, decide if a referral to OH is appropriate.

*Employer Note – If the employee is covered under the Equality Act as having a disability there is a requirement for the school to consider reasonable adjustments to working practices and premises in order to accommodate the needs of individual employees who have a disability.*

**6. Absence Management Policy**

Explain the Absence Management Policy and the formal monitoring process.

* Short term absence is normally identified as any absence from work due to sickness
* In Line with the Schools Sickness Absence Management Policy - Short Term Absence procedure - set a monitoring period of 2 or 3 or 4 months after which the employee’s absence will be reviewed again. Ensure the employee is clear how many months are being set i.e. you should **not** set a period of 2-4 months as it is unclear when the review will then take place. (The default monitoring period is **2 months** unless there is anything obvious to suggest why 3 or 4 months is more appropriate).
* The purpose of the monitoring period is for the employee to achieve a sustained improvement in their attendance. The sustained improvement required is for the employee to reduce their current level of sickness to below the School’s trigger point (i.e. 4 occasions or 12 days pro-rata to the monitoring period – please specify the target so that the individual is clear on this, for example this could be no absences in a 2 month monitoring period).
* The monitoring period may be brought to an end earlier if the employee fails to meet the level of attendance required.

Advise the employee that should their attendance not significantly improve during the monitoring period set, then they will be subject to a Stage 2 Absence Management meeting and thereafter should their attendance still not improve, they could be dismissed.

**7. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub**

Ensure that the employee is aware of the Counselling and Wellbeing Hub (01522 555440). Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

**8. Close**

The employee will receive written confirmation of the outcome of this meeting.

## Short Term Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note

**1. Introductions**

* General introductions
* Confidentiality – everything discussed in the meeting will remain confidential. If information is going to be shared, inform the employee who with.
* The employee will receive a letter following the meeting confirming the outcome.

**2. Purpose of meeting**

* To discuss the employee's current level of absence,
* To understand the employee’s current health situation,
* Determine any support the school may provide with a view to facilitating improved attendance.
* Look at options available in line with the school’s short term absence procedure.

**3. Attendance since the Stage 1 Meeting**

* The Head Teacher will provide the employee with a list of their absences, with reasons since the Stage 1 Meeting.
* Ask the individual to provide an explanation as to why their attendance has not improved over the monitoring period since the Stage 1 Meeting
* Inform the employee that their level of attendance over the monitoring period has reached a trigger point for concern within the Absence Management Policy and the current level of absence cannot be sustained.

**4. Support**

* Provide an overview of what action/support has been put in place to help improve attendance levels.
* Explore other areas possibly associated with the absences e.g. are the absences caused by a disability or personal, family or work related problems.
* Where appropriate reference should be made to other supporting policies such as Disability Leave, Special Leave, Flexible working etc.
* Where applicable discuss creating a personal support passport

**5. Occupational Health advice**

* Discuss the contents of the latest occupational health report – pick out the key extracts.
* Where an underlying medical condition is identified discuss reasonable adjustments suggested by occupation health
* Ask the individual whether there are any other reasonable adjustments that the individual feels would assist them in improving their attendance levels. Discuss whether these can be implemented and how.

Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:

* Extending the trigger points & allowing more absence before action is taken
* Allocating alternative duties
* Altering hours of work eg phased return.
* Allocating a ‘buddy’ to support the employee.
* Providing specialist equipment.

*Employer Note – If the employee is covered under the Equality Act as having a disability there is a requirement for the school to consider reasonable adjustments to working practices and premises in order to accommodate the needs of individual employees who have a disability.*

**6. Absence Management Policy**

Explain the Absence Management Policy and the formal monitoring process.

* Short term absence is normally identified as any absence from work due to sickness
* In Line with the Schools Sickness Absence Management Policy - Short Term Absence procedure - set a further monitoring period of 2 or 3 or 4 months after which the employee’s absence will be reviewed again. Ensure the employee is clear how many months are being set i.e. you should **not** set a period of 2-4 months as it is unclear when the review will then take place. (The default monitoring period is **2 months** unless there is anything obvious to suggest why 3 or 4 months is more appropriate).

The purpose of the monitoring period is for the employee to achieve a sustained improvement in their attendance. The sustained improvement required is for the employee to reduce their current level of sickness to below the School’s trigger point (i.e. 4 occasions or 12 days pro-rata to the monitoring period – please specify the target so that the individual is clear on this, for example this could be no absences in a 2 month monitoring period).

The monitoring period may be brought to an end earlier if the employee fails to meet the level of attendance required.

**7. Requirement for GP Fit Note from First Day of Each Period of Sickness**

Decide whether to utilise the option of requesting the employee to produce a GP’s Fit Note from the first day of each period of sickness absence, during the monitoring period (any cost incurred will be reimbursed in full by the school).

If the school wish to implement this option inform the individual of this requirement for the duration of the monitoring period starting on the day of the meeting.

**8**. **Redeployment;**

Explain that LCC have a redeployment scheme which can support individuals in finding alternative work where, through a medical condition, they are unable to return to their substantive post.

Enquire whether the individual would like to consider redeployment and whether they provide consent for their details to be passed onto Ady Clarke, LCC Redeployment Officer. Reassure individual that in passing their details on they are not making any commitment to redeployment.

If the individual does not provide consent confirm that if they change their mind at any point they should contact you straight away so that you can arrange for Ady to contact him/her.

**9. Next Steps – Potential Stage 3 Hearing**

Advise the employee that should their attendance not significantly improve during the monitoring period set, the Head Teacher will need to decide whether a Stage 3 absence management hearing would be appropriate. At that hearing consideration may be given to ending the individual’s employment on the grounds of ‘some other substantial reason’ (where no underlying medical condition is identified) or ‘capability’ where an underlying medical condition is identified.

* Explain that you very much hope that this will not be the outcome however, it is important that he/she understands the next steps and what is being considered.
* Notice Period – If such a decision is made at that hearing confirm the notice period entitled to.
* Confirm that she will also have the right to appeal to a panel of three Governors should the decision be dismissal.

**10. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub**

Ensure that the employee is aware of the Counselling and Wellbeing Hub (01522 555440).

Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

**11. Close**

The employee will receive written confirmation of the outcome of this meeting.

## Short Term Stage 3 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note

**1. Introductions**

* General introductions
* Confidentiality – everything discussed in the meeting will remain confidential. If information is going to be shared, inform the employee who with.
* The employee will receive a letter following the meeting confirming the outcome.

**2. Purpose of meeting**

* To discuss the employee's current level of absence,
* To understand the employee’s current health situation,
* Determine any support the school may provide with a view to facilitating improved attendance.
* Look at options available in line with the school’s short term absence procedure which may include a decision to dismiss.

**3. Background – Recap of process to date**

* *<enter key dates & actions e.g. Stage 1/2 Meetings & monitor periods set for each>*
* *<enter dates of occupational health reports received throughout the absence>*
* *<enter information on adjustments previously discussed / accommodated>*
* *List of absences since the commencement of the process up to the last stage 2 meeting*

**4. Attendance since Stage 2**

* The Head Teacher will provide the employee with a list of their absences, with reasons since the Stage 2 Meeting to now.
* Ask the individual to provide an explanation as to why their attendance has not improved.
* Inform the employee that their level of attendance has reached a trigger point for concern within the Absence Management Policy and the current level of absence cannot be sustained.

**5. Support**

* Provide an overview of what action/support has been put in place to help improve attendance levels.
* Explore other areas possibly associated with the absences e.g. are the absences caused by a disability or personal, family or work related problems.
* Where appropriate reference should be made to other supporting policies such as Disability Leave, Special Leave, Flexible working etc.

**6. Occupational Health advice**

* Discuss the contents of the latest occupational health report – pick out the key extracts.
* Where an underlying medical condition is identified discuss reasonable adjustments suggested by occupation health
* Ask the individual whether there are any other reasonable adjustments that the individual feels would assist them in improving their attendance levels. Discuss whether these can be implemented and how.

Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:

* Extending the trigger points & allowing more absence before action is taken
* Allocating alternative duties
* Altering hours of work eg phased return.
* Allocating a ‘buddy’ to support the employee.
* Providing specialist equipment.

*Employer Note – If the employee is covered under the Equality Act as having a disability there is a requirement for the school to consider reasonable adjustments to working practices and premises in order to accommodate the needs of individual employees who have a disability.*

**7.** **Redeployment;**

Explain that LCC have a redeployment scheme which can support individuals in finding alternative work.

Enquire whether the individual would like to consider redeployment and whether they provide consent for their details to be passed onto Ady Clarke, LCC Redeployment Officer. Reassure individual that in passing their details on they are not making any commitment to redeployment.

If the individual does not provide consent confirm that if they change their mind at any point they should contact you straight away so that you can arrange for Ady to contact him/her.

**8. Adjournment**

In accordance with the absence management policy you now need to consider the next course of action which may be a dismissal.

Is there anything else that the employee or their representative wish to add before we adjourn?

**9. Next Steps**

Confirm decision;

* If dismissal is the outcome confirm the grounds for dismissal as SOSR or Capability (where a medical condition is identified). Confirm the notice period and explain that they have a right of appeal to a panel of 3 Governors and they should submit their appeal to you in writing within 10 days.
* If further monitoring under Stage 3 is the outcome, confirm the length of the extension i.e. 2, 3 or 4 months and the target for improvement e.g. no more than 2 days absence over a 2 month monitoring period.

**10. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub**

Ensure that the employee is aware of the Counselling and Wellbeing Hub (01522 555440). Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

**11. Close**

The employee will receive written confirmation of the outcome of this meeting.

## Long Term Stage 1 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note

**1. Introductions**

* General introductions
* Confidentiality – everything discussed in the meeting will remain confidential. If information is going to be shared, inform the employee who with.
* The employee will receive a letter following the meeting confirming the outcome.

**2. Purpose of meeting**

* To understand the employee’s current health situation,
* Determine any support the school may provide with a view to facilitating the individuals return to work and improving his/her attendance.
* Look at options available in line with the school’s long term absence procedure.

**3. Current Health situation**

* Ask the individual to provide an update on his/her health at present and any treatment.
* Are they able to comment on when s/he feels s/he will be ready to return to work?

**4. Occupational Health advice**

* Discuss the contents of the latest occupational health report – pick out the key extracts.

OR

* Discuss the need to refer the employee to occupational health for advice as to their fitness to return to work and how the school can support this.

**5. Reasonable adjustments**

Does the occupational health report suggest any reasonable adjustments?

* Discuss each of these any whether they can be accommodated.
* Reach agreement on the support that will be put in place.

If a referral to occupational health has not yet been made, can the individual suggest any support required to assist him/her return to work?

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

* Allocating alternative duties
* Altering hours of work eg phased return.
* Allocating a ‘buddy’ to support the employee.
* Providing specialist equipment.

*Employer Note – If the employee is covered under the Equality Act as having a disability there is a requirement for the school to consider reasonable adjustments to working practices and premises in order to accommodate the needs of individual employees who have a disability.*

**6. Absence Management Policy**

Explain the Absence Management Policy and the formal monitoring process.

* Long term absence is normally identified as an absence from work for one month (or more) with an underlying medical condition and/or where there is no prospect of a return to work in the near future.
* In Line with the Schools Sickness Absence Management Policy the Long Term Absence procedure states that:

*“One of the outcomes of the Absence Management meetings will be to set a relevant period of time for the Head Teacher to review the employee’s attendance”.*

* Set a monitoring period of 2 or 3 or 4 months after which the employee’s absence will be reviewed again. Ensure the employee is clear how many months are being set i.e. you should **not** set a period of 2-4 months as it is unclear when the review will then take place. (The default monitoring period is **2 months** unless there is anything obvious to suggest why 3 or 4 months is more appropriate).
* If the employee is unable to return to work during the review period, the Head Teacher will need to decide whether a Stage 2 absence management meeting would be appropriate. Ultimately if a further review period is set and the employee remains unable to return to work after this second review period, consideration may be given to ending the individual’s employment on the grounds of ill health.

**7. Pay implications**

Inform the employee if Payroll has notified the school of his/her impending half/nil pay.

**8. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub** *[Include only if your school pay for this service via Lincolnshire County Council]*

Ensure that the employee is aware of the Counselling and Wellbeing
Hub (01522 555440). Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

**9. Close**

The employee will receive written confirmation of the outcome of this meeting.

## Long Term Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note

**1. Introductions**

* General introductions
* Confidentiality – everything discussed in the meeting will remain confidential. If information is going to be shared, inform the employee who with.
* The employee will receive a letter following the meeting confirming the outcome.

**2. Purpose of meeting**

* To understand the employee’s current health situation following the previous meeting,
* Determine any support the school may provide with a view to facilitating the individuals return to work and improving his/her attendance.
* To look at the options available in line with the school’s long term absence procedure.

**3. Current Health situation**

* Ask the individual to provide an update on his/her health at present and any treatment.
* Are they able to comment on when s/he feels s/he will be ready to return to work?

**4. Occupational Health advice**

* Discuss the contents of the latest occupational health report – pick out the key extracts.

OR

* Discuss the need to refer the employee to occupational health for advice as to their fitness to return to work and how the school can support this.

**5. Reasonable adjustments**

Does the occupational health report suggest any reasonable adjustments?

* Discuss each of these any whether they can be accommodated.
* Reach agreement on the support that will be put in place.

If a referral to occupational health has not yet been made, can the individual suggest any support required to assist him/her return to work?

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

* Allocating alternative duties
* Altering hours of work e.g. phased return.
* Allocating a ‘buddy’ to support the employee.
* Providing specialist equipment.

*Employer Note – If the employee is covered under the Equality Act as having a disability there is a requirement for the school to consider reasonable adjustments to working practices and premises in order to accommodate the needs of individual employees who have a disability.*

**6. Redeployment**

* Explain that LCC have a redeployment scheme which can support individuals in finding alternative work where, through a medical condition, they are unable to return to their substantive post.
* Enquire whether the individual would like to consider redeployment and whether they provide consent for their details to be passed onto Ady Clarke, LCC Redeployment Officer. Reassure individual that in passing their details on they are not making any commitment to redeployment.
* If the individual does not provide consent confirm that if they change their mind at any point they should contact you straight away so that you can arrange for Ady to contact him/her.

**7. Ill Health Retirement**

* If the employee is a member of the Pension Scheme, ask whether ill health retirement is something they would like for you to explore.
* If yes then as part of a management referral to occupational health the question should be asked: ‘Is …. likely to meet the criteria for ill health retirement?’

**8. Absence Management Policy**

Explain the Absence Management Policy and the formal monitoring process.

* In Line with the Schools Sickness Absence Management Policy the Long Term Absence procedure you need to explain that you are now setting a monitoring period under Stage Two.
* Set a monitoring period of 2 or 3 or 4 months after which the employee’s absence will be reviewed again. Ensure the employee is clear how many months are being set i.e. you should **not** set a period of 2-4 months as it is unclear when the review will then take place. (The default monitoring period is **2 months** unless there is anything obvious to suggest why 3 or 4 months is more appropriate).

**9. Next Steps – Potential Stage Three Hearing**

* If the employee is unable to return to work during the review period, the Head Teacher will need to decide whether a Stage 3 absence management hearing would be appropriate. At that hearing consideration may be given to ending the individual’s employment on the grounds of ill health.
* Explain that you very much hope that this will not be the outcome however, it is important that he/she understands the next steps and what is being considered.
* Notice Period – If such a decision is made at that hearing confirm the notice period entitled to.
* Confirm that she will also have the right to appeal to a panel of three Governors should the decision be dismissal.

**10. Pay implications**

Inform the employee if Payroll has notified the school of his/her impending half/nil pay.

**11. The Counselling and Wellbeing Hub**

Ensure that the employee is aware of the Counselling and Wellbeing hub (01522 836198). Thecounsellingandwellbeinghub@lincolnshire.gov.uk

**12. Close**

The employee will receive written confirmation of the outcome of this meeting.

## Long Term Stage 3 Absence Management Meeting Briefing Note

**1. Introductions**

* General introductions
* The employee will receive a letter following the meeting confirming the outcome.

**2. Purpose of meeting**

* To understand the employee’s current health situation following the previous meeting,
* Determine any support the school may provide with a view to facilitating the individuals return to work and improving his/her attendance.
* Look at options available in line with the school’s long term absence procedure which may include a decision to dismiss.

**3. Background – Recap of process to date**

* *<enter key dates & actions e.g. Stage 1 Meeting>*
* *<enter dates of occupational health reports received throughout the absence>*
* *<enter information on adjustments previously discussed / accommodated>*

**4. Current Health situation**

* Ask the individual to provide an update on his/her health at present and any treatment.
* Has there been any improvement in his/her health since your last meeting?
* Are they able to comment on when s/he feels s/he will be ready to return to work?

**5. Occupational Health Advice & Reasonable Adjustments**

* The latest occupational health report states that;

<include key statements from the report>

Does the occupational health report suggest any reasonable adjustments?

* Discuss each of these any whether they can be accommodated.
* Reach agreement on the support that will be put in place.

Can the individual identify any adjustments that would enable him/her to return to work?

**6. Redeployment**

* At the last meeting/outcome letter details were given about the LCC redeployment scheme. Has the employee accessed this support?
* If not, enquire whether the individual would like to consider redeployment and whether they provide consent for their details to be passed onto Ady Clarke, LCC Redeployment Officer. Reassure individual that in passing their details on they are not making any commitment to redeployment.
* If the individual does not provide consent confirm that if they change their mind at any point they should contact you straight away so that you can arrange for Ady to contact him/her.

**7. Adjournment**

In accordance with the absence management policy you now need to consider the next course of action which may be a dismissal.

Is there anything else that the employee or their representative wish to add before we adjourn?

**8. Next Steps**

Confirm decision;

* If dismissal is the outcome confirm the notice period and explain that they have a right of appeal to a panel of 3 Governors and they should submit their appeal to you in writing within 10 days.
* If extension to the Stage 3 is the outcome, confirm the length of the extension
* If a return to work is confirmed, explain that the process will cease however, it remains 'live' for 1 year and that if she resumes long term sickness absence during this period (for any reason) then we will pick up at the Stage 3 Hearing again and dismissal could be an outcome.

**9. Close**

The employee will receive written confirmation of the outcome of this meeting.

# FORMS

## SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – ACTION LOG – Strictly Confidential

Use this log to record all actions taken in association with managing an employee’s absence.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Employees Name: |       | Employee Number |       |
| Job title: |       | Employment Start Date: |       |
| Headteacher/Line manager: |       |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Notes** | **Action Taken** (next steps/next stage etc) |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**This form is to be kept with the employee’s absence management file/information.**

An example of a few entries which this log could be used for is detailed below:

Return to work meetings

Receipt of Fit Notes

Telephone conversations with employee

Letters or information sent to employee, i.e. when, what

Home visits

Meetings, including absence management meetings

Review checklist

Personal Support Passport

Occupation health referrals, date referral made, date of appointment report received

HR advice and guidance sought

Advice/Guidance sought from your manager/Head of Service etc

With each of the entries made on the Action Log, further detailed notes should be kept with the employee’s absence management file/information.

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT AGREEMENT FORM

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Employee’s name:** |  |
| **School and Job Title:**  |  |
| **Date:** |  |
| **Head Teacher’s name:** |  |

Nature of medical condition / disability:

|  |
| --- |
|       |

Description of disadvantage experienced by the employee within work, and nature of adjustment sought:

|  |
| --- |
|       |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific adjustment agreed** | **Date implemented**  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

 |  |

*If any of the listed adjustments will not be implemented, please record the reasons for this in the notes section at the bottom of this form.*

Has advice been sought from anyone else, e.g. occupational health, GP/specialist, Jobcentre Plus adviser? If so please attach a copy of the advice/assessment or provide a date by when this is expected.

|  |
| --- |
|       |

How effective will the adjustment(s) be in supporting the employee?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

How practical is it to make this adjustment? For example, how long will it take to implement the adjustment; will additional training be needed for the employee or anyone else?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

What are the financial and other costs, if any, of the adjustment?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

What, if any, disruption will be caused by making the adjustment?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

Is financial or other assistance available to help make an adjustment, e.g. Access to Work?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

What effect, if any, will the adjustment have on other employees?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

What effect, if any, will the adjustment have on the school or pupils?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

Would making the particular adjustment result in either: unacceptable risks to the health and safety of any person (including the employee)?

reduce a health and safety risk for anyone including the employee?

|  |
| --- |
|       |

What factors have been taken into account in assessing ‘reasonable cost’ e.g., recommendations from appropriate experts, medical, occupational health and/or workplace assessment (to be obtained if not attached)

|  |
| --- |
|       |

Resources such as training that have been invested in the individual by the organisation.

|  |
| --- |
|       |

Any other relevant notes

|  |
| --- |
|       |

**Future Amendments**

This agreement may be reviewed and amended as necessary with the agreement of both parties:

* At any regular 1:1 meeting, supervision, or appraisal;
* At a return to work meeting following a period of sickness absence;
* Before a change of job or duties or introduction of new IT systems or ways of working;
* Before or after any change in circumstances for either party.

**Manager agreement**

The adjustment(s) listed above have been discussed with       and his / her views on the questions have been sought and accurately recorded. Expert advice has been taken on board where appropriate. This agreement will be reviewed at regular intervals (at a minimum annually) with       to ensure it is still appropriate.

Headteacher’s name       Headteacher’s signature

Date

**Employee agreement**

The adjustment(s) listed above have been discussed with me and incorporate my views on the questions have been sought and accurately recorded.

I understand that further information may be needed from       and/or myself and that expert advice or an assessment may be necessary before adjustments are implemented. The views of other colleagues may also be sought where appropriate.

I will inform the School via my line manager if there are changes to my condition that have an effect on my work and/or the agreed adjustment are not working. We will then meet to discuss any further changes or adjustments that need to be made.

Should my line manager change I agree that a copy of this form may be shared with my new line manager.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Employee signature:** |  | **Date:** |
| **Line manager signature:** |  | **Date:** |

## RETURN TO WORK MEETING FORM

**Strictly Confidential**

Return to work meetings must be conducted after every period of absence and where possible managers should carry this out on the day an individual returns. Where applicable please utilise the action log to effectively record all actions taken in association with managing an employee’s absence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date of discussion |  |
| Method of discussion Face to Face [ ]  Telephone [ ]  |
| **EMPLOYEE DETAILS** |
| Full Name: |  |
| School: |  |
| Job Title: |  |
| **ABSENCE DETAILS** |
| Start date of absence |  |
| Date of return |  |
| Reason for absence |  |
| Dates of absences in last rolling 12 month period (refer to managers BW dashboard or local employee file) |  |
| Has the employee been updated on any issues that occurred during his/her absence? | Yes | [ ]  | No | [ ]  |
| If the period of absence has been long term does the employee require any retraining? | Yes | [ ]  | No | [ ]  |
| Any issues that the employee wishes to raise following their recent absence? |  |

|  |
| --- |
| Does the employee consider themselves to have a disability? Yes [ ]  No [ ] If yes, please provide an explanation of the disability and if any support is required.  |
| Do any reasonable adjustments need to be considered? Yes [ ]  No [ ] If yes, please provide details of the reasonable adjustments. |
| Has the employee received a fit note? Yes [ ]  No [ ] If yes, are there any recommendations/adjustments to support the employee at work? |
| Has the employee met the corporate trigger points in a rolling 12 month period?* 4 or more episodes of sickness
* 12 working days of absence
* Where there have been a number of absences in a short period e.g. 3 episodes or 9 working days in 6 months
* Where a pattern of absence is causing concern e.g. every Friday/Monday

Trigger points for employees that work fewer than 5 days in a week will need to be pro rata to the number of days.  | Yes | [ ]  | If yes, please refer to the sickness absence procedure. | No | [ ]  |
| If yes to the above question please state what stage you are up to within the Sickness Absence Procedure, e.g. stage 1, stage 2 or stage 3? |
| If the employee has triggered and you have decided not to start/progress with the Sickness Absence Procedure, please document the reasons why. |
| Has the employee been made aware of future actions in accordance with the Sickness Absence Procedure if they are absent again in the near future? | Yes | [ ]  | No | [ ]  |
| Is a referral to Occupational Health required?If yes, please complete the relevant referral form and send it to Occupational Health | Yes | [ ]  | No | [ ]  |
| Details of support offered to employee (actions agreed, including timescales) |
| Please include any additional information discussed at the return to work interview |
| I understand that this information will be used for the purposes of recording and monitoring sickness absence. |
| Signed Employee |  | Date |
| Signed Headteacher |  | Date |

## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – REVIEW CHECKLIST

Stage 1 Review Stage 2 Review Stage 3 Review

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Date ­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

At the end of the review period the Headteacher will review the employee’s attendance. The purpose of a review is for the manager to gather all relevant information before deciding on the next course of action.

|  |
| --- |
| **Absences during the review period**  |
| List any absences the employee had during the review period; | Gather any Return to Work forms completed for these absences |
| **Review any supervision / 1:1 notes where the employee’s attendance or wellbeing have been discussed** |
| Detail any notes made during supervision / 1:1: Refer to Personal Support Passport if applicable  |
| **Adjustments in review period** |
| Detail any adjustments made during the review period: |
| Detail any adjustments suggested or considered but not put into practice and the reasons why: |
| **If applicable review latest Occupational Health Report** |
| Key outcomes/advice from OH report |
| **Employees Health update (this will include any updates given from the employee)** |
| Detail any changes to employees health; |

**Outcomes of Review**

Once all the information has been gathered the Headteacher / Stage 3 Chair will decide on the following outcomes of the review:

Escalate to the next stage (2 or 3) in the Sickness Absence Procedure

Extension of review

Employee's attendance has improved, manager set a 12 months live period

Date verbal outcome explained to employee:

Notes of any discussions/additional information:

Signed by (Manager)……………………………………………………… Date……………………………………………

## STRESS CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS

Stress at work is a major issue for organisations. We all have a responsibility to improve the health and wellbeing of our employees. In particular, a supportive and responsive line manager who works to understand the needs of employees is crucial if stress is to be managed effectively.

LCC is committed to raising awareness and increasing the understanding of mental health conditions, and therefore is a proud signatory of the **Mindful Employer Charter**. The charter is a set of six aspirations for employers to work towards, with the aim to provide employers and employees with easier access to information and support with mental health conditions. A Mental Health Awareness Toolkit for Managers is available as a source of practical advice for supporting employees who may experience mental health problems. For further information on Mindful Employer and the charter please refer to LCC – A Mindful Employer on the LCC website.

**DEFINITION OF STRESS**

Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures of other types of demand placed on them at work and at home. Stress is not an illness – it is a state. However, if stress becomes too excessive and prolonged, mental and physical illness may develop and may often be linked to a variety of long-term health conditions that could be covered by the Equality Act 2010 such as depression, heart conditions, back problems and asthma.

**Mental Health in the Workplace**

**Support that is available for employees:**

* [Supporting Mental Health Section on Health Lincs](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/jobs/manuals/health-and-safety-manual/hazards/working-alone/g23-working-alone/47765.article?catId=37114)
* [The Counselling and Wellbeing hub](http://george/section.asp?catId=37891)
* Occupational Health Service
* Personal Support Passport
* Managers are advised to refer to the Mental Health Awareness Toolkit for Managers.
* **Coaching** helps individuals develop their thinking to discover their own solutions within themselves through the use of high quality questions. , releasing the potential in all employees to be the best that they can be to and increasing their confidence

**Guidance on Managing Employees with Stress**

To help an employee cope with stress, outlined below are some steps you can take:

1. Talk to the person and find out what the problem areas are, show an interest, listen to what is being said, ask if there is anything you can do to help and actively follow up to continue to demonstrate your wish to support them.
2. Encourage them to plan their day, have a lunch break, work reasonable hours, have a work / life balance and be a good role model.
3. Find out the persons concentration span and energy levels, be realistic with the target goals being set.
4. Encourage them to delegate if possible.
5. Understand when someone is trying to be assertive and allow them to say ‘No’
6. Encourage the person to find something in their work to enjoy.
7. Develop with your team a sense of humour- laughing reduces stress.
8. Encourage people to pace themselves and to make time for themselves.
9. Make them aware of other support services if needed. e.g. The Counselling and Wellbeing hub, Occupational Health, GP etc.
10. Operate an open door policy to encourage all employees to discuss any issues.
11. Review staff rotas and working patterns regularly to accommodate each employee’s circumstances where possible to address work life balance issues.
12. Treat stressed employees in the same way as those with a physical health problem.
13. Consider a stress risk assessment when making adjustments for the employee.
14. Consider a referral to Occupational Health so the employee can be assessed and medical advice provided. If the employee is absence OH can provide an indication of the likely length of absence and if there is anything the employer can do to help them return to work.

**Returning to Work after being Absent with Stress**

When an employee returns to work from long-term sickness certain steps need to be followed, to ensure the return to work is smooth and doesn’t overload the employee.

* Step 1: If appropriate; plan a phased return to work (seek advice from Occupational Health).
* Step 2: If needed, carry out a stress risk assessment to assess the working environment for the employee.
* Step 3: Complete a return to work interview and form.
* Step 4: Provide the employee with any refresher training if needed or up-date them on any changes.
* Step 5: Organise regular one to one meetings during the first month back to assess how the employee is coping.

**HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS**

The Health and Safety Executive is the body responsible for the encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare. HSE recommend organisations undertake workplace stress risk assessments; these involve looking at our current practices in relation to the HSE Management Standards and determining whether enough has been done to manage the risk or whether more needs to be done. It can be done with an individual or team and can undertaken by using the stress risk assessment form[**Appendix 1 – Example Workplace Stress Risk Assessment Form**](#Stress_RiskAss), or an informal discussion using the standards as a guide. If you do an informal assessment, you should still make a record of the outcomes. If you need help with carrying out stress risk assessment, contact your Health and Safety Advisor or HR representative.

For further information on the management standards please refer to the HSE's Stress Website.

**Stress Risk Assessments**

As an employer, the School is required by law to assess the risk of stress-related to ill health arising from work activities and take action to control that risk. The risk assessment is based on the familiar ‘5 steps to a stress risk assessment’ model, requiring management and staff to work together.

1. Identify the stress factors -

The key work-related factors with potential to cause stress-related illness are: a) Demands b) Control c) Support d) Relationships e) Role f) Change

2. Decide who might be harmed and how -

Although some people may be more vulnerable to developing work-related stress illness than others, any individual could be working under conditions that could cause undue pressure and so be at risk from work related stress. Information that may be useful in making this assessment include; sickness absence data, staff turnover rates, exit interviews, OH referrals, day to day meetings and other interactions with employees.

3. Evaluate the risks

4. Record the findings; develop and implement action plans

5. Monitor and review action plans and assess effectiveness -

The stress risk assessment should be reviewed on an ongoing basis, ordinarily through normal line management practices. Where appropriate, formal review dates may be built in.

**Wellness Action Plan (WAP)**

The Wellness Action Plan (WAP) has been developed by the organisation **MIND** as a tool to help employees support their own mental health by thinking about how their work impacts on their health and how they can best mange these triggers.

Where Occupational Health recommends a WAP it should be drafted by the employee, with support from a health professional where appropriate, and then discussed and agreed with the line manager. It is designed to open up a dialogue between the manager and employee so they can agree on the help and support the employee needs whilst at work. Information can be found on the MIND website

**Personal Support Passport (PSP)**

The passport is an optional personalised, practical tool to raise awareness of the employees circumstances which could affect their working life, whether they have medical conditions, are a carer outside of work or if they have a need for equipment or support with a personal circumstance.

It opens a dialogue with the line manager to encourage open and supportive conversations, for the employee to be made aware of their circumstances, experiences and ultimately better support them at work. It can help the line manager to identify what understanding and support the employee needs from the manager and the team around them.

##

**APPENDIX 1 Individual St****ress Risk Assessment Tool **

The form can be completed either by:

* An employee can complete this form should they be experiencing signs or symptoms of stress.
* Where a manager feels the employee is displaying signs/symptoms of stress, they should encourage him/her to complete this form.

This risk assessment should not be seen as a one-off exercise but should be incorporated as part of 1:1 and Appraisal.

The first part should be completed by the employee experiencing signs or symptoms of stress, this can be done on their own or with their line manager. The outcomes and actions will be completed with the employee and line manager.

**How to complete this risk assessment**

The following table is divided into 6 categories; Demands, Control, Support, Role, Relationships and Change.

Within each of these 6 categories there is a list of brief questions which you indicate your preference ranging from ‘never’ to ‘always’. The questions are underpinned by the Health & Safety Executive Management Standards (2004) and correlate to identify areas of perceived work pressures.

* **Demands: '** Employees indicate that they can cope with the demands of their jobs’
* **Control:** 'How much say the person has in the way they do their work'
* **Support:** ‘Includes relationships with line management and colleagues & support structures in place e.g. learning resources and colleague circles/consultations’
* **Role: '**Whether people understand their role within the organisation’
* **Relationships:** 'Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour'
* **Change:** 'How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated’

**Individual Stress Risk Assessment**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name:** |  |
| **School:** |  |
| **Job Title:** |  |
| **Date of Assessment:** |  |
| **Manager:** |  |

Read the statements listed on the following pages carefully. Place a tick in the box which best describes your perception in relation to that statement. Try to average your answer in relation to how you have been feeling over the past 2-3 weeks.

To complete the assessment, employees should be offered the opportunity to comment on any aspects of their work which they feel has not been covered in the assessment.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Demands** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Always** | **Control** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Always** | **Support** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Always** |
| My employer provides me with adequate & achievable demands in relationto the agreed hours of work |  |  |  |  |  | Where possible I have control over the pace of my work |  |  |  |  |  | I feel supported by my manager or line manager |  |  |  |  |  |
| My skills & abilities are matched to the job demands  |  |  |  |  |  | My employer encourages me to use my skills and initiative to do my work |  |  |  |  |  | I feel able to support and encourage my colleagues |  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel empowered to use my full skills and potential abilities at work in the day-to-day tasks |  |  |  |  |  | Where possible I am encouraged to develop new skills to help me undertake new and challenging pieces of work |  |  |  |  |  | I know what support is available and how and when to access it |  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel my skills and abilities are used to their full potential  |  |  |  |  |  | I have a say when I can take my breaks |  |  |  |  |  | I know how to access the required resources to do my job |  |  |  |  |  |
| In general, my job is designed to be within my capabilities |  |  |  |  |  | I am consulted over my work patterns and annual leave |  |  |  |  |  | I have regular supervision and appraisal from my manager |  |  |  |  |  |
| My concerns about my work environment are addressed |  |  |  |  |  | I feel supported by my employer in line with friendly family policies |  |  |  |  |  | I have the right equipment to do my job well |  |  |  |  |  |
| I regularly only work my contracted hours |  |  |  |  |  | I have opportunities to express my ideas and points of view |  |  |  |  |  | I feel I can raise any issues I have with my line manager |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Change** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Always** | **Role** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Always** | **Relationships** | **Never** | **Seldom** | **Sometimes** | **Often** | **Always** |
| I am provided with information to enable me to understand the reasons for proposed changes |  |  |  |  |  | My employer provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities |  |  |  |  |  | My employer promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness in the workplace |  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel that my employer consults me regarding changes and provides opportunities for open discussion |  |  |  |  |  | My employer ensures that the different requirements it places upon me are clear, and that these are compatible with my role |  |  |  |  |  | I share information relevant to my work with colleagues |  |  |  |  |  |
| I am made aware of the probable impact of any changes to my job |  |  |  |  |  | There are adequate opportunities to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts concerning my role and responsibilities |  |  |  |  |  | My employer has policies / procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour |  |  |  |  |  |
| I am given training to enable me to facilitate changes within my job |  |  |  |  |  | I have a good understanding of my role and what is expected of me during my duties |  |  |  |  |  | I feel that managers deal appropriately with reports of unacceptable behaviour |  |  |  |  |  |
| I am made aware of time periods for change |  |  |  |  |  | My current job role adequately reflects my current job description |  |  |  |  |  | There is a supportive team atmosphere and dynamics between the team are good  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I have access to relevant support during change |  |  |  |  |  | I know the standards I have to meet in my job |  |  |  |  |  | If I had a problem, I feel that I would be able to approach my manager  |  |  |  |  |  |
| When change is implemented, I feel equipped to deal with it |  |  |  |  |  | I know what I am expected to achieve in my job |  |  |  |  |  | The team works positively together |  |  |  |  |  |

# How to use the results

# Both the manager and employee look carefully at each individual answer and for those answered ‘Never’, ‘Seldom’ and ‘Sometimes’ discuss each answer to try and identify the employees’ concerns. Record the results in the ‘Outcomes and complete the Action Plan’ below.

**OUTCOMES / ACTION PLAN**

Use this space to record statements the employee has answered ‘never, seldom, sometimes’ and the agreed action plan you are putting in place to manage these. It may be helpful to consider other resources of support you could build into your action plan.

Continue on separate sheet if required

**Identified Issues Raised**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** |  |
| **2.** |  |
| **3.** |  |
| **4.** |  |
| **5.** |  |

**Agreed Actions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** |  |
| **2.** |  |
| **3.** |  |
| **4.** |  |
| **5.** |  |

**Signed Manager \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed Employee \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Review date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Review actions:**

**Additional support available:**

**Councils Health and Wellbeing** **offer** can be found here: [Employee Support and Counselling Service](https://lincolnshire.learningpool.com/pluginfile.php/80918/mod_resource/content/3/The%20Counselling%20and%20Wellbeing%20Hub.pdf)

**Personal Support Passport**: [Course: Schools Area HR Policies](https://lincolnshire.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=2122) (below)

**School Employment Manual Policies**: [Schools employment manual – Professional resources](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/schools-employment-manual)

**Tackling work-related stress using the Management Standards approach** - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.pdf>. [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards)

## EXTENSION / UPGRADE OF SICK PAY – BUSINESS WORLD E-FORM

This form must be completed where a school chose to approve an upgrade or extension to sick pay. See guidance above on the criteria for agreeing an upgrade or extension.

Note: To be completed by the employee’s Manager and approved by the Headteacher / Chair of Governors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employee Name: | School: |
| Employee Payroll Number: | Employing Service: |
| Date Continuous Service Commenced: | Date Occupational Sick Pay Concludes:Full Pay Half Pay |
| Details of the request:Full pay to continue from <> to <>Half pay to continue from <> to <> |

|  |
| --- |
| Have you included the latest medical evidence and advice from Occupational Health? |

|  |
| --- |
| Supporting Statement by Line Manager: |
|  |
| Line Manager: | Date: |

FOR COMPLETION BY Headteacher / Chair of Governors

|  |
| --- |
| Authorisation of request |
| Has advice from HR been considered?Yes/No |
| I authorise\*/do not authorise\* the above request. (\*please delete as appropriate)If not authorised, please give reason: |
| Headteacher / Chair of Governors: | Date: |
| Senior HR Adviser: | Date: |

****

The purpose of this passport is to support you to be your true self in the workplace.

Employee:.…………………………………..

Job Title:………………………………………..

Head Teacher / Line Manager: ………………………………………

Date of first discussion: …………………

Date of latest update: …………………..

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Personal Support Passport (PSP)**

**Using this Personal Support Passport**

|  |
| --- |
| **Points of Reference for the PSP:*** **My personal circumstances**
* **How it impacts me at work**
* **What support is currently in place?**
* **How can my manager support me?**
 |

The passport is an optional personalised, practical tool to raise awareness of your circumstances which could affect your working life, whether you have medical conditions, are a carer outside of work or if you have a need for equipment or support with a personal circumstance.

It opens a dialogue with your manager to encourage open and supportive conversations, for them to be made aware of your circumstances, experiences and ultimately better support you at work. It can help you to identify what understanding and support you need from your manager and the team around you.

This may include what keeps you well and able to give your best, what affects your wellbeing, and how additional support can help. It could be something that is affecting you and will continue over a long time or can be a temporary issue.

|  |
| --- |
| **The key areas relate to:*** **Disability**
* **Health conditions including underlying conditions**
* **Physical limitations**
* **Caring responsibilities**
* **Neurodiverse conditions**
* **Religious observance**
* **Personal commitments and circumstances**
* **Any other conditions as identified in the Equality Act 2010**
 |

**Who owns the Passport?** The passport is produced and owned by you the employee with the support of your manager. If you move roles or have a change in line manager this practical tool can assist in those initial conversations during the induction stages.

**How often is the passport reviewed?** The passport is designed to be a ‘live’ document to be reviewed periodically in one to ones and appraisals and when circumstances change, whether that is in a couple of months, or after a year.

**Who has sight of the passport?**

You and your current line manager will need to view your passport, however you may choose to share this with whoever you wish. If your line manager changes then we encourage you to share your passport with your new line manager, preventing you having to repeat the details of your circumstances and how this impacts you again. We would encourage sharing the passport with HR via your line manager, this is to ensure you have the full support available to you and they can discuss this with your line manager, however, this is your decision as ultimately the passport belongs to you.

**About my Personal Circumstances**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Provide a summary of your personal circumstances or commitments that you would like your manager to be aware of?**
 |
| *Example discussions could be: Health conditions - What is the history or pattern of your health condition? Have you had a diagnosis and, if so, when? Is it stable, relapsing or recurrent? Does it have defined ‘episodes’? What difficulties do you have on an average day? What are the side effects of medication, recovery time post-treatment etc? Are there any resources you can share that may support an improved understanding of your issues (e.g. GP or Consultant formal diagnosis, NHS pages)?* *Caring responsibilities - Who do you care for? How long have you cared for them for? What type of care do you provide? On average how many hours of week do you spend caring for the person in question?* |
| 1. **Use this space to describe the impact that your personal circumstances may have on you at work.**
 |
| *Include examples of where this impacts on you whether this is practically, physically, emotionally and behaviourally. Describe what your behaviours may look like to others.* |

**Workplace Support**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Do you require any support to be considered to assist you in fulfilling your role?**
 |
| *Include any current reasonable adjustments along with any new support. Examples of support available – The Counselling and Wellbeing hub, Occupational Health, Specialist equipment, Flexible working, Disability Employment Adviser via Job Centre Plus.*  |
| 1. **Workplace support discussed and agreed**
 |
| **Support**  | **Date Implemented**  | **Review date**  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Managers are encouraged to complete the Reasonable Adjustment Request Form in addition to this PSP. The reasonable adjustment request form can be found in the sickness absence toolkit [Schools Area Hr Policies: Tool kit folder](https://lincolnshire.learningpool.com/mod/folder/view.php?id=17098)

**Additional support available:**

**School Employment Manual Policies**:

[Schools employment manual – Professional resources (lincolnshire.gov.uk)](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/schools-employment-manual)

[Absence management – Professional resources (lincolnshire.gov.uk)](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/102/absence-management?downloadID=102)

[Appraisals – Professional resources (lincolnshire.gov.uk)](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/104/appraisals?downloadID=104)

[Schools redeployment policy - Lincolnshire County Council](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/699/redeployment-scheme-for-school-based-staff)

[Schools Leave and Time Off Policy (lincolnshire.gov.uk)](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1779/schools-leave-and-time-off-policy)

[Schools working flexibly policy (lincolnshire.gov.uk)](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1777/schools-working-flexibly-policy)

[Toolkits – Professional resources (lincolnshire.gov.uk)](https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/toolkits)

**Declaration**

The information I have shared within my Personal Support Passport is a record of my circumstances and the agreements made with my manager.

|  |
| --- |
| EMPLOYEE: |
| Print Name | Signature | Date  |
|  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| CURRENT LINE MANAGER: |
| Print Name | Signature | Date  |
|  |  |  |

Please tick if you consent to the passport being shared with HR:

Following any changes in personal circumstances or role, the employee and manager should ensure this is reviewed and updated as required but should be reviewed at least every 12 months.

# Hints & Tips

**Managing difficult conversations**

The key to managing difficult conversations is control. You need to control the meeting and how it progresses. This means you decide if and when you need to adjourn for a break and what tactics are working and if you need to change your approach.

For example, you may have started out being quite expansive and friendly but realise that a firmer style is required to bring the meeting to a conclusion and agree a way forward.

Although it can be tempting to enter a meeting wanting to be liked and to maintain a close friendship with the employee, most conversations will work best if you adopt a calm and professional manner. Set out from the beginning how the meeting will run, the issues you wish to discuss and how you hope to move forward.

It can be difficult to control your emotions, if the employee becomes confrontational or makes and accusation about you. They may seek to get behind your defences by appealing to you personally and hoping you will agree with their point of view or concerns. Remember to focus on the behaviour and not the person and remain objective and non-judgemental at all times.

**TIPS for managing difficult conversations:**

* Don’t be afraid of referring to your pre-prepared script, it will help you to stay in control;
* Anticipate the likely response from your employee and your response back to them. You cannot control the other person’s reactions, but you can anticipate and prepare for them.
* Give difficult messages upfront. Talk slowly and clearly. Challenging messages should be simply stated in the first sentence. Check the employee understands and reframe if necessary.
* Allow time for the information to be absorbed by your employee and gauge their reaction.
* Allow your employee to express him or herself. Listen, be supportive and be prepared to answer their questions.
* Ask questions. Paraphrase to check your understanding.
* Know when to reschedule and revisit. If a conversation becomes too emotional, then it may be appropriate to reschedule for another time.
* Ensure you convey the key messages for the employee and that they understand them fully.

**What if the person tells me things I am not equipped to deal with, for example they appear to have an alcohol problem or self-harm?**

This is an understandable concern and if you require help or advice you should contact HR. Further details on various support groups are available through the Counselling and Wellbeing hub. If an employee tells you about activities which are illegal, in breach of contract or affect the health or safety of others you need to make sure they are aware that you will not be able to maintain confidentiality. You may also need to advise them that you can only help them in some circumstances if they agree to share certain confidential information with others.

**What if I think the person is not fit for work?**

If you feel they are not fit for work and may be putting themselves or colleagues at risk speak to HR. You may have to consider medical suspension pending advice from HR / Occupational Health. If there are adjustments that can be made to the employee’s role that will allow a return to work this should be given serious consideration.

**What if the return to work meeting leads me to suspect abuse of the sickness scheme?**

This may be a disciplinary matter and therefore conclude the discussion and speak to HR about whether the issue should be referred to the Disciplinary Procedure.

**Do I have to do return to work meetings with someone if they are already going through sickness absence procedure?**

Yes. Return to work meetings must take place alongside all other stages of the procedure. They are integral to the monitoring process and have been shown to be one of the most effective tools in managing absence.

**What do I ask at the Stage 1 meeting?**

Similar questions to those asked at return to work meetings. However, you must ensure that the employee is fully aware that they are at Stage 1 of the formal procedure and the implications for their future employment if their attendance does not improve. Have a script prepared in advance of what you need to cover, and use that as the basis for the discussion.

**Sickness is a very sensitive issue – how far should I probe with questions?**

You need to get sufficient information on which to base your decision as to what further advice and/or action to take while avoiding applying unreasonable pressure. Plan the meeting in advance and anticipate possible responses to your questions. It will also be helpful to think through your reactions to the answers you might get and how you will deal with them. The Personal Support Passport maybe useful in such circumstances.

**How long should the review period be?**

The review period should be long enough for an improvement in attendance to be achieved and maintained. If the employee’s attendance does not improve during the review period you must meet with them to discuss the reasons. We recommend a typical period of 2 months but it can be up to 4 months. For long term sick it will depend on the individual circumstances .You do not need to wait until the end of the review period to move the employee into the next stage of the procedure if further absences occur and they are clearly not meeting the targeted improvement.

**Can I give a second review period in Stage 1 or Stage 2?**

Yes, this would not be usual practice but there may be exceptional circumstances where you can justify the reasons why. These must be fully documented. Remember there is the 12-month ‘live’ period whereby you can resume the process where you left off if the absence becomes unacceptable again.

**What if an employee hits the triggers and has a disability?**

It should be distinguished whether or not the absences relate specifically to the disability; if that is not the case then the employee should be taken through the sickness absence procedure. If the absences relate to the disability you may wish to consider amending the trigger points to take account of this. This is not automatic, but may be recommended by Occupational Health as a reasonable adjustment. Advice should be sought from HR and Occupational Health on the appropriateness of this in managing the employee’s attendance.

**What can I do during the review period to help the employee improve their attendance?**

There are many options, for example, you can share the employee support tools and resources and encourage your employee to take advantage of these; you can ensure that you implement any reasonable adjustments; and provide the employee with guidance on how to manage their work etc. Most importantly maintain an open dialogue and frequent check-ins to see how the employee is doing. Occupational Health will provide medical advice. Be open-minded and aware that sometimes the simplest initiatives are the most effective. Remember, also ask and make the employee aware that they are responsible to improve their own health and attendance – they may have suggestions too. Do not take on responsibility for sorting out all the employee’s problems, as you may not have the expertise or authority. You should also be mindful of any work related issues that come to light that you should investigate and attempt to resolve.

**Can I meet with the employee if they haven’t been off work?**

Yes, it might be a good idea to see the employee and offer praise and encouragement if their attendance is improving, although this does not have to be a formal meeting.

**How do I decide to move the employee to Stage 2?**

If during the Stage 1 review period there has been no satisfactory improvement in the employee’s attendance or if improvements have not be maintained they should be moved to Stage 2.

**What is the difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2?**

Moving to stage 2 makes it clear to the employee that their attendance at work remains unacceptable and, unless an improvement is made, one of the outcomes of the next stage of the procedure may result in them losing their job. It is important at the stage 2 meeting to specifically explain to the employee their employment could be at risk. During the review period within stage 2 you should continue to work closely with the employee in order to improve and maintain their attendance. The format of the meeting will remain similar to that of the stage 1 meeting. Occupational Health advice should be sought and HR should be involved if they haven’t been involved previously.

**Some final important thoughts:**

Ensuring you successfully manage your employee’s absence from work is not just about legal compliance. There are significant business benefits to be gained by effectively ensuring your team are present at work and able to undertake the requirements of their role - this includes higher employee retention, increased motivation, lower recruitment costs, increased efficiency and productivity, greater team engagement etc. manager you have a key role to play in ensuring that managing absence is a success and these benefits are realised. You can do this by:

**Do:**

* Focus on conducting robust Return to Work interviews and keeping an open dialogue with your employees about their health and wellbeing.
* Look out for any changes in behaviour such as lateness or overworking that may lead to ill health. Make sure that employees are utilising the tools and resources available to them to manage their health and wellbeing.
* Be supportive and positive in your approach whilst assisting the employee to take ownership and responsibility of their own health.
* Document all key discussions as part of the process and retain all records.
* Handle all conversations sensitively and thoughtfully whilst still actively conveying the required changes and improvements to attended.
* Utilise the various support tools and subject matter experts where appropriate

**Don’t**

* Assume the process will be too challenging or take too long to follow and therefore not start the process
* Assume the employee is already aware that their absence is becoming an issue and that they are aware of the trigger points.
* Fear holding challenging conversations on absence. With the correct preparation and sensitivity to how messages are conveyed, the outcome can continue to be a fruitful working relationship.
* Assume the employee’s absence will improve and sort itself out on its own.