Absence

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Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I am absent due to sickness?

On your first day of absence, you or a person you have nominated on your behalf e.g. a relative or friend, must telephone your Line Manager immediately and within one hour of your normal start time e.g. no later than 10am if you work office hours. Your Line Manager will then inform Impact's Human Resources Team. The following information must be provided:

- Your name
- The reason for your absence
- The length of time you are likely to be absent from work
- Whether the absence if due to an accident at work, and if so, the nature of the accident.
- Appointments, meetings or training courses in your diary to be cancelled or details of any work deadlines

In the absence of your Line Manager you need to speak to their Line Manager, or failing that the HR Team.

What should I do if I am absent for up to 7 days?

For a period of absence of anything up to 7 days you must complete a self-certification form on Select HR upon your return to work. It is your responsibility to complete this. (It is not necessary to submit a self-certification form if the period of absence is already covered by a Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work.)

What should I do if I am absent for more than 7 consecutive days?

If the absence exceeds 7 consecutive days then you must consult a doctor and produce a Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work to cover the proposed period of absence. This note must reach your Line Manager on or before the 8th day of absence.

It is your responsibility to ensure the Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work arrives on time. If your note is likely to be delayed you must contact your Line Manager and explain the reason for the delay. If it is not received in time, nor covers the full period of absence, this could lead to loss of pay.

When the period of absence covered by your Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work expires, you must either return to work or, if the period of absence is to continue, produce another Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work which must be received by your Line Manager on or before the day the previous Statement of Fitness for Work expires.

If you are not able to complete your normal role you may be able to attend work to carry out suitable light duties. This will be discussed with your Line Manager and a member of the HR Team.

If you wish to return to work before your statement of fitness for work ends then you must see your Doctor and provide HR with an updated Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work.

What will happen if I am sick during annual leave?

If you are on annual leave and you are ill you will only be regarded as being on sick leave and not annual leave when you produce a Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work to cover the period and you will be regarded as being on sick leave from the Doctor's date of signing. You cannot be re-credited with annual leave by self-certification.

What will happen to my annual leave when I am off sick?

If you are off on long term sickness and are therefore unable to take all your annual leave within the holiday year, you are entitled to carry over the statutory annual leave entitlement into the following leave year. The current entitlement is 5.6 week or 28 days for full time members of staff and includes bank holidays (this entitlement will be pro-rata for part time members of staff e.g. a member of staff who works one day a week will be entitled to 1/5 of 5.6 weeks) which equates to 5.6 days.

Please note that if you were able to take some annual leave/ bank holidays prior to your sickness absence commencing, this will be deducted from the statutory annual leave entitlement when your carryover is calculated.

We will consider the appropriateness of this system on an individual basis and exceptions will be made where anomalies occur.

What do I do if I need to attend a doctors or dentist appointment?

Impact will support you to attend routine medical and dental treatment and expects all employees to advise their manager within a reasonable time. Ideally appointments should be made outside normal working hours. If this is not possible, you are expected to use lieu time, annual leave or flexible working to accommodate time off work.

What will happen on my return to work after being off sick?

Returning members of staff will have a return to work interview with their Line Manager, or in exceptional circumstances, a member of the Human Resources Team. Your Manager will be required to complete a return to work form, which will require them to ask certain questions to ensure you receive adequate support on your return.

The normal format for this interview will be the following:

- Your Manager will welcome you back to work;
- Discuss the reason for absence notified on the self certification form or doctor's certificate;

- Clarify if it is likely to recur;
- If appropriate, explore whether the absence is as a result of any issues or incidents at work, and discuss whether any assistance from Impact could assist in minimising future absences;
- Tell you, you were missed and stress the importance of your work to the organisation;
- If this is not the first period of absence, explore any patterns or trends that appear to be emerging, or if appropriate explore any work-related reasons for absence;
- Record the interview details

What are the Absence Trigger points identified in the Positive Attendance Policy?

As outlined in the Positive Attendance Policy, these are:

- 3 short periods of absence of any duration over a rolling 12 month period;
- And/ or 2 working weeks e.g. 10 days if full time or 6 days if you work 3 days a week or 48 hours if you work 24 hours per week etc, in a rolling 12 month period;
- And/ or repeated absences linked to weekends or other breaks;
- And/ or frequent/excessive medical appointments.

Your Line Manager will then carry out a support interview to discuss your sickness absence with you in more detail. You will be given at least 5 calendar days notice of the meeting and you may be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or a work colleague, if you wish.

As with the 'return to work' interview stage, this can be done with a member of the Human Resources Team instead of your Line Manager if you feel more comfortable with this.

What action could be taken if I do not adhere to the sickness absence procedure?

You could lose your entitlement to Occupational Sick Pay and, if you fail to submit a Doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work in a timely manner, you may also lose your entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay. You may also be liable to disciplinary action.

What happens if I am on long term sick?

If you have been absent for a continuous period of three working weeks, this is regarded as 'long term' sickness. This means that around 3 weeks from your first day of absence a member of the Human Resources Team will contact you to arrange to visit you at home or at an Impact Office/ premises, if you prefer. In certain circumstances your Line Manager may also be present. The purpose of this staff welfare visit is to:

- Establish any support needs you may have.
- Establish the nature and likely duration of any medical condition for operational purposes.
- Consider whether a medical opinion by the Association's Occupational Health Advisor is required.
- Consider whether a phased return/light duties might be appropriate

For further information on staff welfare visits please refer to the Absence Management Procedure Section below.

If you have possession of a mobile phone or laptop computer for business usage you will be required to return these to Impact after being absent for a period of 4 weeks. Failure to do so may result in some income tax liability for being in receipt of a personal benefit. This requirement is subject to some flexibility if, by mutual agreement, you wished to undertake some work at home during a period of sickness absence.

What bereavement leave am I entitled to?

Child, Spouse or Partner- Up to 4 working weeks (e.g. 20 days/64 hours etc.)

Brother, Sister, Parent or person loco parentis- Up to 1 working week (e.g. 5 days/16 hours etc.)

Grandparents or in-laws- Up to 2/5 of a working week (e.g. 2 days or 6½ hours etc).

Other family member i.e. Cousin, Auntie, Uncle etc- It is Impact's expectation that staff will only take time off to attend the funeral and not a full day/shift (time off to attend a funeral will in normal circumstances be no longer than 2 ½ hours). If there is a distance to travel to the Funeral, then staff will need to take Annual leave or lieu time to cover this.

What if I am called for Jury Service?

Inform your Line Manager, show them the letter and send a copy of the letter and originals of the forms to complete regarding your pay to HR. HR will complete these forms and return them to you to take along on your first day of Jury Service. Please inform your Manager immediately if your Jury Service is cancelled.

You are expected to be at work on the days you are not required for Jury Service or we expect you to return to work if you are not called or you are only used for part of the day. Alternatively you can take lieu time or holidays rather than return to work. If you work in Care and Support your Manager may require you to take holiday or lieu time rather than return to work if your shift has already been covered. Please ensure all your absence is logged on Select HR.

What will I be paid when I am on Jury service?

Full pay as normal and then you will claim back from the Courts the time that you were in attendance and whatever you are paid by them we deduct from your next salary. HR need to see evidence of this. You claim your expenses eg travel allowance, subsistence e.g lunch and any parking fees directly from the courts; this is not something we reclaim.

What if a colleague asks me to accompany them to a disciplinary or grievance meeting?

You need to speak to your Line Manager to approve your time to attend. Line Managers will, where possible, facilitate this but it will depend on the needs of the service.

Positive Attendance Policy

Roles & Responsibilities

Positive Attendance is everybody's responsibility and everyone within Impact has a role to play in ensuring that it is controlled and managed effectively and efficiently.

Employees: 'Work as a team to achieve positive attendance!'

Employees are expected to:

- Get to work safely and to be responsible for their travel arrangements.
- Attend work when fit to do so.
- Notify their manager if they have to leave the workplace due to sickness.
- Notify their manager punctually if they are going to be absent.
- Refrain from any work/activities outside of work incompatible with their illness or that may delay recovery.
- Return to work as soon as possible but only when fit to undertake work duties.
- Communicate with their manager whilst absent due to sickness, especially if situations change.
- Attend Occupational Health appointments.
- Access the recommended clinical treatments.
- Work with their Manager and the HR Team to facilitate their return.
- Work to the Positive Attendance process and complete all forms.
- Take personal responsibility for their health and welfare.
- Raise concerns with their manager if they believe that their job is making them ill or contributing to their illness.

Managers: ‘Be proactive in supporting employees to prevent absence as well as managing absence effectively’

Managers are expected to:

- Create a working climate where employees feel valued and respected, including providing appropriate training and development, ensuring effective communications and effective health and safety.
- Treat all employees as individuals with respect and understanding.
- Ensure all employees are made aware of the Positive Attendance Policy.
- Act fairly, consistently and adhere to the Positive Attendance Policy.
- Ensure that accurate records are maintained.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Enter absence details onto Select HR. Check any appointments, meetings, training courses that need to be cancelled.
- Carry out return to work discussions on the first day of return.
- Monitor absences and ensure that support interviews and absence management interviews are undertaken in a timely manner.
- Co-operate with other bodies to ensure employee support and a quick return to work.
- Respect employees’ rights to representation and encourage this.
- Ensure contact with absent employees is reasonable.
- Always appreciate that certain situations will need sensitive and careful management.
- Always be aware of the organisation’s “Duty of Care” to employees.
- Liaise with HR/Occupational Health as set out in the Policy to help prevent lengthy absences.

Impact’s HR Team: ‘Help managers to achieve positive attendance’

HR are expected to:

Ensure that the policy meets the business needs of the organisation.
Effectively monitor the policy ensuring that all parties adhere to it.
Amend the policy as needed in light of legislation and operational needs.
Support managers in dealing with individual cases as appropriate.

Others: ‘Support Impact in policy implementation’

Others are expected to:

Our external Occupational Health Advisors are responsible for providing a range of services in support of this policy including pre-employment health screening, and fitness for work assessments if appropriate.
Our confidential staff counselling facility provides support to staff if they wish to make use of this option.

The Trade Union should support Impact in the management of attendance and support their members with rights to representation.

The Trade Union may provide welfare support for their members.

Prevention of Sickness, Absence & Disability

Impact wants all employees to feel that they work in a safe and healthy environment. If you feel that any aspect of your work is causing concern for you or your colleagues, you should report the concern(s) to your manager, the HR team, Lisa Ford in the Central Services, or Janet Hughes (if you work in Care and Support). If a member of Impact's recognised Trade Union, Unison, you can also contact their Health and Safety Representative.

Working Relationships

There is a lot which managers and colleagues can do to support employees in the workplace, by creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and contributes to the success of the team. By taking an interest (without being intrusive) in the well being of others, managers and team members can notice early warning signs of something which is causing an individual a problem, which may lead to periods of absence. This might be changes in behaviour (quiet when usually outgoing, looking tired, odd days off sick). By being aware of these signs, it might be possible to offer support earlier and prevent a difficulty from becoming more serious and leading to a longer period of absence.

Learning and Development

Employees need the necessary skills to perform their jobs safely and effectively, and also need to be engaged in a continuous learning and development process in the workplace in order for them to remain motivated and engaged in the delivery of the organisational goals and objectives. Employees, with support from their managers, should be partners in the learning process, and managers must champion learning and development in a high profile, open way through their everyday actions.

Communication and Involvement

The role of managers is crucial in preventing absence. By involving employees, consulting them on changes, generally communicating in an open and constructive way, managers will create a supportive environment, which will have a positive effect on employee morale and well being, and help to prevent absence.

Health Promotion

The external occupational health service provides Impact with a range of services in support of this policy. This may include pre-employment health

screening, fitness for work assessments, night worker assessments etc. Impact will undertake a range of health promotion activities and this may include the ongoing screening of individual employees.

Impact supports employees in attending routine medical and dental treatment and expects all employees to advise their manager within a reasonable time. Ideally appointments should be made outside normal working hours. If this is not possible, employees are expected to use lieu time, annual leave or flexible working to accommodate time off work.

Other Resources to Support Employees

Other resources that are available to managers in supporting employees in the prevention of sickness, absence and disability are:

- Health & Safety
- Occupational Health (referral via HR Team)
- Confidential Counselling Service
- HR Team
- Trade Union Health & Safety Representative
- Inoculations and Immunisations
- Simply Health Scheme- assists with payments for e.g. dental treatment, chiropody, reflexology, optical treatments etc.

Impact's Policies and Procedures

These resources are supported by policies and procedures, which every employee is responsible for being familiar with:

- Health & Safety Policy and other health and safety documents
- Staff Handbook
- Diversity Policy
- Preventing Bullying at Work Policy
- Competence, Accountability and Integrity Policy

All Impact's policies and procedures are accessible via the h:\ drive on our internal computer system. Details of how to access these documents will have been provided as part of your induction process or through internal IT training. However please ask if you require further assistance.

Voluntary Reduced Working / Redeployment

In addition to these policies the following preventative measures are available to support employees in appropriate cases.

At the employee's request and with the agreement of the line manager, HR Team and Functional Director, a period of voluntary reduced working will be

considered (with a resultant reduction in income) as long as this does not significantly impact upon the service delivery.

Where employees feel that they cannot cope with the role they are doing, redeployment to a different role may be considered, especially where there are health implications behind the wish to move. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the final decision will rest with the functional Director supported as necessary by the HR Director.

Absence Management Procedure

To enable all absences to be handled effectively and for the appropriate support to be given, it is essential that contact is maintained between you and Impact throughout the period of absence. Impact can reasonably expect you to keep in regular contact as well as attend meetings with your manager, HR and/ or the external Occupational Health Service and provide the necessary certificates and/or documentation at the appropriate times. You need to co-operate with Impact to facilitate your return to work as soon as possible. Where you fail to do this, Impact will take action as appropriate, which may include the withdrawal of statutory sick pay/ occupational sick pay and/or take disciplinary action.

Notification

You must ring in as soon as possible (before 10 a.m. for those who work office hours) and normally within one hour of your expected start time. If you work on a rota providing a direct service to clients you are asked to ring before the start of your shift wherever possible to give your manager time to arrange cover.

In all cases your line manager, (or your line manager's manager if your manager is not available) must be notified. In exceptional circumstances, where it would be detrimental for you to contact your manager, or where your manager is not contactable, you should contact the HR Team. Notification to colleagues is not acceptable, except where the first three routes are not available. Voicemails or text messages may be left, but not as a substitute for letting someone know where you are; you must speak to someone.

If your manager is temporarily absent, you must leave a message with a telephone number to allow your manager to call back. You must make every effort to be available for the call back as long as this does not prevent you from seeking medical treatment/attention.

Exceptionally, if you are unable to call your manager yourself, an appropriate person should notify your manager and identify their relationship with you. You should make direct contact with your manager as soon as possible thereafter.

During the telephone notification the manager will ask:

- The nature of the sickness absence

- When the sickness began
- Expected date of return to work
- Any relevant information about current workload e.g. appointments, training due to attend, work deadlines etc. This will help managers to plan for ongoing work to be done.
- Telephone number for calling back
- If they can be of assistance

NB If you state that your absence is due to an accident that happened at work, your manager must ensure that the Accident and Incident Form is completed electronically. The form can be found in your internet favourites.

Your manager will record the details of your absence on SelectHR and this will be used during the return to work discussion.

If you indicate that the prognosis/potential time away from work will be longer than three weeks, your manager is advised to contact HR to see what support can be provided. In such circumstances, HR/Occupational Health may make contact with you.

Failure to Notify

If you fail to notify Impact within the agreed timescales you will lose your entitlement to sick pay for that absence, subject to the scheme rules. In addition failure to notify may constitute unauthorised absence and result in disciplinary action.

Certification of absence

All sickness absence has to be certified to ensure prompt and correct payment of sick pay and to ensure accurate records are maintained.

You can self-certify for the first 7 days of sickness absence by ringing in on the first day, and keeping your manager informed about the state of your health if the sickness continues throughout this 7 day period.

For sickness absences of more than 7 days (including weekends) a doctor's certificate (Statement of Fitness to Work) is needed, and should be received by your manager by no later than the eighth day of absence. Your Manager should forward this immediately to the HR Team. E.g. if you phone in sick on the Tuesday, you must either be back at work on the following Tuesday or have a doctor's note (Statement of Fitness for Work) to cover you from that time. This means that you must go to the doctors on the Monday at the latest so that the Statement of Fitness for Work covers you for Tuesday. You must also return to your doctor in good time so that any continuation sick note covers you fully.

Employees who fail to follow the notification and certification requirements will lose their entitlement to both statutory sick pay and occupational sick pay for

that absence, subject to the scheme rules. In addition, continued failure to supply certificates without good reason, may result in disciplinary action.

Removal of Self-certification

In certain circumstances Impact reserves the right for all absences to be certified by a General Practitioner (at the employee's cost). This is most likely to be linked to persistent short-term absence (see below) and where you have failed to notify Impact on previous occasions.

This will be expected for every absence until your manager has confirmed that an acceptable level of attendance has been achieved. (Your Line Manager will do this in consultation with HR.)

Returning to Work

You should only return to work when you are fit to do so. For absences of less than seven days, which you can self certify for, you need to exercise judgement about your own fitness.

You will not be allowed to return to work in advance of the expiry of a fit note without further confirmation from your doctor that you are fit to do so.

If you are in any doubt about your fitness for work, you should make contact with either your manager or the HR team before attempting to return to work.

Your Line Manager (or their line manager if your line manager is away from work) will hold a 'Return to Work Discussion' following every absence. This should be carried out on the day you return. Where your manager is not based in the same location as you, this can be done via the telephone.

NB The discussion is informal and supportive and is designed to enable your manager to better understand the reason for the absence. It is an opportunity to explore whether there are any underlying reasons for absence and what support could be provided. As this is informal, there is no right for you to be accompanied by a trade union representative or other work colleague.

In some circumstances, you may prefer to speak to someone of the same sex, and your manager needs to facilitate this. This can be organised through the HR team.

Contact Management if absence is longer than a week

It is expected that you will keep Impact informed about your absence, especially if a significant change occurs. Normally, you should keep in touch with and update your manager, or a more senior manager/HR, on a weekly basis by telephone or as deemed appropriate depending upon the length and nature of your illness. Alternatively, you may prefer your manager to make contact at pre-arranged times for these updates.

There may be circumstances when it would be medically detrimental for your manager to contact you, or where you may wish to be visited by an alternative manager or a member of the HR team. In such cases, you or your manager should make alternative arrangements, e.g. involve the HR team. Similarly, where appropriate Impact may wish to contact a third party, such as a family member, where you cannot make personal contact.

If you continually fail to keep in touch you may lose your entitlement to sick pay and may be referred to Impact's disciplinary procedure.

In normal circumstances, your manager will make contact at their earliest opportunity, to offer support in cases of absence. The level and type of contact will be considered carefully by your manager, taking into account your condition. It is important that the level and type of contact is supportive and not intrusive.

Contact with you can include:

- Writing to you to offer their support
- Providing updates on team/organisation news
- Arranging a workplace or home visit, usually after an absence of 3 weeks

NB You may also welcome contact from colleagues to support you through your absence.

Meeting with Manager/Home Visit/Staff Welfare

A member of the HR team will make contact either by telephone or by letter to arrange a meeting to see what can be done to help, and normally this is when the member of staff has been absent for 3 weeks. This may be in the form of a home visit or if preferred the meeting can take place at an Impact office/ premises or another appropriate venue can be agreed. Employees are responsible for ensuring that arrangements for travelling to / from meetings are not detrimental to their health. If an employee wishes to be represented or accompanied (e.g. by a trade union representative, colleague, family member) at a meeting they should request this when the HR representative makes contact.

At these meetings the HR representative will:

- Keep it informal and friendly
- Be sensitive to your feelings
- Discuss your absence
- Explain the process for referral to Occupational Health if appropriate
- Consider and discuss whether any support can be offered
- Agree further review dates with you. Depending on the nature of the incapacity they may wish to meet you monthly for an update and to assess how best to proceed.

- If and when appropriate, discuss the possibility of part time/reduced hours for a phased return based on medical need.

Manager Liaison with HR and Occupational Health and Medical Assessments

An Occupational Health Service (OHS) is accessible through the HR team, and can offer managers advice about how best to support you when you are off sick. Your Manager is encouraged to contact HR as soon as possible to discuss and agree the appropriateness of a referral to investigate clinical options and to speed up or access treatment.

Your manager must have sought advice from HR who will progress a referral for you to Occupational Health when you have been absent for 3 weeks if appropriate.

When a referral is made to Occupational Health as much background information is provided as possible together with an outline of the questions we require a response to so that they can conduct as thorough an assessment as possible.

Occupational Health will normally arrange an appointment with you at the earliest opportunity, and will also inform HR of the outcome of the meeting, usually in the form of a written report.

Occupational Health will always give you a verbal outline of what the referral report back to the organisation will say, at the time of the consultation. There are also options to receive a written copy.

Failure to co-operate with referral to Occupational Health, completion of the Access to Medical Records declaration, or to attend medical assessments would mean that Impact would have to make decisions based on the information available. This could have a detrimental effect on the level of support that could be given. Furthermore, it may also mean that you may lose your entitlement to occupational sick pay.

Record Keeping

It is essential that managers/ HR keep records of all discussions and meetings with you. This is to ensure that absence is managed effectively and fairly, and that records of earlier decisions and actions are available to inform future decisions.

Procedure to Deal with Persistent Short-Term Sickness Absence

There is a difference between short term absence (normally single day or up to several days at a time e.g. for colds, upset stomach, headaches) and long term sickness absence where you are absent continuously for a number of weeks or where shorter absences are clearly linked to an ongoing medical

condition. Your manager will need to address the two types of absence differently.

This section sets out what managers are required to do to manage you if you are incurring periods of short term absence as defined above (see the section on “long term absence resolution” for advice on how to handle all other cases).

Support Interviews

If your short term sickness absence reaches one of the following trigger points, unless there is good reason for not doing so, your manager will hold a support interview with you. NB Each case must be considered on its own facts and if your manager is unsure whether to proceed with a support interview in a particular case, advice should be sought from the HR team.

Absence Trigger Points:

- 3 separate absences have occurred in any rolling twelve month period, and/or

- the short term absence(s) have lasted for a total of more than 2 working weeks in any rolling 12 month period e.g. 10 days for a full time member of staff, 6 days if you work 3 days a week, 48 hours if you work 24 hours a week etc.

Other factors which may generate a support interview are where the pattern or nature of the absence is giving rise for concern. Examples of patterns could be:

- Friday – Monday absences (or weekend where on shift working)

- Pre/post bank holidays, annual leave and any other notable dates

- Monthly dates e.g. last Friday every month

The purpose of a support interview is to assist you in attaining required levels of attendance. It will include a discussion of the underlying reasons for sickness absence, what support can be offered, what expectations/ responsibilities you have for improving your health/attendance and agreement on the way forward.

NB. To avoid discriminating against a person with a disability, it is important to distinguish between general sickness and disability related sickness. Advice should be taken on whether to discount any disability related absence when considering whether a support interview is appropriate.

You should be given at least 5 calendar days notice of the meeting, and told that you are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague (however this is not compulsory and you can choose to attend

the meeting unaccompanied and to have the meeting earlier than 5 days if this is mutually agreeable to you and your manager and this should be recorded on the Support Interview notes). Each support interview will be different depending upon the individual circumstances of each case. It is important however, in relevant cases, that you appreciate that further absence could lead to formal action under the absence management interview process. The outcome of the support interview must be confirmed in writing and signed by both parties.

Absence Management Interviews

If following a support interview your short term absence again reaches one of these trigger points outlined above, you will be invited to a formal absence management interview unless there is a good reason not to do so. Managers will arrange these interviews in partnership with the HR team. These meetings will normally be chaired by a manager delegated to take disciplinary/capability action under Impact's disciplinary/capability procedures.

The interview should take place as soon as is reasonably possible to arrange with all the parties involved.

You will be given a minimum of 7 calendar days notice when convening an absence management interview, and advised in writing of the purpose of the meeting and your right to representation. Any relevant documentation should be enclosed. You can submit medical evidence from your own GP or other medical practitioner.

It is recognised that there may be individual circumstances surrounding each absence and the manager will take these into account. The purpose of this meeting is for the manager to undertake the following:

- Present you with the facts surrounding your absence history
- Invite comment from you
- Investigate further the causes of the absences
- Review the causes
- Investigate why the absence had an impact on the team/service
- Explore ways in which improvements can be made
- Explore what support can be provided
- Consider what action is appropriate based on the discussion

In exceptional circumstances, you may not be well enough to attend an interview. HR will determine whether to agree a reasonable request for the postponement of the interview for a reasonable period, on medical grounds.

If an interview has been postponed once and you indicate you cannot attend a subsequent interview, HR will decide in the particular set of circumstances, whether or not to proceed in your absence, subject to:

- You being advised in writing that the interview will be held in your absence and the possible outcomes

- You having the right to nominate a trade union representative or work colleague to represent you at the interview
- You having the right to make written submissions to the interview and/or to submit medical evidence to the manager for consideration

Possible Outcomes of an Absence Management Interview

First Stage

This will lead to one or more of the following:

- Continued monitoring in all cases
- Provision of support where appropriate, as determined by HR/Occupational Health
- Consideration of removal of self-certification
- Agreed targets for improvement which will be reviewed every 3 months
- Occupational Health referral/assessment, if appropriate, to be completed within 2 to 4 weeks or as soon as is reasonably practicable. You will be expected to assist in completing the referral but will not have to disclose any confidential medical information if you do not wish
- A formal oral warning will be issued to you where appropriate, which will remain current on your personal file for the next 6 months

The improvement targets will ordinarily be:

- No more than one further short term absence in the next 6 months
- No more than a total of 4/5 of a working week short term absence in the next 6 months e.g. 4 days for a full time member of staff; 16 hours for a member of staff who works 20 hours per week etc.
- No further absences that continue a particular pattern/trend

If a target is exceeded the manager should take immediate action, rather than waiting for the end of the review period.

Second Stage

A formal written warning will be issued to you where:

- Targets agreed at stage one, oral warning, are not met by you.
- You have 2 “lapsed” (after 6 months) oral warnings within the last 3 years

Removal of self-certification if not already implemented, will be considered, as will referral to occupational health if this has not already been progressed.

The formal written warning will remain current on your personal file for the next 12 months.

Subject to the same management process as above, a designated manager having issued the formal written warning, will review your attendance record with the HR team on a 3 monthly basis against the targets.

These targets at Stage Two will ordinarily be:

- No more than 2 further short term absences in the next 12 months
- No more than a total of 1 working week short term absences in the next 12 months (e.g. 5 days for a full time member of staff; 20 hours for someone who works 20 hours per week etc).
- No further absences that continue a particular pattern/trend

If a target is exceeded the manager should take immediate action, rather than waiting for the end of the review period.

It would be inappropriate to issue a warning where for example, the employee has 2 “lapsed” warnings and then is involved in say, a car accident that results in several weeks’ absence. The accident related absence is a one-off and does not count towards the short-term absence triggers. However, if the absence is felt to be prolonged advice should be sought from the HR Team.

Third Stage

A final written warning will be issued to you where:

- Targets agreed at the earlier stage, formal written warning, are not met by you
- You have 2 “lapsed” (after 12 months) written warnings within the last 4 years.

The final written warning will remain current on the personal file for the next 2 years.

Subject to the same management process as above a designated manager, having issued the final written warning, will keep the employee attendance record under review with the HR team.

Removal of self-certification if not already implemented, will be considered, as will referral to occupational health if this has not already been progressed.

The targets at Stage Three will ordinarily be:

- No more than 2 further short term absences in each of the next 2 years.
- No more than a total of 1 working week’s short term absences in each of the next 2 years e.g. 5 days for a full time member of staff; 20 hours for someone who works 20 hours per week etc.
- No further absences that continue a particular pattern/trend.

If a target is exceeded, the manager should take immediate action, rather than waiting for the end of the review period.

Fourth Stage

If you fail to achieve the targets agreed following the issue of a final written warning, the matter will be passed immediately to a more senior manager for a decision on possible dismissal.

The HR Director must ensure that up to date reports from Occupational Health are available for consideration before dismissal takes place, if appropriate.

If the HR Director concludes that it is appropriate to pursue dismissal, you will be given at least 7 calendar days notice in writing of the date, time and place of a hearing. You will be advised of your right to be accompanied at the hearing by a trade union representative or a work colleague. The hearing will normally be conducted by a Director. Both you and your Line Manager will have the opportunity to present any supporting documents.

When reaching a decision about whether to dismiss or not, the Director will consider:

- Advice received from Occupational Health
- Your absence record
- The Impact of your absence on service delivery, colleagues and Impact
- What actions have been taken to support you in trying to reach an acceptable level of attendance
- The implications of such a decision in light of the Equality Act (2010) and other employment legislation
- Any representation made by you, including any information submitted to support their health problems
- Any new information that comes to light

The Director will be aware that dismissal must be justifiable on the particular circumstances of the individual case. New information may come to light at this stage which may lead to a decision to continue monitoring for a set period or to take some other action e.g. redeployment.

If the decision is taken to dismiss, you may be informed verbally at the conclusion of the meeting and in all cases will receive written confirmation of the dismissal and the reasons for dismissal, the date on which your employment will terminate – allowing for the appropriate period of notice – and be given information on your right of appeal.

NB You are entitled to normal pay for the duration of your contractual/statutory period of notice even if you have exhausted your sick pay entitlement. Also, you are entitled to pay for untaken annual leave

accrued during the leave year in which the contract of employment is terminated.

Appeals Process

You have the right of appeal against any formal action, if you consider the sanction is too harsh, or consider that the policy has not been properly applied. Any employee subject to an oral or written warning or dismissal may, within 14 calendar days of the date upon which the written notification was sent to them, give written notice of appeal against the decision. The notice shall specify the grounds of the appeal and shall be sent to the HR Director. In all cases the appeal shall be heard by the Chief Executive, or another member of the Senior Management Team, accompanied by a representative from HR, unless the original decision was taken by the HR Director or Chief Executive, in which case the appeal shall be heard by 3 members of the Board. No person who has been involved in a decision to impose a disciplinary sanction, or dismissal, shall hear an appeal.

The appeal shall be by way of re-hearing and shall follow the same procedure as the disciplinary hearing. You shall have the same right of representation as at the disciplinary hearing.

At the completion of the appeal hearing the decision may be announced, or may be notified in writing normally within 7 calendar days. No further right of appeal will be available to you within the organisation.

Where an appeal against a decision to dismiss in unsuccessful, the dismissal shall stand from the date when the original decision was given to you.

An unsuccessful appeal shall not have the effect of extending any notice period, or, in the case of summary dismissal rendering Impact liable to pay any remuneration to you for the period between dismissal and appeal. In the event that an appeal against dismissal is successful you shall be fully reinstated and any back pay paid to you.

The person or panel hearing an appeal may decide to impose a lesser sanction than the one agreed by the original decision-maker at the disciplinary hearing.

Procedure to Deal with Long Term Absence Resolution

Long term absence is defined as absence lasting 3 weeks or more. In many long term absence situations, you will recover and return to work. However, this may not always be the case. There are a number of possible outcomes when managing long term absence.

Support While You Are Absent

There is guidance set out in the absence management procedure section in the policy on:

- Contact Management
- Meeting your manager/home visits from HR, and your Manager liaison via HR about Occupational Health and medical assessments is to be followed when supporting you when absent due to long term illness.

NB Your Manager must have sought advice and referred you to HR, and via them, to the Occupational Health Service when you have been absent for more than 3 weeks. The only exception is when having sought advice, your manager is told that referral is not needed (e.g. if you have a broken leg without complications).

Sometimes the longer that you are absent, the more difficult it is for you to return, even when you have regained good health. Therefore, it is important your manager and HR do not allow a situation to drift along indefinitely, but actively manage it in a supportive and constructive way.

If you have been absent for more than 3 weeks, and due to the reason for absence it is not clear that you will be back at work soon, your manager and HR must consider possible next steps.

You should welcome this meeting as it will give you an opportunity to fully understand the current situation, the various perspectives on the absence and to attempt to gain a mutually beneficial resolution.

It is recognised that it will not always be possible to achieve a resolution at this stage and further meetings and support may be appropriate throughout a more extensive period of absence.

Regular contact between you and your manager/HR must be maintained throughout the duration of your absence, to avoid you feeling isolated, and to ensure all possible options are explored on an ongoing basis to try and enable you to return to work. Once involved, you must keep in contact with Occupational Health as requested, so that advice and support can be obtained on any significant changes to your medical condition which may affect their options for redeployment/return to their job.

Work Reintegration and Recovery

Managers and HR will do all they can to help you return successfully to work.

This commitment is demonstrated in relation to employees with a disability by Impact's approach to managing disabilities. This means that if an employee becomes disabled, or an existing disability becomes worse, Impact will make every effort to keep an employee in employment.

The following options are available to help achieve work re-integration whether an employee is disabled or not:

- Return to existing post, possible with adaptation/adjustments
- Phased return to work, either on reduced hours or light duties, for a 2 week period (extendable on the specific advice of Occupational Health or by agreement with HR and the line manager).
- Re-deployment to an alternative post (which is currently vacant, it would not be possible to create a new post) within the organisation, potentially with retraining and adjustments to the post, if suitable and appropriate.
- If redeployment within the employee's own team is not practical, Impact will explore re-deployment for the employee elsewhere within the organisation

In addition, Managers and HR will:

- Consider paying for retraining to fulfil an alternative role
- Support an eligible employee in accessing appropriate benefits
- Undertake a job specific induction (not a full induction) if required. This may include a risk assessment and medical examination
- Ensure that they provide the appropriate support to facilitate an early return to full duties e.g. regular one to one meetings, seeking adjustments with advice from HR and Occupational Health when appropriate
- Support from the employee with any adaptations and other reasonable adjustments as appropriate under the Equality Act (2010). This will include addressing access to work issues where appropriate.

NB - Fuller guidance on redeployment will be available from HR.

The term 'disability' can be wrongly confused will illness/poor health generally, so to avoid discriminating against a disabled person, it is important to distinguish between general sickness and disability related sickness. Further advice is available from the HR team, but the definition is that set out within the Equality Act (2010), and its subsequent updates.

Case Review Meetings

If, despite the best efforts of those involved with the absence, redeployment/return to the current job is not possible, HR and your manager will have to consider whether you can continue in employment.

HR will ask you to attend a case review meeting to consider whether there are any further actions which Impact can take to assist you in continuing in employment or whether employment should be terminated due to your incapability to undertake your duties effectively because of ill health.

As part of the preparation for the case review meeting, if appropriate HR will obtain up to date advice from Occupational Health. There may be an Occupational Health Specialist, your Line Manager and a representative from HR at this meeting.

Consideration of eligibility for payment of pension benefits is separate from making a decision about terminating employment. However, if you are a pension scheme member Impact can explore ill health retirement if you wish. It will be helpful for all parties to know whether you meet the criteria to qualify for an ill health early retirement pension before the case review meeting is held, and that exhaustive attempts at redeployment have been made. (See section below Ill Health Early Retirement Pension.)

If, after any initial case review meetings, the absence continues, with no sign of the likelihood of a return to work in the near future, and/or the service is being affected, then another case review meeting will be held and this would normally be chaired by the HR Director, or in their absence another SMT member.

You will be given at least 7 calendar days notice in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing. You will be advised of your right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

You and/or your representative will be given the opportunity to state your case. Others who have been involved in trying to facilitate a return to work (either into your own job or via deployment) for example, your Line Manager, and any HR team member will provide information on what actions have been taken.

When reaching a decision about whether or not to dismiss an employee on capability grounds, the HR Director will:

- Consider the latest advice from Occupational Health, or independent medical advisor
- Be mindful of the likelihood of an eventual return to work e.g. after an operation
- Consider the length of the absences and any periods of good health in between
- Consider the impact of your absence on service delivery, colleagues and the organisation
- Consider the implications of such a decision in light of the Equality Act (2010) and other such employment legislation
- Review what actions have been taken by Impact to try and enable you to continue in employment
- Consider representations made by you and/or your representative

The list is not exhaustive and the weight attached to each will depend on the particular circumstances of each case, whilst balancing your needs and those of Impact.

Where the HR Director decides that capability dismissal is the appropriate outcome, you should be given your notice, and informed of your right of appeal to the Chief Executive.

NB - You are entitled to normal pay for the duration of your contractual/statutory notice period even if you have exhausted your sick pay entitlement. Also, you are entitled to be paid for any untaken annual leave accrued during the leave year in which the contract of employment is terminated. (If you are pension scheme members may also be eligible for immediate payment of pension – see Ill Health Early Retirement Pension section below.) More information regarding Annual Leave can be found here

In exceptional circumstances, you may not be well enough to attend the hearing. The HR Director will give favourable consideration to a reasonable request for the postponement of the hearing for a reasonable period, on medical grounds.

If the HR Director has postponed a hearing once and you indicate you cannot attend a subsequent hearing, the HR Director may decide in the particular set of circumstances, to proceed in your absence, subject to:

- You being advised in writing that the hearing will be held in your absence and the possible outcomes.
- You having the right to nominate a trade union representative or work colleague to represent you at the hearing
- You having the right to make written submissions to the hearing and/or to submit medical evidence to the HR Director for consideration

Resignation

If you are suffering from ill health you may choose to resign from your post with Impact. Whilst this is a personal decision, your manager/HR team member may discuss this with you before accepting the resignation. This is to ensure that you have reached the decision after proper consideration of the facts and there are no further implications for Impact e.g. you may have a disability and your manager/HR team needs to be clear that impact has not discriminated against you, and have considered possible reasonable adjustments to help you to continue working.

NB - An employee who resigns from employment will not be eligible to receive any ill-health benefits from the occupational pension scheme (SHPS).

Ill Health Early Retirement Pensions (Pension Scheme Members only)

The option to take ill health early retirement benefits is only an option for current pension scheme members, but it is only at the discretion of Impact/ SHPS and therefore is not an automatic right. The Social Housing Pension Scheme (SHPS) is controlled by statutory regulation, which means that there

are strict criteria which must be met, and processes that must be followed, before an early release of pension can be granted. For specific advice please contact HR/The Pensions Trust.

To be considered for an ill-health pension, you must be dismissed on the grounds of permanent incapacity. In all cases, the reason for leaving must be clearly set out in a letter to you from the HR Team.

The granting of an ill health early retirement pension will only be considered once all attempts at work reintegration and redeployment have been explored and exhausted. It is your manager's/HR team's responsibility to explore all options set out above in the Work Reintegration and Recovery section.

If you refuse the offer of a suitable, alternative role you will not be granted immediate payment of an ill health early retirement pension. The appropriateness of the alternative employment is determined by the HR Director and will include the following:

- Location
- Travelling time
- Conditions
- Job content
- Status
- Pay
- Other relevant aspects of comparison

For you to qualify for the ill health early retirement benefit, you will have to be assessed by an occupational health specialist, engaged on behalf of the Social Housing Pension Scheme, who will have to form an opinion that you are permanently incapable of working in the future. Further details of this provision will be discussed with you, once a specific situation looks as though it is reaching this potential option.

Sickness Payments

Subject to the provisions of this Scheme, if you are absent from duty due to illness (which term is deemed to include injury or other disability) shall be eligible to receive an allowance in accordance with the following scale:

- During 1st year of service- 1 month's full pay and (after completing 4 months' service) 2 months' half pay.

- During 2nd year of service- 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay.

- During 3rd year of service - 4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay.

- During 4th and 5th years of service - 5 months' full pay and 5 months' pay

- After 5 years' service- 6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay.

The scale of allowances outlined above refer to our Occupational Sick Pay Scheme. Periods of sickness are linked within a 24 month rolling period. For instance, if you are in your 5th year of service and go off sick on the 18th May 2012, we look back at the 24 month period previous to this i.e. back from the 18th May 2012 to the 19th May 2010 and check how much sickness has been taken in this time. If you have accumulated 1 month's sickness in this time, you will only be entitled to the remaining 4 months' full pay and 5 months' half-pay under our Occupational Sick Pay scheme (as you have already used up 1 month's entitlement to full pay).

With regard to Statutory Sick Pay, if you are off sick, you qualify for SSP from the 4th day of sickness and this lasts for 28 weeks (providing you have made sufficient national insurance contributions in a specified period). If you return to work for a period of 56 days and do not have any further sickness absence during this period, you would qualify for the full 28 weeks SSP entitlement if you were to go off sick again (from the 4th day of sickness). If you have another period of sickness within the 56 days these are classed as link periods and you would only qualify for the remainder of the 28 weeks SSP which you had not taken in the previous period of sickness.

Please note that if you enter another year of service whilst absent due to sickness, you will not be entitled to receive any increases in your entitlement to sick pay, during that period of absence.

Please contact the Senior Human Resources Officer for further details and greater clarity regarding sickness allowances and which one(s) staff may be eligible to claim.

Impact shall have discretion to extend the application of the foregoing scale in exceptional cases and should review your position at an early opportunity and before your entitlement to paid sick leave expires.

For the purposes of this section, service in a temporary capacity shall be recognised.

Grant of Sick Pay to Victims of Crimes of Violence

Where you are absent from work because of an injury in respect of which a claim will lie to the Criminal Injuries/ Crime Victim Compensation Board and you are otherwise qualified to receive sick pay in accordance with this section, such sick pay shall be disbursed to you without you being required to refund any proportion of it from the sum which the compensation Board may award, and;

Where an award has been made by the Compensation Board, Impact is free to discount wholly or partly the period of sick leave occasioned by the injury in

calculating your future entitlement to sick pay, as they may see fit on consideration of all the material circumstances.

Contact with Infectious Diseases, etc - Persons Deemed to be Incapable of Work

In accordance with the appropriate legislation if you are prevented from attending your place of employment because of contact with infectious disease you shall notify your Line Manager immediately and shall be entitled to receive full pay less any benefits payable. A period of absence on this account shall not be reckoned against your entitlement to normal sick leave.

In the case of contact with other infectious or contagious disease you should not stay away from duty if you feel well but should report the fact of contact to your Line Manager.

Inoculations/Immunisations

The immunisations recommended by the Department of Public Health Medicine for staff who feel that their work area puts them at potential risk, i.e. If you work in our projects or you deal with the general public on a day to day basis, e.g. Care and Support, Housing Management staff, are the childhood immunisations of Diptheria, Tetanus and Polio with boosters for Tetanus and Polio every 10 years and vaccination against Hepatitis B. It is also recommended that you are screened for T.B.

You should make an appointment to see your GP who will then be able to check your immunisation records and administer the vaccinations required and any screening as appropriate.

Usually there is no charge but if your doctor decides to charge, then Impact will pay the cost, either by the doctor billing Impact directly or by us refunding the cost to you upon production of a receipt.

Health Assessments

The European Working Time Directive contains a requirement that employer's with staff working nights, offer a facility for those Night Workers to have a health assessment with a competent person. HR will supply you with the appropriate paperwork if required.

Occupational Health

Impact may at any time require you, if you are still at work but are unable to perform your duties as a consequence of illness, to submit to an examination by a medical practitioner nominated by Impact. Any expenses incurred in connection with such examination shall be met by Impact.

Please see above section regarding other support available for staff who are absent due to illness for details of the support options available to you.

Other Conditions

Exceptionally Impact may, in a particular case, require statements to be submitted at more frequent intervals than the certification period provided by the General Practitioner.

Failure without good cause to comply with these arrangements may have the effect of disqualifying you from entitlement to sick pay and may also render you liable to disciplinary action. Compliance with these conditions includes a requirement that absent staff, allow contact with any management representative during the period of absence, especially with the welfare contacts / visits undertaken by HR representatives.

An allowance may not be paid in a case of accident due to active participation in a sport as a profession, nor in a case in which the absence arises from or is attributable your own misconduct.

A period of absence due to injury sustained by you in the actual discharge of your duty and without your own fault shall not be recorded for the purposes of this Scheme.

In the event that you are absent from work due to the negligence of a third party, and you successfully pursue a claim for damages against the third party, which would enable you to recover loss of earnings, Impact requires you to repay to the association all sums paid to you during your absence from work, and the full employer costs incurred by Impact (e.g. national insurance and pension contributions), including any temporary staff cover that may have been put in place. In the event of any finding of contributory negligence against you, then Impact will expect repayment of sums advanced to you in the same proportion as the percentage of the award you recover. Repayment of all or part of the sums advanced to you in this way will be credited to you with regard to sickness pay as payable under the scheme. Thus by way of example if you are injured in a car accident, and are off work for 1 month, and subsequently repay to Impact the salary advanced to you for that month then that will not count as a period of illness with regard to the calculation of sick pay (but it will nevertheless count with regard to any decisions made as to long term illness).

Monitoring of the Policy

Effective implementation of the Positive Attendance Policy is an important element of delivering the HR strategy in Impact.

The policy provides a clear framework and standards for departments to apply so that employees are treated fairly and consistently. It also enables Impact to improve its performance.

Monitoring of the policy will be carried out by the HR team.

Absence Interview Guidance Notes

Preparing for the Return To Work Discussion

NB Please use this guidance to fit the circumstances of each case, including the reason for absence, the number of previous occurrences, your existing knowledge of their condition and any previous discussions you have held with them. There are also user notes for using SelectHR to carry out the meeting.

- Discussions must be held the day the employee returns to work, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Ensure you have sufficient time to complete the discussion.
- Hold the discussion in private without interruptions – consider the layout. NB In exceptional circumstances it can be done over the phone but meeting with the employee is a major benefit.
- Preparation - Gather any necessary information before the discussion including information regarding recent period of absence and details of past absences and consider what information you require from the employee
- Be open minded, but be prepared to discuss any trends/patterns of absence.

Steps to be followed during the return to work discussion:

Step 1 Welcome the employee back to work

- Keep the tone informal and friendly - Tell them they were missed
- Ensure they are fit to return to work
- Explain this is an informal discussion, part of Impact's procedures, to help understand why the absence has occurred and what can be done to help avoid future absence

Step 2 Discuss the reasons for the Absence – what was the real cause?

- Was it a one off or part of an ongoing problem?
- Are there underlying reasons e.g. stress, work related, or any other underlying medical cause?
- Can anything be done to prevent recurrence?
- Be constructive, avoid confrontation and stick to the facts
- Avoid making assumptions or accusations suggesting the illness was not genuine - Be sensitive to the individual's feelings
- Explain the effect of their absence on colleagues and the working of the department - Agree appropriate actions to prevent recurrence
- Offer support

- Ask them what they are going to do to improve attendance. The employee must make a commitment to improve, however can the Manager / Supervisor provide assistance?
- Where the absence reaches a short term absence trigger, explain the need for a support interview

Step 3 Where there has been more than one absence and / or where absence is likely to recur:

- Impress on the individual that it is their personal responsibility to attend work
- Recognise that it may not be their fault – however it is their responsibility to address the matter, and to access appropriate support from their GP or health professional
- Explain that they are responsible for attending work every day
- Ask them to accept this responsibility
- Ask them what they are going to do to improve attendance
- The employee must make a commitment to improve, however can the manager provide support or assistance
- Where the absence reaches a short term trigger, explain the need for a support interview/ absence management interview etc.

Step 4 Record discussion details, sign and date

Step 5 Move on by concluding the discussion on a positive note

- Update individuals on events during their absence
- Discuss any work required in order to make up lost ground

Preparing for the Support Interview

(NB - Please use the information contained in this Guidance Note – as a guide. Each Support Interview will be different, and will need to reflect the unique individual circumstances around that particular employee. This will include reasons for absence, the number and scale of previous absences, your existing knowledge of their condition, and any previous discussions you have had with them). There are also user notes for using SelectHR to carry out the meeting.

Always speak to the HR Team in advance of reaching a decision about convening a Support Interview, to ensure that it’s appropriate to progress a specific case in that way.

In Advance of the Interview:

- Give the employee as much notice as possible – ideally, at least 5 working days;

- Tell them they have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, or a work colleague; (however if the member of staff wishes to not take up this option and/ or requests to hold the support interview straight away, then arrange the meeting for a mutually agreeable time and record on the form that this was at the member of staffs request.)
- Ensure you have sufficient time to complete the discussion;
- Hold the discussion in private without interruptions;
- Preparation – Ensure you have all necessary information before the discussion, including information about the most recent periods of absence – especially the ones that have "triggered" the support interview – but also other absence history data.
- Consider what information you will require from the employee (See more details below)
- Be open minded, but be prepared to discuss any trends / patterns of absence.

Steps to be followed during the Support Interview:

Step 1 Welcome the employee to the meeting

- Keep the tone informal and friendly;
- Check on their current state of health;
- Clarify the purpose of the interview is to assist an employee in attaining the required levels of attendance. It will include a discussion of the underlying reasons for sickness absence, what support can be offered, and agreement on the way forward
- Explain that there are concerns about their levels of attendance at work, which have been prompted by them exceeding the absence "trigger" levels
- Clarify the trigger points are
- 3 separate absences, or 2 working weeks, short-term absences in any rolling 12 month period
- other factors may generate a support interview – e.g. "Patterns" of absence – Friday – Monday absences; pre / post public holidays; Monthly dates, e.g. last Friday every month, weekends (if a shift worker)etc.
- Clarify that we are not disputing whether or not they have been ill – but they are failing to meet our expectations with their levels of attendance.

Step 2 Discuss the reasons for the Absences

- Are they due to isolated instances, or part of an ongoing problem?
- Are there any underlying reasons, e.g. stress, work related, or any other underlying medical cause?
- Are the absences due to a disability? If so, we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to enable regular attendance?

- If appropriate explore what reasonable adjustments could we make (but you will probably need to check out any potential solutions with HR to ensure, we are dealing with similar problems consistently).
- Can anything be done to prevent recurrence?
- Be constructive, avoid confrontation and stick to the facts;
- Avoid making assumptions or accusations suggesting that the illness was not genuine – Be sensitive to the individual's feelings.
- Explain the effects of their absences on colleagues, and the working of the team – agree appropriate actions to prevent recurrence.
- Offer support
- Ask them what they are going to do to improve attendance. The employee must make a commitment to improve - however can the line manager provide assistance?

Step 3 Next Steps

- Impress on the individual that it their personal responsibility to attend work
- Recognise that it may not be their fault – however it is their responsibility to address the matter, and to access appropriate support form their GP, or possibly our Occupational Health Specialist
- Ask them to accept the responsibility for attending work more regularly?
- Ask them what they are going to do to improve their attendance?
- Explain what will happen next if there is no improvement – which depending on the individual circumstances, may be a referral to the Absence Management Interview Process - a disciplinary / capability process, which will essentially, be a formal warning process, aimed at bringing about improved attendance at work.
- If no improvement is seen, nor sustained this could ultimately lead to the termination of an employee's employment.

Step 4 Record discussion details, sign and date

Step 5 Try and conclude the discussion on a positive note

- Update the employee on what has been happening during their absence
- Discuss any work required to make up lost ground

Time off for Medical/Dental Appointments

Where possible appointments should be made outside working hours. Where this is not possible, for instance hospital and specialist appointments, necessary paid time off shall be granted, subject to production of the appointment letter/card and submission on SelectHR.

If doctor's or dentist's appointments are made in or impinge on working hours, staff will have to take lieu time to cover this. If staff do not have lieu time to take, various options may be discussed and agreed with their line manager. For instance, they may agree to come in earlier or leave later to make up the time. Alternatively, staff whose holidays are calculated in days not hours, may "trade in" 1 day's holiday or ½ day's holiday to use as lieu time. An absence request on SelectHR would need to be filled in exchanging the day's holiday for lieu. Staff and line managers will need to ensure they keep a tally on the amount of lieu time left from the "traded in" annual leave. This will not be necessary for staff whose annual leave is calculated in hours. In this case, staff just need to record the actual number of hours holiday taken to attend the appointment e.g. 1½ hours. The Flexible Working Scheme may also be used to enable staff to attend these appointments. Please note that a 'common sense' approach to this issue is important; contact Human Resources if you have any queries.

Bereavement Leave

Staff are entitled to the following periods of paid leave for bereavement:

Child, Spouse or Partner- Up to 4 working weeks (e.g. 20 days if you work 5 days per week/64 hours if you work 16 hours per week etc.)

Brother, Sister, Parent or person loco parentis- Up to 1 working week (e.g. 5 days if you work 5 days per week/16 hours if you work 16 hours per week etc.)

Grandparents or in-laws- Up to 2/5 of a working week (e.g. 2 days if you work 5 days per week or 6½ hours if you work 16 hours per week etc).

Other family member i.e. Cousin, Auntie, Uncle etc- It is Impact's expectation that staff will only take time off to attend the funeral and not a full day/shift (time off to attend a funeral will in normal circumstances be no longer than 2 ½ hours). If there is a distance to travel to the funeral, then staff will need to take annual leave or lieu time to cover this.

In extra-ordinary circumstances, variations to the above provisions may be agreed by the Human Resources Director or Chief Executive.

Staff should make their Line Manager aware of any absence due to bereavement leave within one hour, of the normal commencement time for work, and their Manager will log the leave on SelectHR.

Any travelling time needed to attend events associated with bereavement is included within the above parameters.

Leave for Jury Service

Staff receiving a summons to serve on a jury must report the fact to their Line Manager and show them the letter from the Courts. Member of staff should enter the anticipated duration of the absence into Select, unless exemption is secured. Send off a copy of the letter and the original forms for the employer so that HR can complete them and return them to the member of staff so that they can take them to the courts on the first day of Jury Service.

A member of staff serving as a juror shall claim the allowance for loss of earnings to which they are entitled under the Juror's Allowances Regulations currently in force. Once Jury Service has been completed the Line Manager must be informed in writing (email is acceptable) of the number of days served including the dates and times and the allowance received. The Line Manager will then inform the Human Resources Team and the appropriate deduction will be made from the member of staff's salary in the following month. Manager needs to update Select accordingly.

Staff may claim for themselves any travel/subsistence allowances payable by the Courts.

Please note on days when you are not required for Jury Service or your Jury service finishes early you must attend work as normal or take holidays/ lieu time to cover this absence. This must be agreed with your Line Manager and in some instances where they have already arranged cover for your role they may require you to take holidays/ lieu time instead.

Leave for Service as a Witness

If a member of staff if required to attend Court either as a witness for the Association or as a witness in any private law suit on any matter arising out of employment with the Association, they will be regarded as being on official duty and will be granted paid special leave plus appropriate travel and subsistence allowances. Any fees /allowances from Court must be paid back to the Association.

If required by the Police, Director of Public Prosecutions or by another Government Department, to appear as a witness in criminal proceedings unconnected with employment in the Association, staff may be granted paid special leave subject to the production of written evidence to support this requirement. Travelling and subsistence allowances may be claimed from the Court, but staff should not receive compensation for loss of earnings.

If subpoenaed to attend as a witness in a civil case they may be granted unpaid special leave. Loss of salary is a matter for settlement between the individual member of staff and the party who issued the subpoena. No travel or subsistence will be payable by Impact.

If a member of staff appears in Court in connection with a private lawsuit unrelated to their employment with the Association, they should normally take annual leave/ unpaid leave or lieu time.

Where the private lawsuit arises from occurrences on duty, the HR Director /Chief Executive must be consulted before any decision is made on how absence should be treated.

Absence for attendance at an inquest for the purpose of giving evidence should be in accordance with the above.

Leave for Meetings of Public Bodies

It is a contractual requirement set out in the Duality of Interest Policy that all staff must receive approval from the Chief Executive before applying for any public office. However, within that provision, employers have a statutory duty to permit an employee to have reasonable time off* during working hours to perform any of the duties of their office or their duties as:

- a justice of the peace;
- a member of a local authority (including a parish council or a county council);
- a member of any statutory tribunal;
- a member of, in England, a Regional or District Health Authority or, in Scotland, a Health Board;
- a member of a Family Practitioner Committee;
- a member of the National Rivers Authority;
- a governor of a grant-maintained school, higher education corporation or educational establishment maintained by a local education authority, or in Scotland, a school or college council or a central institution or a college of education; or
- in Scotland, a member of a school board or of the board of management of a self-governing school;
- a member of a Board of visitors in England and, in Scotland, of Visiting Committees, to prisons, remand centres and young offender institutions.

There is no statutory right for time off with pay to be granted for the purposes outlined above. Impact will not make any payments to a member of staff who decides to pursue any or the above public offices. However you may book annual leave, lieu time or unpaid leave as agreed with your Line Manager.

*Reasonable time off is at the discretion of Impact, taking account of the circumstances of the organisation and the effect of the employee's absence on the running of the Association. Any other time off in respect of an employee's involvement in trade union duties and responsibilities will also be a factor (i.e. if an employee is also an elected trade union representative, requiring time off for TU related activities, then Impact will be "less reasonable" about further time-off for additional public duties), due to having to balance this with the needs of the service.

Leave to Attend Blood Donor Sessions

Staff are permitted (indeed encouraged) to attend blood donor sessions during working time at sessions held near their place of work. Where possible, we would request that staff try and make an appointment, to minimise waiting time.

Staff must be prepared to show proof of attending these sessions if requested to do so by their line manager.

Note All absences must be recorded on SelectHR and submitted to your Line Manager.