



# **Guidelines for Absence Counselling**

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The following guidelines provide clarity on both the structure and responsibilities at each stage of the counselling procedure.

### **Return to Work Interview**

Line Managers or supervisors will hold a return to work interview with the employee after every period of absence, this interview will be informal you will need to complete the return to work form (see appendix 1). This is so you can do a well-being check in with the employee and it will give you the opportunity to identify any potential concerns and if there is any extra support you may need to provide to the employee.

The return to work interview should ideally be held on your first day back, or as soon as practically possible.

The employee absence will be monitored along with HR; therefore, it is important that you ensure all absences are recorded on Splash and it is kept up to date for this purpose.

Leadership team will discuss any absences/health issues with the employee, and consider what support or adjustments may be needed, as well as whether any further informal or formal discussions are required.

### **Occupational Health Referral**

If in some instances there may be a need to refer the employee to attend an appointment with our external Occupational Health Specialists at any point during or after the sickness absence, please discuss with HR.

### **Further reporting of sickness absence**

Any serious infectious disease, or work-related illness or injury must be reported immediately to the Health and Safety team and to HR.

Depending on the employee's attendance improvement, any of the following stages below may be repeated. The ultimate objective is for the employee's attendance to improve to the point where they are no longer under the absence counselling procedure.

### **Stage 1 – Oral Counselling**

This stage applies to the initial identification of any unacceptable level of absence, usually after **3 incidents of absence within a 12-month rolling period**.

#### **1.1 Notification**

The employee will be asked to attend a return to work interview with a member of the leadership team and the return to work form will be completed (see appendix 1) and an informal discussion will be held with the employee and main points of discussion will be recorded.

## **1.2 Arrangements**

The oral counselling meeting should be held in an office where there will be no interruptions, and the employee can talk in confidence. The counselling will be conducted by the Line Manager using the Absence counselling checklist (see appendix 2)

## **1.3 Confirmation of decision**

At the absence counselling notes should be taken and shared with the employee with a clear action plan.

## **Stage 2 – First Formal Counselling**

This stage applies to cases of persistent unacceptable absence, **normally 1 further absence within 12 months following a Stage 1 Oral counselling meeting.**

### **2.1 Notification**

The employee will be sent an Absence Counselling Invite Letter (see Appendix 3), and the meeting will take place no earlier than 2 working days after the date of receipt of this letter. The employee should be given the opportunity to have a person accompanying him/her at the meeting.

### **2.2 Arrangement**

The counselling should be held in an office where there will be no interruptions, and the employee can talk in confidence. The counselling will be conducted by the Line Manager/Supervisor in the presence of the person accompanying the employee (if requested) using the checklist (see appendix 2)

### **2.3 Confirmation of Decision:**

The absence counselling confirmation of decision to be completed (see appendix 4), and a copy given to the employee and HR confirming the Line Manager's action.

## **Stage 3 – Final Formal Counselling**

This stage applies to cases of persistent unacceptable absence, **normally 1 further absence within 12 months following a Stage 2 first formal counselling meeting.**

**A) Notification** Please refer to point 2.1

**B) Arrangements** Please refer to point 2.2

**C) Confirmation of Decision:** Please refer to point 2.

## **Stage 4 – Dismissal**

This stage applies to cases of persistent unacceptable absence, **normally 1 further absence within 12 months following a Stage 3 final formal counselling meeting.**

### **4.1 Notification**

The employee will be sent an Absence Counselling Invite Letter (see Appendix 3) from the line manager/supervisor and the meeting will take place no earlier than 2 working days after the date of receipt of this letter. The employee should be given the opportunity to have a person accompanying him/her at the meeting.

### **4.2 Arrangements**

Your line manager will conduct the meeting in the presence of the person accompanying the employee (if requested) and HR. The line manager will present their case and the employee will be given the opportunity to respond.

### **4.3 Confirmation of Decision:**

Following the discussion and before a decision is made, an adjournment may be necessary to consider the circumstances. If your line manager decides that the dismissal is justified, this decision will be confirmed verbally at the meeting and confirmed in writing using the confirmation of decision letter (see appendix 4) five days following the meeting.

If dismissal is not viewed as justified, this decision will be confirmed verbally at the meeting and in writing five days after the meeting, outlining precisely the improvement expected from the employee.

## **Appeal**

The employee has a right to appeal the decision made at any Stage of the Absence Counselling Process, using the Appeal's Procedure (can be found under the disciplinary policy)