

Introduction

We've developed this information sheet to outline the types of discussions that should take place with the employee during the long term absence interview. You should read this information in conjunction with the guidance contained within [supporting attendance: manager's guide](#).

Purpose of the absence interview

The main purpose of the absence interview is to:

- Fully discuss the employee's absence.
- Ensure steps are taken to determine the nature of the medical condition.
- Offer support and assistance to the employee which may aid a return to work.

Key discussion points

You should discuss the following with the employee when conducting the absence Interview:

Confirm condition	You should ask the employee to confirm the nature of their condition (you should already know why the employee is absent as they will be keeping in contact with you as required under our procedures; however, this can change during a period of absence).
Medication:	You should find out what medication the employee has been prescribed, and any side effects. This is particularly important when an employee is close to returning to work where, for example, they operate machinery and the medication can cause drowsiness.
Further tests:	<p>Where the employee's prognosis isn't clear, you should ask them if they have been referred to a consultant or to hospital for tests, and when these will take place. You may find this information helpful in deciding when to refer the employee to our occupational health service (OHS).</p> <p>Where hospital tests, investigations or consultant's appointments are due in the near future, you'll find that it's usually better to wait until after these appointments before seeking advice from occupational health. This means that OHS are then able to access the most up to date medical information.</p>

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Occupational health referral:	In cases where you are referring an employee to OHS, you should discuss the reasons with them. You can find further details, including the referral process, in supporting attendance: managers guide .
Employee's feelings about condition:	Each person will react in their own way when suffering from a health problem. You should discuss this with the employee to see if we could offer any form of support, such as the services available through our employee assistance provider (EAP).
Employee's feelings about returning to work:	Employees can often feel anxious about returning to work after a long absence. You should discuss this with the employee, and offer support to help reassure them about their return. This could take the form of a phased return or limited workload, or advising them of the counselling services available.
Expected return to work date:	<p>You should ask the employee when they feel they will be fit to return to work. While this can change over time, it gives you an idea of how they feel about returning.</p> <p>You can also discuss any action that you may need to take before they return to work. This could include any adjustments recommended by their doctor, or any other changes that may help. You can find more information on this in our manager's information sheet: types of reasonable adjustments.</p>
Confirm capability to work on full capacity or restricted duties:	You should establish whether the employee will be fit to return to their full range of duties or restricted duties. You may be able to get this information from their doctor, or following a referral to OHS. You should discuss and agree timescales where restricted duties are required.
Follow up interview:	You should advise the employee that you will meet with them again if there's no return to work. You should meet the employee regularly, around every 4-6 weeks or so, where appropriate.
Pay:	You should confirm sick pay details with the employee, including, where appropriate, the dates when they will go on to half pay and then no pay. You can find further guidance on this in our sickness absence: leave and pay conditions of service.

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Management decisions:

You may have to discuss future possible management decisions with the employee, where appropriate. These options include:

- ill health retiral; and
- termination of employment on the grounds of capability.

You should seek advice from your service HR team in such cases. You can find further information on these options and what they mean later in [supporting attendance: managers guide](#).

You should confirm details of these discussions, including the outcome, in writing to the employee after the meeting.

Further guidance

Further guidance on this, or any aspect of the supporting attendance toolkit, is available from your Service Strategic HR team.