
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Managers

(Please also refer to the FAQ for Employees)

Attendance Management Policy

The new Attendance Management policy comes into effect on 1 March 2020. This policy replaces the Wellbeing at Work policy 2016.

In addition to the Attendance Management Policy a Wellbeing Strategy 2020/22 is being developed which will outline the actions and support mechanisms available to support and improve employee wellbeing. The Attendance Management policy applies to Chief Officers, Local Government employees, Teachers and Employees on SNCT Conditions of Service.

Manager and Employee Toolkits have been developed to support the policy which will be available on the HUB alongside the policy.

This FAQ documents aims to provide you with the answers to some of the questions you may have in relation to the policy changes and how this affects you.

1. What are the main changes the Attendance Management Policy brings?

The main changes are outlined as follows:

- The Attendance Management policy is a standalone policy which will complement the wider Wellbeing Strategy and provides clear focus around attendance management;
- The name of the policy has changed and within it the names of the various meetings required to be undertaken;
- The policy has been streamlined to support clearer understanding of the stages of the policy and to provide clarity in the management of absence;
- The support mechanisms available for employees still remain but are outlined in the Manager and Employee Toolkits which support the Policy;
- The policy no longer refers to the disciplinary policy but allows for improvement plans to be issued through this policy where an improvement in attendance is required;
- The absence triggers remain the same apart from the 8 day trigger which has been amended from 8 working days in a calendar year to 8 working days in a rolling year;
- Absence Review Hearings have been replaced by Attendance Support Meetings and there is a staged approach to managing both short and long terms absence;

2. What are the Definitions of absence?

The different types of absence can be defined as:

- Short Term absence is defined as a single occurrence which lasts up to 20 calendar days
- Long Term absence is defined as a single occurrence of absence of 21 calendar days and above
- Rolling year is from the date of the current absence looking back exactly 12 months i.e. 1 July of the current year looking back to 30 June of the previous year.

3. Why are Return to Work meetings important after every absence?

The Return to Work discussion represents best practice and is key to supporting employee wellbeing and attendance at work. You are required to arrange to meet with the employee on their return to work, this should normally take place on the day of return or, where this is not possible, within 2 working days of their return to work. This is an opportunity for you to ensure the employee is fit to be back at work, discuss and explore their absence, offer any support and highlight areas of concern to ensure optimum attendance at work is achieved.

4. What are the Absence Triggers?

The procedure for managing absence will be followed when:

- the reason for absence requires further support and intervention
- an employee has had 3 occurrences of absence within a rolling year
- an employee has absences totalling 8 working days in a **rolling year** (pro-rated for part-time employees and employees working non- standard working patterns). Please note this has changed for 8 working days in a calendar year.
- the absence has been identified as work-related
- the pattern of absence causes concern
- the absence is long term (21 calendar days and above)
- unauthorised absence

5. What are the Procedure for managing Short Term or Persistent absence?

Attendance Support meetings will be arranged in conjunction with the set triggers (as detailed above). There will be a **staged approach** to the procedure:

- **Stage 1** – initiated when an employee reaches a trigger level
- **Stage 2** – initiated when there has been further absence, during the 12 month review period, following discussion at Stage 1
- **Stage 3** – initiated where there is further absence, during the 6 month review period, which continues to reach the trigger levels and/or absence continues to cause concern, following discussion at Stage 2
- **Stage 4** – a Capability Hearing will be arranged where absence continues to cause concern within the 12 month review period, following Stage 3, further action under the procedure may lead to dismissal

6. What is the purpose of an Attendance Support meeting?

The purpose of the meeting is to support the employee to remain at work and identify if there are any underlying medical conditions. This will be an opportunity for you to:-

- discuss and explore the absence
- highlight areas of concern
- discuss the likelihood of further absence
- offer support
- explore reasonable adjustments
- inform the employee that failure to achieve a sustained improvement may result in further action being taken in line with the stages of the procedure
- formally record the outcome

7. I have an employee who had an absence under the previous policy (Wellbeing at Work) but has had a further absence after 1st March 2020 which now meets the changed trigger of 8 working days trigger in a rolling year what should I do?

With effect from 1 March 2020 the trigger will change to 8 working days in a rolling year. Therefore if an employee has an absence following this date which may have previously been discounted but now meets the 8 working days in a rolling year trigger this should be managed through the provisions of the new policy.

Consideration should be given to the length and reason/s for the absence when considering what action to take in this transition period. However where an employee meets the 8 working day trigger in a rolling year this is an opportunity to for an Attendance Support Meeting to be arranged for Managers to see if employees require any support at an early stage.

Example:

An employee has a 6 day absence starting on 1st April 2019 and then a further absence of 3 days starting on 11th March 2020. Under the previous policy the April absence would have 'dropped off' due to 8 working days in a calendar year being the trigger but under this policy the March absence now triggers the 8 working days in a rolling year trigger. This would therefore be managed under the new policy and where circumstances permit an Attendance Support Meeting should be arranged.

Further advice can be sought from your HR Case Adviser in relation to individual cases.

8. What happens when the employee is being managed in conjunction with the Attendance Support meeting process and sustains an improvement during the review period then subsequently has a deterioration in attendance when the review period ends?

The absence triggers allow for patterns of absence that cause concern to be managed accordingly. If there is a concern around the employees' attendance pattern this should be discussed on a case by case basis with your HR Case Adviser.

9. I have a member of staff that has a historical record of good attendance at work, I have been supporting them through a difficult period in relation to their health but they have reached the trigger level what should I do?

The procedure Triggers for managing absence include the requirement for further support and intervention. You should still arrange an Attendance Support meeting with the employee to ensure appropriate support is put in place for the employee. The next steps should be based on a case by case basis and discussed with your HR Case Adviser.

10. When is the procedure for Managing Long Term absence used?

The procedure for managing long term absence should be followed when the absence has or is likely to last 21 days and over, however, individual circumstances can be taken into consideration around the appropriateness of this.

11. What is the purpose of the Initial Long Term Attendance meeting?

This will be an opportunity for you to:-

- Discuss and explore the background surrounding the absence
- Establish if there are any underlying health conditions

- Explore options of support
- Explore early interventions
- Explore the potential return to work date
- Explore reasonable adjustments that can facilitate a return to work
- Consider occupational health referral
- Provide an outcome letter summarising the discussion and any agreed actions
- Where necessary, discuss arrangements for an Ongoing Long Term attendance meeting

12. What is a Capability Hearing?

A **Capability Hearing** for Short Term or Persistent absence or for Long Term absence will be arranged when the following has been identified:

- The pattern of short term and/or persistent absence continues to cause concern or;
- In the case of long term absence where a return to work is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

The outcome of the Hearing could result in dismissal. The format of the Hearing is detailed within the Policy under section 5.21.5.

13. Can the employee be accompanied to meetings?

Yes, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a companion/employee representative as outlined in section 5.11.2 of the Attendance Management policy.

14. What if the employee does not agree with the outcome of the Capability Hearing?

The employee will have the right of appeal within 14 calendar days of the outcome where the outcome is dismissal or an alternative to dismissal only.

15. Where can I seek additional information and support from?

You can also address any queries to your local HR Adviser:

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Your Trade Union representatives are also available for support.