

MANAGERS GUIDE ON CONDUCTING A STAGE 1 ABSENCE MEETING

GENERAL

A Stage 1 Absence Meeting is the first formal stage under the [Policy and Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work](#). A Stage 1 Absence Meeting should be convened either where

- An employee's absence has reached the corporate action trigger point in the monitoring period following an informal review meeting
- An employee has reached 3 months of continuous absence

The purpose of a Stage 1 Absence Meeting is to discuss the content of the Occupational Health Adviser's report (where applicable) and explore ways of supporting the employee in improving their attendance or in continuous absence cases, supporting their return to work.

As this constitutes the first formal stage of the Policy & Procedure on [Policy and Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work](#), an employee is entitled to be accompanied at a Stage 1 Absence Meeting by a Trade Union representative or some other person of their choice.

PREPARING FOR A STAGE 1 ABSENCE MEETING

The Stage 1 Absence Meeting must be held no later than 2 weeks from an employee's return to work or no later than 2 weeks from receipt of the Occupational Health Advisers report if a referral was made.

In dealing with continuous absence, the meetings should be held within 2 weeks of reaching the corporate action trigger point.

As a Stage 1 Absence Meeting is a formal meeting, the employee should be given a minimum of 5 working days' notice of the meeting, in writing. This should be done by using the [template letter](#) available on MyToolkit.

In preparing for a Stage 1 Absence Meeting, you should ensure that the following information/documentation is available:

- The previously completed Record of Informal Review Meeting
- Notes of discussion at previous Attendance Support Meeting(s)
- Number of occasions /days of absence over the last 12 month
- Reason(s) for absence(s)
- The Occupational Health report (where applicable)
- Details of any pattern that exists (i.e. Monday/Friday/after public holidays)

CONDUCTING A STAGE 1 ABSENCE MEETING

The detail of the discussions held during a Stage 1 Absence Meeting will vary depending on the circumstances of each case but the key topics to be covered during the meeting are as follows

1. Accompaniment

Employees are entitled to be accompanied at a Stage 1 Absence Meeting by a Trade Union Representative or other person of their choice. An employee may choose not to be accompanied and this is perfectly acceptable. However in such circumstances you should open the meeting by ensuring the employee was aware of their right to be accompanied and that they are happy to proceed without this.

2. The employees sickness absence record

The employee will be aware of their absence record from the letter inviting them to attend the Stage 1 Absence Meeting. You should however begin the meeting by recounting this and ensuring the employee agrees with the accuracy of the record. You should also explain to the employee that their absence record has resulted in them reaching the councils corporate action trigger point.

3. The reasons for absence

This should be an open discussion between yourself and the employee about the reasons for their absence.

Where a referral to Occupational Health has been made, you should refer to the report from Occupational Health and any specific guidance offered within this. Where the Occupational Health Adviser confirms that the employee is suffering from an underlying health condition this should be taken into consideration when discussing adjustments or support that could be put in place to assist the employee in improving their attendance.

If Occupational Health have recommended any adjustments you should discuss these with the employee with a view to deciding whether or not they can be accommodated within the service. You should also discuss with the employee whether they feel there are any additional supports that could be provided to assist them in improving their attendance at work. You should ensure that all adjustments and supports are fully discussed with the employee and in cases where any recommended adjustments or supports cannot be accommodated the employee should be made aware of the reasons for this.

4. Monitoring Arrangements

When advising employees of the improvement required in their attendance levels, managers should be specific and detail triggers and timescales. You should ensure that you clearly explain to the employee the monitoring arrangements that will be put in place from the date of the Stage 1 Absence Meeting and the consequences of the employee failing to achieve the required improvement in their attendance. The monitoring arrangements should be explained to the employee as follows

- They will be monitored under Stage 1 of the [Policy and Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work](#) for a period of 12 months from the date of their return to work or in continuous absence cases, from the date they reached 3 months absence.
- If their absence level reaches the corporate action trigger at any point during the 12-month monitoring period then they may be required to attend a Stage 2 Absence Meeting.
- Employees should be reminded that the corporate action trigger level for intermittent absence is 6 days or 4 occasions in a **rolling 12 month period** and it is therefore possible that any further absences during the monitoring period will result in them reaching the action trigger point.
- Employees with continuous absence the action trigger point will be 6 months
- It is also advisable that regular review meetings are scheduled during the monitoring period and the employee should be advised of how frequently these are expected to take place.

At the conclusion of the Stage 1 Absence Meeting, you should **ensure that the employee understands the improvement required, any support mechanisms being put in place, the monitoring arrangements, and the consequences of again reaching the corporate action trigger points.**

ACTION REQUIRED FOLLOWING A STAGE 1 ABSENCE MEETING

Following the Stage 1 Absence Meeting the manager should write to the employee confirming the outcome of the meeting, using the appropriate template letter from the manager's toolkit (line supplied previously). It is important that this outcome letter accurately and fully records the key issues discussed during the meeting as it may be relied upon at a later stage in the procedure.

A copy of this letter should be sent to Human Resources to allow the employee's file to be updated

For monitoring and compliance purposes, managers are required to confirm that they have undertaken Stage 1 Absence Meetings.

Managers must ensure that systems are in place to monitor an employee's absence during the monitoring period to allow appropriate action to be taken should they reach the corporate trigger level.