

Guidance on Conducting an Attendance Support Meeting

1. What is an Attendance Support Meeting?

An Attendance Support Meeting is a formal meeting which should take place when an employee's level of sickness absence triggers the need for a more formal supportive approach. These triggers are (in a retrospective rolling 12 month period):

- 3 occasions of absence
And/or
- 12 calendar days
And/or
- Where monitoring identifies that recurring patterns of absence are emerging over time (including several prolonged periods of absence)

When calculating this, the manager should consider any time off for sickness for the 12 months prior to the last day of the most recent period of sickness absence.

E.g., Joe Bloggs is off work on the 25 to 30 September 2023. When considering if Joe needs an Attendance Support Meeting, their line manager would take into account any absences between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023

If an absence started before the 1 October 2022 but concluded after this date, the time after the 1 October 2022 should be included in the calculations.

The meeting should be in a private location and between the employee and their line manager (or an appointed supervisor). The meeting should be separate to any Return to Work Interview, however, it can be conducted immediately after a Return to Work Interview has concluded.

The objectives of the meeting are to:

- Discuss the reasons for the absences, building on the discussion which has taken place in the Return to Work Interview.
- Identify any patterns of absence.

- Discuss if there is an underlying reason/s for the absences.
- Discuss if the employee has a long term condition/disability.
- Consider what support the Trust can give to the employee to help them improve their level of attendance.

2. What should be covered in an Attendance Support Meeting?

All Attendance Support meetings will be different, however there will be some commonalities. Prior to the meeting the manager should prepare by:

- Considering the best place for the meeting to take place.
- Gathering details of the employee's previous absences – these can be found on ESR Manager Self-Service.
- Gathering the Return to Work Interview Forms from all previous absences.
- Considering and preparing questions to ask.
- Considering if any support may be needed and how this can be accessed.

When conducting the meetings, managers should be empathetic and sensitive to the employee's situation. One example of how a meeting could be conducted is:

2.1 Introduction

- Welcome the employee and ensure they understand the purpose of the meeting and the reason why they have triggered the meeting.

2.2 Absence Details

- Check with the employee that their absence dates and reasons are correct on ESR.
- Discuss the employee's absences, reviewing the Return to Work Interview forms.
- Discuss whether the employee has an ongoing condition, establishing if it could be a long term condition or disability.
 - Discuss any advice given by the employee's medical practitioner about their condition.
- Discuss whether a referral to OHWbS would be beneficial or go through the most recent report if applicable.
- If adjusted duties had been previously agreed, make sure these are still appropriate.

2.3 Looking Forward

- Explore if there is any support that can be given to improve attendance, such as
 - Referral to OHWbS,
 - A Reasonable Adjustment Agreement,
 - Discussion about our in house counselling service.
- Explain that the employee's attendance will be reviewed over a period of 6 months, starting from the day the employee returned from their most recent period of absence.
- Make clear the level of attendance the Trust would find acceptable within that 6 month period. This would normally be no more than 2 periods of absence totalling no more than 5 calendar days however, as a reasonable adjustment due to an underlying health condition, this can be amended and the manager should refer to the Reasonable Adjustment Guidance and seek support from HR in this situation.
- Explain what would happen if the employee was unable to meet these levels of attendance; that an Attendance Support Review Meeting would be held.
- Make sure the employee has access to the Sickness Absence Support Policy (printed or electronic copy as appropriate).
- Summarise everything discussed, pointing out any outstanding actions (and who is responsible for these).
- Close the meeting on a positive note.

3. Recording the Meeting

Whilst conducting the meeting, the manager should record a summary of the discussion on the Attendance Support Meeting Form and ask the employee to sign the form to confirm their agreement that this is an accurate account of the discussion.

If the employee declines to sign the form the manager should record this in the relevant field. Once completed, the manager should copy the form, giving a copy to the employee and keep one copy for the employee's personal file.