



It goes without saying that absence from work must be managed if a consistent service to patients is to be delivered. The first step is to always have a fair and equal system in place, which is understood both by the manager and the employees. It is not uncommon within Practices for there to be close friendships intertwined with working relationships. This can make the management of sickness absence difficult but all the more important. A good way of overcoming these difficulties can be to liaise with Occupational Health as an independent source of help and support.

This guidance is offered as a framework for managing sickness absence in the Practice, whether it is repetitive short term absences or longer term.

The Occupational Health team may be contacted at any stage, by a manager or individual employee, to discuss sickness absence issues in confidence and where appropriate to arrange for an independent medical opinion.  
(Contact details at front of the OH&S Manual)

### **Further sources of information**

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) – this organisation has a helpful website and a confidential helpline for all queries on employment rights and work related matters.  
Tel no. 08457 474747

## **Information for Staff**

### **- What to do if you are ill and unable to go to work**

1. Phone your manager to let him/her know.
2. If you can, offer some views on when you might be better and back at work.
3. Agree to keep in touch, perhaps weekly if the absence is likely to last longer than a few days.
4. Fill in any forms needed e.g. self certification or send in GP 'sick note'.
5. Agree to meet, in due course, to discuss any support, returning to work, occupational health review, or anything else that you or your employer think might help you.
6. If you think your work made you ill, please mention this to your manager as soon as you make contact or telephone the OH service.

Thank you.

***It may be appropriate to include the above information for employees in staff handbooks or Induction packages.***

## **Information for Managers**

### **- What to do when a member of staff telephones in sick**

1. See attached checklist, Appendix 1 – be consistent and fair throughout for all your staff.
2. Maintain a written review, Appendix 2.
3. Be aware of the need to be tactful, sympathetic and supportive..... whilst also being aware of your role of manager and securing the information you need e.g. likely return to work!
4. Keep a regular contact (possibly by phone) – perhaps weekly if the illness is likely to last for more than a few days. However, if the employee perceives this contact to be unhelpful, try to agree a different form of communication agreeable to both parties.
5. It is difficult being both a friend/colleague and a manager. For this reason, there is merit in having a structured and consistent approach to all employees.
6. If appropriate consider other sources of advice and support for both you and your member of staff, e.g. Occupational Health, Counselling Service, etc.
7. If you feel it would be helpful to meet with your member of staff see Appendix 3 and 4.
8. Consider 'phased return to work' programmes, if appropriate. (Occupational Health can help you with this.)
9. The 'return to work' interview is probably the most important step!
10. If you feel you are getting more onto HR/Conduct issues, seek HR advice.

**Remember, you can contact Occupational Health for advice/support at any stage of the process.**

# Checklist for Managers - Appendix 1



Name of Employee .....

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>1. Initial Contact</b>	Complete any Practice Notification form	
	Discuss with employee the reason for absence and estimated return date	
	Arrange staff cover if appropriate	
	Is absence due to work injury or incident? If YES – complete appropriate accident reporting documentation	
	Arrange with employee to maintain regular contact e.g. weekly	
	Record and summarise discussion with employee (see appendix 2)	
	Obtain medical certificates for absences over 7 days	
<b>2. Ongoing Contact</b>	If you have concerns, arrange to meet with the employee to discuss - see Appendix 3	
	Write to the employee with outcome of the meeting within 5 working days - see Appendix 4	
<b>3. On day of return to work (or few days before)</b>	Welcome employee back	
	Complete Return to Work Discussion – Appendix 2 - and discuss if further support if appropriate	
	Complete attendance record	

## Record of Contact – Appendix 2



**Employee:**

**Date:**

**Summary of Discussion:**

**Agreed Actions:**

**Agreed date for next contact:**

**Date:**

**Summary of Discussion:**

**Agreed Actions:**

**Agreed date for next contact:**

**Date:**

**Summary of Discussion:**

**Agreed Actions:**

**Agreed date for next contact:**

**Date:**

**Summary of Discussion:**

**Agreed Actions:**

**Agreed date for next contact:**

## Sickness Absence Meeting Checklist – Appendix 3



### **Write to employee to request meeting – to be received at least 5 days before the date of meeting**

To include

1. State date, time and location of meeting.
2. Detail the reasons for holding the meeting and what the outcome of the meeting will be.
3. Advise who will be in attendance at the meeting.
4. Advise (if appropriate) of the employee's right to be accompanied at the meeting by a representative or friend (not acting in a legal capacity).
5. If appropriate refer to any previous action taken on sickness absence.

### **Aide memoire for meeting:**

Consider discussing, as appropriate

- Counselling
- Referral to Occupational Health (see Section 1.2 OH&S Manual)
- Phased return to work
- Other sources of advice/support



To be sent out within 5 working days of the meeting:

1. Confirm the date and location.
2. State who was present.
3. State the reasons for the meeting.
4. Brief summary of proceedings.
5. The outcome of the meeting i.e. document any agreed return to work or other programme.
6. State the reasons for any decisions reached and the factors taken into account.
7. Confirm details of the review period and the date of the review meeting.