This Sickness Absence Policy template was developed to assist local churches, circuits, districts and other local employing bodies in drafting and agreeing their own policy. Therefore, the content of this policy template should be adapted to suit their size, structure and needs. As a minimum text in blue font should be adjusted.

SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY – DRAFT TEMPLATE

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# Introduction

The [name of the Church Council, Circuit Meeting, Managing Trustees of the XYZ district, or other employing body] (‘the Church/Circuit/District’) is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all employees. This policy and the associated guidance aim to promote supportive and effective management of absence due to ill-health and ensure that any support is considered as early as possible.

The Sickness Absence Policy aims to maximise employee attendance at work while recognising that there are occasions when employees are be unable to attend work due to their own ill-health.

The purpose of this policy and associated guidance is to provide clarity around reporting and recording sickness absence and outlines the fair and consistent management of short and long-term sickness absence. It also ensures that lay employees have the support they need from their managers.

The following definitions are used in this policy:

**‘Period of sickness absence’** or **‘instance of sickness absence’** means any continuous period of sickness absence, of whatever length, during which the employee does not work.

**‘Short-term sickness absence’** means any period of sickness lasting [1 to 27] calendar days.

**‘Long-term sickness absence’** means any period of sickness lasting [28] calendar days or more.

# Responsibilities

## Guidelines for line managers

Line managers should:

* take responsibility for monitoring their staff's attendance and absence;
* maintain a proper record of each employee's sickness absences;
* ask the employee to complete a self-certification form for sickness of seven calendar days or less and to provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days;
* conduct a return-to-work meeting each time the employee returns from a period of sickness absence;
* speak to the employee about the absence to understand the reasons and any underlying factors;;
* be supportive towards the employee and, where appropriate, seek to identify ways in which to assist the employee to improve their attendance in the future;
* identify patterns of absence, for example frequent absences on Fridays or Mondays, or immediately before or after bank or public holidays;
* try to establish any underlying reasons for frequent absences and, where the underlying cause is identified, if applicable take reasonable steps to help the employee to manage the cause;
* where applicable, seek medical advice, to determine whether or not there is any underlying medical cause for the employee's frequent absences and any reasonable adjustments that the Employer should consider implementing;
* be particularly sensitive when absences are influenced by personal or family problems;
* show a reasonable degree of tolerance and sympathy towards the employee's sickness absence, while at the same time making clear that continuing frequent absences from work are a serious concern for the Employer;
* check whether or not the employee's absences are in any way work related, for example as a result of workplace stress;
* bear in mind that the Employer may seek a medical report on an employee, for example from the employee's doctor or where appropriate, from an independent occupational health practitioner;
* keep confidential records of all absences in line with GDPR regulations (please see TMCP website), including discussions and medical certificates, and make sure that the records clearly identify the reasons for the employee's various absences;
* be aware of the legal implications for the Employer when managing absences related to disability, maternity;
* keep in mind the Employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people when managing absence; and
* consult with the [District Lay Employment Secretary (DLES)/ District Employment Adviser/other] if unsure about anything or any special circumstances arise;.

## Guidelines for employees

Employees should:

* if they are unable to attend work because of ill health, notify their manager by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before they are due to start work and in any event no later than [one hour] after they are due to begin work;
* continue to notify and keep in touch with their manager while unable to attend work;
* be prepared to give their manager a clear reason (ie the nature of the illness or injury) why they cannot attend work, and estimate how long they think the absence will last;
* complete a self-certification form for sickness of seven calendar days or less and provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days;
* attend a return-to-work meeting with their line manager each time the employee returns from a period of sickness absence;
* be open with their manager about the reasons for their absence, to give the manager the opportunity to provide support where possible;
* share with their manager of any extenuating circumstances if these impact on the absence, for example personal or family problems or an unmanageable workload;
* bear in mind that the Employer may seek a medical report, for example from the employee's doctor [or an independent occupational health adviser]; and
* cooperate with the Employer with regard to the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, particularly those suggested by a healthcare professional.

# Notification and evidence of sickness absence

## Absence Notification

On the first day of sickness absence, the employee must inform their line manager as soon as reasonably practicable that they will not be working because of illness or injury. Preferably, the employee should notify their manager of non-attendance by telephone before they are due to start work and in any event no later than [one hour] after they are due to begin work. If the employee's manager is unavailable, the employee should contact the next most appropriate person who is available.

The employee should provide a clear reason (ie the nature of the illness or injury) why they cannot attend work, and estimate how long they think the absence will last. The employee should also be prepared to discuss briefly any consequences of their absence, for example if appointments need to be cancelled or any essential work needs to be covered.

Notification of sickness absence must be via telephone, rather than text message, email or social media. In exceptional circumstances where the employee is unable to telephone (for example, because of hospitalisation), another person such as a friend or relative can contact the Employer on their behalf.

If an employee comes to work, but needs to leave during the day because of ill health, they should inform their manager before leaving work. If the manager is unavailable, the employee should inform the next most appropriate person.

Sickness absence that begins part way through the day will count as one full day's sickness absence if the employee leaves before completing half of their working day. Where sickness absence begins after the employee has completed half of their working day, this [should be recorded as half a day's absence */or* this would not be recorded as a half day of sick leave. The sickness absence would start the following day if the employee is still unwell and unable to attend work].

For each subsequent sick day after the first day of absence, the employee should generally telephone their manager as soon as reasonably practicable in the morning. However, line managers should use their discretion and can agree different arrangements with the employee, for example if the employee is hospitalised.

If an employee does not report their sickness absence in accordance with the above the line manager must attempt to contact an employee who has not attended for work one hour after their start time, or contacted their Line Manager or another designated person for absence as set out above.

The purpose of the call is to establish their reason for absence, provide advice if needed and determine when they may be returning to work. The employee should be reminded of the absence notification procedure at that time as appropriate

## Self-certification of sickness absence

If sickness is for seven calendar days or less, [on the first day of the employee's return to work/at a return-to-work meeting], they must obtain, complete and sign a self-certification form, setting out the dates of absence and the nature of the illness or injury.

The line manager should countersign the form.

## Statement of fitness for work (fit note)

While the first seven calendar days of sickness can be self certificated, all sickness that last longer than seven calendar days require medical evidence. This medical evidence will normally be in the form of a fit note, also known as a "statement of fitness for work".

If the employee's sickness lasts for eight calendar days or more, the employee's line manager must ensure that the employee provides a fit note as soon as possible. A fit note may state that the employee:

* is "not fit for work", in which case the employee should remain off work; or
* "may be fit for work", if the healthcare professional's recommendations are followed (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, or workplace adaptations).

For continued absence, a further Fit Note must be submitted within [3] calendar days of the expiry date and submitted to their line manager.

While there is no legal obligation on the Employer to follow the recommendations, line managers should take the recommendations seriously and give fair consideration - in consultation with the employee and [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/Employment Adviser/Occupational Health]- as to whether or not any of the changes recommended can be accommodated.

# Sick pay

*Delete as appropriate. Please ensure that the contracts of employment contain the same provision.*

Eligible employees are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP), provided that they follow the Employer's usual notification and evidence requirements.

The employee is entitled to SSP where they have a period of sickness absence from work of at least four calendar days in a row and three "waiting days" (days on which the employee would usually be required to work) have passed.

Statutory sick pay is payable for up to 28 weeks in any one period of sickness absence, at a weekly rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year.

[OR

The Employer operates a contractual sick pay scheme that is more generous than statutory sick pay (SSP).

During sickness absence employees will, in any 12-month period [except while on their probationary period] receive sick pay from the Employer at their normal rate of pay for a total of [xxx] weeks. [This will be followed by a further [xx] weeks at half of normal pay.] Any payments made under the Employer's scheme are inclusive of any entitlement to SSP for the same period of absence.

Sick pay under the Employer's scheme is subject to the usual deductions for PAYE, national insurance, pension contributions, etc.

# Medical appointments

The Employer recognises that employees will, from time to time, need to attend medical appointments.

Employees should endeavour to arrange medical appointments in their own time or, if this is not possible, at times that will cause the minimum amount of absence from work or inconvenience to the Employer.

However, because the Employer accepts that it is not always possible to arrange medical appointments outside working hours, it is the Employer's policy to permit reasonable time off work for such appointments.

Provided that the employee gives their line manager reasonable notice of the date and time of an appointment, time off with pay will normally be granted.

Where time off for medical appointments becomes frequent or regular, or starts to cause difficulties operationally, the line manager should first consult with [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/ Employment Adviser] and arrange discussion with employee before taking any decision.

Employees should notify their line manager as soon as possible in advance of any appointment. This would enable the line manager to make arrangements for cover.

Employees who are pregnant have the statutory right to paid time off work to attend for antenatal appointments where the employee's attendance has been recommended by a registered medical practitioner, midwife or nurse. Paid time off in such circumstances will automatically be granted. The employee should notify the line manager of the appointment as soon as possible and the line manager will still have the right to request to see the confirmation of the employee's second appointment and any subsequent appointments.

A prospective father, or partner of a pregnant woman, has the statutory right to take unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments.

# Return to work

## Actions required by the employee and line manager

On an employee's first day back after any period of sickness absence, the employee should either fill in a self-certification form (where the sickness is seven calendar days or less) or provide medical evidence (where the sickness is longer than seven calendar days).

On an employee's return to work following a period of sickness absence, their manager should check the employee's absence record. Line managers will monitor short-term absences to assess whether there are any issues to be addressed.

The manager should check employee’s absences [12] months prior to the date of the employee's return to work. For example, if the employee returns to work on 1 April, the employer should examine the period from 1 April the previous year to 31 March.

While no employee should feel under pressure to attend work if they feel unfit, the Employer would monitor absence and would raise with the Employee if the sickness absence would exceed 8 working days in total or more than occasions in any rolling 12-month period (pro-rata for part-time employees, or for employees who work a non-standard work pattern).

The line manager should bear in mind that special considerations apply to absences related to pregnancy and disability, please see below under Special Cases.

When checking the employee's absence record, the line manager should also review whether or not the employee's absences have been frequent, regular or repeated. The manager should be alert to the possibility of any pattern, for example frequent absences on Fridays or Mondays, or immediately before or after bank or public holidays. Managers should, however, remain open minded and not jump to any hasty conclusions about an employee's absences.

The line manager should invite the employee to an informal return-to-work meeting each time the employee returns from a period of sickness absence.

If an employee’s absence levels are frequent or impacting on service delivery, the Line Manager would seek to arrange an Occupational Health Service Referral in consultation with the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/ Employment Adviser. The purpose of the referral would be to establish whether there is an underlying health condition that is causing the absences and any adjustments that the Employer could implement to support the Employees wellbeing (please also see below).

## Return-to-work meetings

On the first day back at work after any period of sickness absence of an employee, the employee's line manager will arrange to meet informally with them.

If this is not possible on the employee's first day back (for example, for operational reasons or because the manager is not available), alternative arrangements should be agreed for the informal meeting to take place (e.g. another manager/Superintendent should make contact with the Employee to ensure that they consider themselves to be fit to work and to address any immediate wellbeing concerns that they may have).

The return-to-work meeting should take place in a private place, and all discussions between the employee and the manager should be private and confidential.

The line manager should:

* welcome the employee back to work;
* explain to the employee that the purpose of return-to-work meetings is to ensure the employee is fit to work as well as to manage and monitor employees' absence and attendance to identify any problem areas and offer support where appropriate;
* inform the employee that their absence will be recorded;
* ask the employee about the reasons for their absence, ensuring that the question is asked in a supportive way without any suggestion that the employee is "to blame" for the absence;
* ask the employee if the absence related to an underlying health condition or disability;
* ask the employee whether or not they have consulted a healthcare professional or attended hospital;
* if the employee's sickness has been for seven calendar days or less, ask the employee to complete a self-certification form for the period of sickness absence and sign it in front of the manager, who should then countersign the form and pass it on to the [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/Employment Adviser/other];
* if the employee's sickness lasts for eight calendar days or more, ensure that the employee has provided a fit note, and this has been passed on to [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/Employment Adviser/other]; and
* if relevant, inform the employee if they have hit a trigger point, and advise of the next steps (see below).

## Updating the employee's absence record

The line manager should update the employee's absence record form. This should record the dates of the lay employee's absence, and the reasons for the absence (ie the nature of the illness or injury that has led to the employee's absence). It is very important that the manager completes this form each time the employee returns to work, so that the Employer can keep track of the employee's pattern of absence.

There may be occasions on which the underlying reasons for the employee's absence are not easily classifiable. For example, the employee may have more than one health condition, or the employee may have been feeling unwell because of a bereavement. If there is any concern about the reasons for the employee's absence, the manager should consult [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/Employment Adviser/other] to determine the most appropriate action.

# Special cases

## Pregnancy-related absences

Pregnant employees who are off work because of pregnancy-related illness must abide by the Employer's absence reporting procedure. For example, a pregnant employee is subject to the usual notification and evidence requirements, and can be asked to attend a return-to-work meeting when returning to work.

However, any sickness absence by a pregnant employee for a pregnancy-related reason should not be included when checking to see if the need for formal action under the Employer's absence management procedure has been triggered.

If the manager is in any doubt as to whether or not a pregnant employee's absence is related to their pregnancy, the manager should contact the [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/ Employment Adviser/other] for clarification.

## Disability-related absences

Where an employee gives as the reason for absence an underlying health issue, it is important to be aware that the condition may amount to disability under Equality Act 2010., The manager must therefore consult with [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/Employment Adviser/Occupational Health]. This includes mental health issues e.g. where the employee states that they are suffering from stress.

Line managers should remember that the Employing body is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. Where the absence is wholly or partly for a disability-related reason, the actions after the trigger points are reached (as below) should be modified to take proper account of the employee's disability, and other adjustments to the procedures set out in this policy may need to be made. If in doubt, the manager must contact the [the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/Employer Adviser/Occupational Health] for clarification.

# Sickness absence and annual leave

## Sickness during holiday

Where an employee falls sick or is injured while on holiday, the Employer will allow the employee to transfer to sick leave and take replacement holiday at a later time. This policy is subject to the following strict conditions:

* The total period of ill health must be fully certificated by a qualified medical practitioner where it exceeds seven calendar days.
* The employee must contact the Employer (by telephone if possible) as soon as they know that there will be a period of sickness during a holiday.
* The employee must submit a written request no later than [10] days after returning to work setting out how much of the holiday period was affected by sickness and the amount of leave that the employee wishes to take at another time.
* Where the employee is overseas when they fall ill or are injured, evidence must still be produced that the employee was ill by way of a medical certificate.

Where the employee fulfils all of the above conditions, the Employer will grant the employee the same number of days' replacement holiday leave as the number of holiday days lost due to sickness or injury.

If an employee is ill or is injured before the start of a period of planned holiday, and is consequently unable to take the holiday, the Employer will agree to the employee postponing the holiday dates to another mutually agreed time. Any period of sickness absence will then be treated in accordance with the Employer's normal policy on sickness absence. The employee must submit a written request to postpone the planned holiday and this must be accompanied by medical evidence confirming that they are unfit, or are likely to be unfit, to take the holiday.

## Holiday during sick leave

An employee who is absent on sick leave will continue to accrue their holiday entitlement and will be given the opportunity to take this at a later date, including in the subsequent leave year, if they do not take their holiday entitlement due to being on sick leave.

An employee on sick leave may apply to take their holiday entitlement while on sick leave. The holiday dates must be approved by the Employer.

# Medical advice

## Occupational health referrals

At various stages of managing the employee's sickness absence, a line manager may want to obtain advice on the employee's fitness for work from occupational health advisers.

Examples of when a line manager might refer to occupational health include to:

* seek a medical report on the employee;
* establish when the employee might be able to return to work;
* ask for guidance on the employee's condition, for example if there is a possibility that the employee is disabled or ambiguity as to the exact nature of the condition; and
* if the employee is disabled, discuss any adjustments that could be made to accommodate the employee's disability.]

The Employer will treat personal data collected during the absence management process in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. Information about how an employee's data is used and the basis for processing their data is available from the TMCP website: [Managing Trustees' Privacy Notice - Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (tmcp.org.uk)](https://www.tmcp.org.uk/about/data-protection/managing-trustees-privacy-notice)

When an employee is referred to Occupational Health (OH), an appointment is made for them (subject to the employee’s consent) to meet with either the Occupational Health Adviser or the Occupational Health Physician. At the appointment, OH will undertake an assessment taking into account the individual’s medical condition and the functional requirements of their work. Written consent may be sought from the individual to request medical reports from their GP or external Specialist to assist OH staff with their assessment. OH will provide a written report to the Employer answering the questions asked on the referral form.

All OH records, including medical reports, are stored confidentially. Medical information will be given to a Line Manager and/ District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other in accordance with relevant legislation.

## Report from a medical practitioner (responsible for the employee's clinical care)

Where a report from the employee's medical practitioner is necessary, the employee will be fully informed of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and their permission will be sought for the report to be obtained.

The employee's permission will be sought to contact the medical practitioner.

The employee has the right to access the report before the Employer sees it. If the employee wishes to see the report, they should inform the Employer of this, so that it can inform the medical practitioner. The employee will then normally have 21 days to contact the medical practitioner to see the report. If the employee does not contact the medical practitioner within this period, the medical practitioner can pass the report on to the Employer.

When requesting a report, the Employer will provide the medical practitioner with as much information as possible on the role of the employee and explain why the report is being sought. The Employer will provide the medical practitioner with:

* a copy of the employee's signed consent to the request to seek a medical report;
* confirmation that the employee is aware of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988; and
* details of the major features of the employee's job.

The Employer will ask the medical practitioner to identify:

* the nature of the employee's illness or injury;
* whether or not there are any underlying medical conditions that explain the employee's pattern of absences; and
* what reasonable adjustments could be made to working conditions or work premises to facilitate a return to work.

Where the employee refuses permission for the Employer to contact their medical practitioner, the Employer will explain to the employee the reasons behind the request and inform the employee that a decision relating to their employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

Where the employee feels that the report is misleading or incorrect, they may ask the medical practitioner to amend it. If the medical practitioner does not agree with the employee and does not alter the report, the employee may attach a statement to the report to reflect their views.

Alternatively, having seen the report, the employee may request that access to the report be withheld from the Employer. The employee will be informed that a decision relating to employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

# Long term absence

Absences of more than [27] calendar days covered by a Fit Note are considered long term by the Employer. A referral to Occupational Health will normally be considered at this point to review the absence and assess what adjustments might be needed to facilitate a return to work.

During an extended period of absence due to ill health, a meeting may be arranged with the employee to discuss implications for employment due to their absence. The meeting will normally involve both the line manager and [member of the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/ Employment Adviser].

The employee can choose to be accompanied to the Occupational Health (OH) appointment and any subsequent meeting with their line manager if they wish.

If an employee does not consent to a referral to Occupational Health or does not attend a scheduled appointment without good cause or medical evidence of why attendance is not advisable, the employee’s absence will be managed in accordance with the Employer’s Capability/other Policy.

If a GP provides a Fit Note stating that an employee "may be fit for work" the employee should inform their line manager immediately. The line manager should advise the relevant [member of the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/ or Employment Adviser].

A referral to Occupational Health will be made for further guidance. A meeting, if applicable, will then take place involving the Line Manager, [member of the District Lay Employment Sub-Committee/ Employment Adviser] and the individual to discuss any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate a return to work.

## Phased return to work

The Employer will, where feasible, support any phased return to work recommendations set out by OHS. If there are any difficulties in implementing OH recommendations it is essential to consult with the DLES/ Employment Adviser to decide the next steps.

## Reasonable adjustments

If reasonable adjustments are recommended by Occupational Health, the Employer will implement these. If there are any issues please see above.

## Continued/intermittent long term absence

Employer’s Capability / other Procedure may be followed where an employee has been absent from work on a long-term, but not necessarily continuous basis, due to ill health. Its purpose is to ensure that the Employer gives the employee full encouragement and assistance in relation to their return to work. Where appropriate, the Employer may consider workplace adjustments subject to employees consent. Depending on circumstances these may include redeployment or retraining. This option should be discussed with the DLES/Employement Adviser prior to implementing. If these prove impracticable or unsuccessful, termination of employment may be considered only as the last resort following consultation with the DLES/ Employment Adviser..

# Sickness absence management

The trigger points that are used to decide when action needs to be taken to tackle an employee's sickness absence record are set out below. When applying these trigger points, the special rules that apply to pregnancy and disability must always be considered. The actions taken in response to the trigger points as set out below are subject to individual circumstances and are provided for guidelines only.

## Stage 1

The trigger point for a "stage 1" formal review is:

* [eight] days' sickness absence in the previous [12] months; or
* [four (up to 10)] instances of sickness absence in the previous [12] months.

On the employee reaching a stage 1 trigger point, the employee's line manager will invite them in writing to a stage 1 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting. In advance of the meeting, the line manager should provide the District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other with the documents relevant to the employee's case, including:

* the employee's absence record form;
* any letters previously sent to the employee about their absence levels; and
* any other medical evidence [such as occupational health reports].

The written invitation to the stage 1 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting should give the employee at least [five] days' notice of the meeting. The letter should advise the employee who will be present and that the employee can be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official.

The letter should explain to the employee that the purpose of the meeting is to review the employee's attendance level and discuss concerns.

The letter should warn the employee that a possible outcome of the meeting is that they may be given a warning and moved to a formal review period.

Stage 1 - meeting

The "stage 1" short-term sickness absence formal review meeting will be chaired by the employee's line manager. The line manager will be accompanied by [District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other].

At the meeting, the line manager will:

* explain to the employee that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the employee's attendance in the previous [12] months;
* make clear to the employee that the aim of the meeting is to discuss concerns regarding their attendance;
* allow the employee to share their views;
* establish any underlying reasons for the employee's attendance level, for example a health issue or personal problems;
* gather as much information as possible on any underlying reasons identified, without putting undue pressure on the employee to reveal more information than they want;
* discuss and agree any steps that can be put in place to help the employee to improve their attendance;
* if there is an underlying health problem, [refer the employee to occupational health/encourage the employee to book an appointment with a healthcare professional], if this has not already been done;
* remind the employee of the support that is available to the employee, including the [occupational health/employee assistance programme]; and
* after a short adjournment, inform the employee of the outcome of the meeting and state that the outcome will be confirmed in writing to them within [five] days.

Stage 1 - outcome

After the meeting, the line manager will set out in writing what has been decided as a result of the stage 1 meeting, for example if a warning is being issued and the employee has been placed on a formal review period, or if the decision is that no further action will be taken. The letter, which should be provided to the employee within [five] days of the meeting, should include details of any steps or targets that have been agreed to help the employee to improve their attendance, and any support that the Employer is providing for the employee.

No further action

In limited circumstances, for example if there are extenuating reasons for the absences, the outcome of a stage 1 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting could be that the manager decides that it is not appropriate to move the employee to a formal review period.

If the decision is that no further action will be taken, the letter should inform the employee of this and provide an explanation for the decision.

*Formal review period*

An alternative outcome of a stage 1 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting could be that the manager decides that the employee should be given a warning and moved to a formal review period.

The letter should explain that the employee has [12] months to show an improvement in their attendance levels. The [12]-month period begins on the day after the warning is issued.

The letter should warn the employee that, while on the formal review period, the consequences of reaching sickness absence levels of [eight] days, or [four]instances, in a rolling [12]-month period will be that the employee moves to stage 2 of the Employer's absence management procedure.

The letter should give the employee the right to appeal against the warning.

Stage 1 - improvement

If the employee's sickness absence levels improve (ie during the formal review period, they have less than [eight] days, or [four] instances in a rolling [12]-month period), no further action will be taken. The manager should write to the employee explaining to them that they have completed the formal review period.

If during the formal review period, the employee's sickness absence reaches [eight] days, or [four] instances in a rolling [12]-month period, the employee will be moved to stage 2.

## Stage 2

The trigger point for a stage 2 formal review for an employee on a stage 1 formal review period is:

* [eight] days' sickness absence in a rolling period of [12] months; or
* [four] instances of sickness absence in a rolling period of [12] months.

*Stage 2 invitation*

On reaching a stage 2 trigger point, the employee's line manager will invite them in writing to a stage 2 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting.

The meeting will be chaired by the employee's line manager and [District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other] should be present at the meeting. In advance of the meeting, the line manager should provide the [District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other] with the documents relevant to the employee's case, including:

* the employee's absence record form;
* any letters previously sent to the employee about their absence levels, particularly the letter setting out the outcome of the stage 1 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting; and
* any other medical evidence [such as occupational health reports].

The written invitation to the stage 2 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting should give the employee at least [five] days' notice of the meeting. The letter should advise the employee who will be present and that the employee can be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official.

The letter should explain to the employee that the purpose of the meeting is to review the employee's continued attendance level while on a stage 1 formal review period and discuss concerns.

The letter should warn the employee that a possible outcome of the meeting is that they may be given a second, and final, warning and moved to a second formal review period.

*Stage 2 meeting*

The "stage 2" short-term sickness absence formal review meeting will be chaired by the employee's line manager. The line manager will be accompanied by [District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other].

At the meeting, the manager will:

* explain to the employee that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the employee's continued attendance concerns;
* make clear to the employee that the aim of the meeting remains to find ways to improve their attendance;
* allow the employee to share their views;
* try to establish any underlying reasons for the employee's poor attendance level, for example a health issue or personal problems;
* gather as much further information as possible on any underlying reasons identified, without putting undue pressure on the employee to reveal more information than they want;
* discuss and agree any further steps or targets that can be put in place to help the employee to improve their attendance;
* if there is an underlying health problem, [refer the employee to occupational health/encourage the employee to book an appointment with a healthcare professional], if this has not already been done;
* remind the employee of the support that is available to the employee, including the [occupational health/employee assistance programme]; and
* inform the employee of the possible outcomes of the meeting (see [below](#outcome2)), and that the outcome will be confirmed in writing to them within [five] days.

*Stage 2 outcome*

After the meeting, the manager will set out in writing what has been decided as a result of the stage 2 meeting, for example if a warning is being issued and the employee has been placed on a formal review period, or if the decision is that no further action will be taken. The letter, which should be provided to the employee within [five] days of the meeting, should include details of any further steps or targets that have been agreed to help the employee to improve their attendance, and any support that the Employer is providing for the employee.

*No further action*

In limited circumstances, for example if there are extenuating reasons for the absences, the outcome of a stage 2 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting could be that the manager decides that it is not appropriate to move the employee to a second formal review period.

If the decision is that no further action will be taken, the letter should inform the employee of this and provide an explanation for the decision.

*Formal review period*

An alternative outcome of a stage 2 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting could be that the manager decides that the employee should be given a final written warning and moved to a second formal review period.

The letter should explain that the employee has [12] months to show an improvement in their attendance levels. The [12]-month period begins on the day after the warning is issued.

The letter should warn the employee that, during the formal review period, the consequences of reaching sickness absence levels of [eight] days, or [four]instances, in a rolling period of [12] months will be that the employee moves to stage 3 of the Employer's absence management procedure.

The letter should give the employee the right to appeal against the warning.

*Stage 2 improvement*

If the employee's sickness absence levels improve (ie during the formal review period, they have less than [eight] days, or [four] instances in a rolling [12]-month period), no further action will be taken. The manager should write to the employee explaining to them that they have completed the formal review period.

If during the formal review period, the employee's sickness absence reaches [eight] days, or [four] instances, in a rolling [12]-month period, the employee will be moved to stage 3.

## Stage 3

The trigger point for a stage 3 final formal review for an employee on a stage 2 formal review period is:

* [eight] days' sickness absence in a rolling period of [12] months; or
* [four] instances of sickness absence in a rolling period of [12] months.

*Stage 3 invitation*

On reaching a stage 3 trigger point, a manager/other will invite the employee in writing to a stage 3 short-term sickness absence final meeting.

The meeting will be chaired by the senior manager and [a senior HR manager/other senior manager] should be present at the meeting. In advance of the meeting, the line manager should provide the senior manager and [senior HR manager/other senior manager] with the documents relevant to the employee's case, including:

* the employee's absence record form;
* any letters previously sent to the employee about their absence levels, particularly the letter setting out the outcome of the stage 2 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting; and
* any other medical evidence [such as occupational health reports].

The written invitation to the stage 3 short-term sickness absence formal review meeting should give the employee at least [five] days' notice of the meeting. The letter should advise the employee who will be present and that the employee can be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official.

The letter should explain to the employee that the purpose of the meeting is to review the employee's attendance level while on a stage 2 formal review period and discuss continued concerns.

The letter should warn the employee that a possible outcome of the meeting is that they may be dismissed by reason of capability.

*Stage 3 meeting*

The "stage 3" short-term sickness absence final formal review meeting will be chaired by a senior manager, together with [District Lay Employment Secretary/ Employment Adviser/ Other].

At the meeting, the manager will:

* explain to the employee that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the employee's attendance;
* allow the employee to share their views;
* try to establish any underlying reasons for the employee's poor attendance level, for example a health issue or personal problems;
* gather as much further information as possible on any underlying reasons identified, without putting undue pressure on the employee to reveal more information than they want;
* discuss and agree any further steps or targets that can be put in place to help the employee to improve their attendance;
* if there is an underlying health problem, [refer the employee to occupational health/encourage the employee to book an appointment with a healthcare professional], if this has not already been done;
* remind the employee of the support that is available to the employee, including the [occupational health/other e.g. employee assistance programme]; and
* inform the employee of the possible outcomes of the meeting (see [below](#outcome3)), and that these will be confirmed in writing to them within [five] days.

*Stage 3 outcome*

Within [five] days of the meeting, the manager will set out in writing the outcome of the stage 3 final meeting.

The outcome of the meeting could be:

* a decision to take no further action;
* an offer to make adjustments to the employee's work;
* redeployment with the employee's agreement; or
* a decision to dismiss the employee.

The employee will have a right of appeal. The employee should be informed of their right of appeal in the outcome letter.

## Appeal

An employee who is given a warning or is dismissed under this procedure has the right of appeal.

An appeal must be submitted in writing, to the Chair or the Secretary of the Management Committee and/or the Secretary of the Church Council or the Minister in pastoral charge stating the full grounds of appeal within 5 working days of the date on which the employee (the appellant) received written notification of the decision.

The appeal hearing will be heard by another impartial Officer, who will be either Secretary of the Management Committee, the Secretary of the Church Council and/or the Minister in pastoral charge who will give the staff member written notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing. The appeal hearing will be arranged without undue delay.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting, arrangements will be made for the appeal hearing to be held remotely. [Church / Circuit / Other Employing Body] will ensure that all participating in the process have access to the necessary technology. Lay employee’s rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

As far as practicable, the appeal hearing will normally be conducted by a more senior manager than the person who chaired the final formal review meeting.

Appeals against dismissal will be heard by a nominated appeals panel of normally three members, chaired by the Chair of the District or their nominated representative. Nominations of the appeals panel members will be agreed by the Chair of the District.

No member of the appeals panel will have had direct involvement in the specific decision being appealed. Members of the appeals panel must declare any other conflict of interest to the Chair of the District.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to the employee in writing, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

*April 2023*