



**University of Brighton**

## **Sickness Absence Management Policy**

### Policy Statement

- 1 Principles
- 2 Definitions
- 3 Responsibilities
- 4 Pay
- 5 Fit for Work Scheme

### **Policy Statement**

The University of Brighton recognises that good staff health and wellbeing is vital for ensuring the success of the university. The university's approach to staff health and wellbeing is centred on the prevention of ill health and sickness absence, and the promotion of positive health. Where sickness occurs, the university will offer guidelines and support to enable staff to return to work as early as may be appropriate.

It is now recognised that work can be good for people's health<sup>1</sup>. The university aims to encourage all staff to maximise their attendance at work, and will ensure that staff who are absent from work due to ill health or other reasons, are offered the support and guidelines they need, as early as possible. The university will provide a framework through a procedure, guidelines and toolkits to enable effective and consistent handling of sickness absence throughout the university.

The policy, procedure, guidelines and toolkits will follow the university's commitment to ensuring equality<sup>2</sup>, and embraces the Equality Act 2010.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hann, M. and Sibbald, B. (2011) *General Practitioners' attitudes towards patients' health and work*. DWP Research Report No 733

<sup>2</sup> [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

# **1 Principles**

- 1.1 The University of Brighton seeks to provide a healthy, caring and safe working environment for all members of staff. It also seeks to offer guidelines and support to staff through periods of sickness absence, whilst seeking to minimise the impact of sickness absence on the efficiency and quality of the university's services and the morale and well-being of other staff.
- 1.2 Each case of sickness and sickness absence will be reviewed and dealt with appropriately; for example disability, mental health problems or cases of terminal illness will need particularly sensitive handling.
- 1.3 The university will seek to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace and/or job role of staff who have, or who develop in the course of their employment, a disability that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities, to ensure that all staff have equality of opportunity.
- 1.4 Medical advice will always be sought where a member of staff's sickness absence is giving cause for concern and/or where specialist knowledge is required. Practitioners such as the member of staff's doctor (GP) or specialist, the university's Occupational Health Advisor and/or Occupational Health Practitioner will be consulted.
- 1.5 Where ill health problems have resulted in a poor absence record, and all management supportive measures have taken place and improvement or attendance has not reached acceptable levels, the university's need for a member of staff to attend work regularly and productively may become greater than the ability to guarantee continuous employment. Whilst the emphasis will be on helping staff maintain good health and satisfactory levels of attendance, the university may consider ending employment for reasons of unsatisfactory levels of attendance, where this is unsustainable.

## **2. Definitions**

### **2.1 Self-Certification**

- 2.1.1 Staff are able to self-certify themselves as too unwell to attend work for up to a maximum of 7 calendar days.

### **2.2 Fit Notes**

- 2.2.1 On the 8<sup>th</sup> calendar day of sickness absence, staff must seek a Fit Note from their GP. The GP will issue advice that staff are either:
  - i. Not Fit for Work; or

- ii. Fit for Work – but may need adjustments.

## **2.3 Short Term Sickness Absence**

- 2.3.1 The university considers short term sickness absence to include all self-certified absence (2.1) and certified absence through the issuing of a Fit Note of up to 4 weeks in duration.

## **2.4 Long Term Sickness Absence**

- 2.4.1 The university defines long term sickness absence as any single period of absence lasting, or that is expected to last, 4 weeks or more, or relates to frequent periods of absence connected to a long term health problem.

## **2.5 Notification to Managers**

- 2.5.1 HR will notify managers to review absence when a member of staff has had 4 periods of absence in a 12 month rolling period and/or when absence has amounted to 20 working days (or 4 working weeks for part-time staff) in order that the manager may review the record and decide on next steps. It is at the manager's discretion to decide whether a meeting is required. The manager may be fully aware of the circumstances surrounding the member of staff's absence and have no immediate concerns.

## **2.6 Return to Work Meeting (RTWM)**

- 2.6.1 RTWMs are a normal management tool that will enable absence to be managed fairly and appropriately. They provide an opportunity for the manager to check on staff welfare, enquire informally about their reasons for absence, follow up any serious problems and suggest further assistance if required. They will usually be carried out after every occasion of absence.

## **2.7 Adjustments**

- 2.7.1 Adjustments tend to fall into two categories. They can be recommended by the member of staff's GP (usually via the Fit Note) or the university's Occupational Health department to enable a member of staff to return to work. They may be temporary in their nature, such as a phased return to usual hours or avoiding manual handling for a period of time. Alternatively, longer term adjustments, for example when a member of staff with a disability requires specialist equipment or a job role evaluation where elements of a person's job are reviewed (this list is not exhaustive).

### **3. Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 University**

3.1.1 The university will provide:

- i. a comprehensive Occupational Health and support service;
- ii. an agreed occupational sick pay scheme.

3.1.2 The Sickness Absence Management Policy, guidelines and toolkits are aimed at improving staff health, wellbeing and attendance and its consequent effects on delivering the overall objectives of the university.

#### **3.2 Managers<sup>3</sup>**

3.2.1 Managers have a responsibility to:

- i. be fully conversant with the Sickness Absence Management Policy, guidelines and toolkits (and associated policies) and undertake the appropriate action contained therein;
- ii. exercise a duty of care towards all staff;
- iii. ensure that their staff understand and follow the procedures for reporting sickness absence and understand the policy and guidelines;
- iv. support and promote a pleasant working environment and staff engagement which will contribute towards maximising attendance;
- v. ensure staff are treated in a fair and consistent way, with sensitivity and confidentiality;
- vi. ensure that workplace assessments are undertaken for each member of staff in accordance with the guidelines and policies on the Health & Safety website;
- vii. maintain regular and meaningful contact with staff who are absent.

#### **3.3 Staff**

3.3.1 Staff have a responsibility to:

- i. make every effort to maintain their general health, fitness and wellbeing to ensure availability and attendance at work as part of the contract of employment;
- ii. familiarise themselves with the Sickness Absence Management policy and guidelines;
- iii. report absence, by telephone, to the manager or nominated contact as soon as possible. For staff working on an early morning or late evening shift, alternative arrangements may be in place;

---

<sup>3</sup> Managers are defined as anyone who is responsible for the work or attendance of any other member of staff

- iv. participate in RTWMs;
- v. attend Occupational Health appointments as requested;
- vi. where possible, make routine appointments to attend the doctor, hospital, or dentist etc at a time when they are not required to attend work. When this is not feasible, staff should try to make the appointment at the beginning or end of a shift to help avoid disruption; the university accepts this is not always possible but, when they are available, we would encourage staff to use the NHS booking systems in place.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.4 Human Resources Department**

3.4.1 The Human Resources Department is responsible for:

- i. training and advising managers on all aspects of sickness absence management;
- ii. encouraging consistency of application throughout the university;
- iii. monitoring and publishing appropriate management information;
- iv. liaising with Occupational Health and assisting managers with referrals when professional advice is required.

### **3.5 Occupational Health Department**

3.5.1 The Occupational Health Department is responsible for:

- i. providing information and guidelines to staff and managers to enable a return to, or a continued presence at, work;
- ii. responding to requests from managers and HR when a member of staff has been referred to them;
- iii. liaising with other medical practitioners and specialists;
- iv. acting in accordance the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and Access to Health Records Act 1990 and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate;
- v. advising on rehabilitation following sickness absence;
- vi. providing advice regarding re-deployment and suitability of identified roles;
- vii. providing recommendations regarding ill health retirement;
- viii. health promotion<sup>5</sup>.

### **3.6 Trade Unions**

3.6.1 Through the unions' recognised Health & Safety Representatives, the Trade Unions are responsible for:

---

<sup>4</sup> [NHS Choose and Book](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Wellbeing](#) and [Health and Well-being](#)

- i. asking for information in order to fulfil their functions, including information on incidents and near-misses, hazards, safety measures, changes to working methods and risk information;
- ii. representing their members' views and concerns to the university;
- iii. investigating potential hazards, complaints and incidents on behalf of their members.
- iv. NB the representative also has the right to receive statistical information about sickness absence; this will be in an anonymous format, unless an individual member has given express permission for their information to be shared;

#### **4. Pay**

- 4.1 Details of the Occupational Sick Pay and Statutory Sick Pay provisions can be found on the Occupational Sick Pay information sheet via sharepoint.

#### **5. Fit for Work Scheme**

- 5.1 The Government's Fit for Work initiative helps employers manage sickness absence at work and provides the employer, the employee and the GP with access to work related health advice and return to work plans.
- 5.2 The university is committed to supporting employees back to work as detailed in this policy and provides Occupational Health services which are more extensive than those offered under this scheme. However, we also recognise that our own Occupational Health service can work alongside the Fit for Work assessment services and we will ensure that advice where given is appropriately considered and incorporated into our own plans where applicable.