

## Supporting Attendance



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# Introduction

Creating a happy, healthy and productive workforce is a key priority for all of us. As part of our organisational strategy, we have a joint commitment to care for our health and wellbeing. This policy has been developed in partnership with teams from across the organisation and focuses on a holistic approach to sickness absence. We recognise that individuals need the right support at the right time to stay happy and healthy in work. We also recognise that individuals may in some cases need time off work, for example to recover from illness or for a different reason which is having a significant impact on their health and wellbeing. We aim to achieve a better balance for teams and organisations through:

- Asset based conversations to support and explore alternatives;
- A range of health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Early intervention and prevention;
- Effective management;
- Accountability.

Where absence levels become a concern, for example they are having detrimental impact on others; teams, services and customers and a formal plan has not been achieved, a return to work or improvement, we will explore the most appropriate resolution which, in some cases, may result in termination of employment. Where this policy refers to the manager, it is referring to the person with delegated management responsibilities.

## **Who does this policy apply to?**

This policy applies to all employees at schools who adopt this policy, whether permanent or temporary. The policy does not apply to agency workers. As part of our pledge to support the Trade Union Congress' (TUC) Dying to Work Charter, we have developed separate guidance to support employees who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness.

## **What are the benefits of this policy?**

- Improved support for employees
- Increased engagement levels
- Cost reductions
- Improved service delivery
- Improved outcomes for people.

# Key Principles

**How will we do it?**

We recognise that each case will be different, so we have designed a range of tools to support managers and staff through the process. Whilst the action taken will depend on the circumstances, we will ensure that we follow three key principles in all cases, whilst also considering the impact on employees, colleagues, and our organisation.

<b>Care</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Consider</b>
Take an asset-based approach Treat people as individuals Listen, explore options and alternatives Help and support	The individual GP/Specialists (if needed) Occupational Health (if needed) HR & OD Services, Wigan Council Trade Unions	Absence reason and history Medical advice The prognosis and individuals wishes Reasonable adjustments /realistic alternatives

**The Equality Act**

We have a responsibility as an employer not to discriminate against employees who have a disability. The above principles underpin our legal duty to consider and make reasonable adjustments which are ‘reasonable’ in the individual circumstance of an employee with a disability. ‘Reasonable’ will take into account factors such as cost, practicability and resources available to employers.

As an inclusive employer, we recognise our staff as individuals and embrace our commitment to equality and diversity. We will go beyond the legal requirements and explore adjustments and alternatives for all employees who need help and support based on their individual circumstances.

# Responsibilities

## Employees

- Recognise the importance of regular attendance and be open, honest, and accountable;
- Care for your health and well-being and ask for help and support when needed;
- Inform your manager as soon as possible if you are unable to fulfil your duties;
- Be open to suggestions; alternative arrangements or other options;
- Be aware of and access health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Provide appropriate medical evidence as required; a FIT Note is required for absence of more than 7 days in a row;
- Certify any sickness absence with an end date on your return to work.

## Managers

- Create a working environment that maximises attendance and engagement;
- Take an asset based approach to sickness absence, discuss realistic alternatives and support plans for employees;
- Engage in regular conversations with employees;
- Be aware of and promote health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Manage issues and take appropriate action; including formal action where necessary;
- Create and maintain accurate HR records for all employees for all occasions of absence.

## HR & OD Services

- Provide advice and guidance to managers and employees on the application of policy, including support options and appropriate action;
- Provide tools and training for managers;
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy and seek regular feedback from all employees;
- Consult with trade union colleagues on the policy and take a partnership approach to supporting attendance.

## Trade Unions

- Provide advice, information and support to members;
- Provide feedback on the effectiveness of the policy;
- Work in partnership to explore options, support, and solutions for members.

# Procedure

## **Wellbeing Check In**

A focused conversation on early intervention and prevention to support employee's wellbeing and attendance. A wellbeing check in can be held before, during or after a period of sickness. This should be at a private space either at a school building, off site, virtually or at an employee's home if they prefer. Wellbeing Check In's will help to inform decisions on when to manage absence formally.

## **Supporting Attendance Plan**

A plan to agree the employee's return to work or improvement in attendance. The plan should be reviewed at agreed intervals to determine any necessary changes, extension, improvements, closure or where it is not being achieved. A plan can be arranged when a return to work or improvement has not been achieved despite support offered/provided as part of the Wellbeing Check Ins. This should be at a private space at a school building, off site, virtually or at an employee's home if they prefer. HR may be present at plan meetings and employees can be accompanied by a work colleague or a recognised Trade Union representative if they wish.

## **Plan Review Meeting**

Managers and employees should review the plan at agreed times and consider if there is a change in circumstances to ensure support is in place and accessed within the agreed timescales. HR may be present at plan review meetings and employees can be accompanied by a work colleague or a recognised Trade Union representative if they wish.

## **Plan Outcomes**

Plan achieved – The plan will be closed, and the employee's attendance monitored for twelve months.

Plan not achieved – Options may include, if not already explored, ill health retirement, medical redeployment or other mutually agreed exit options. Where these are not available or appropriate, an attendance hearing may be arranged.

## **Employee concerns**

If an employee is unhappy with how a Supporting Attendance Plan is handled or any decisions made, they should raise their concerns with a designated member of the senior leadership team within school or a designated member of the governing body. The senior leader will review decisions and action taken.

## **Appeals**

An employee has the right to appeal if they are dismissed. Appeals should be made within ten working days of receiving the letter confirming the outcome of the attendance hearing. Appeals will be handled in line with the relevant school Appeals procedure.

# Further information

For further information, including:

- Supporting Attendance Guidance
- Supporting Attendance Interventions
- Wellbeing Check-In Template
- Supporting Attendance Plan Template
- Supporting Attendance Plan Review Template
- Wellbeing guidance
- Support contacts
- Reasonable Adjustments guidance

And more, please visit the Schools Your HR Hub. For guidance on accessing the Hub, please contact the HR Advise and Casework team on 01942 404030 or [HRCaseworkAndAdvice@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:HRCaseworkAndAdvice@wigan.gov.uk).