

Guidance to managers on short-term sickness absence – (Revised November 2018)

(Informal guidance only - full policy is available on the Ealing Intranet)

A management referral can be made whenever an occupational health opinion would be helpful. However, there are some circumstances, where occupational health advice can add very little to the management of an employee at the early stages of frequent short-term absences and the line manager should take action before making a referral.

In cases where the employee meets one of the specified trigger points the manager must **review** the individual's attendance and **consider** whether action is required.

In cases of short-term absence, the trigger points are:

- Absence for a whole day or more, on 3 or more occasions in a 3-month period.
- Seven working days absence in a rolling year.
- Pattern of absence i.e. regularly linked to annual leave/ Fridays.

Actions the manager may take are set out in detail in Section 12 of the Managers Sickness Absence Guidelines and, in brief, include:

- Review of the attendance record (frequency, reasons, duration).
- Initial meeting with the employee to discuss concerns.
- Initiate monitoring period and review in 3 months.

At this stage a referral to occupational health will only assist if the reasons for absence are the same i.e. all migraine, or a specific issue is identified i.e. work-related stress.

Where the reasons for absence are minor self-limiting conditions i.e. coughs, colds, toothache, stomach upset, etc, an Occupational Health Referral at this stage will not be helpful and the line manager should address absences.

Return to work interviews following all sickness absence provides the manager with the opportunity to address levels of absence and to enquire whether any support or assistance can be offered to help improve the employee's attendance.

Depending on the level of attendance, the manager can:

- Discontinue monitoring
- Continue to monitor at 3 monthly intervals advising the employee of implications.
- Seek advice from HR on possible actions.
- Seek advice from Occupational Health to see if a referral would assist.

Where there is no improvement and frequent short-term absence persists after a period of monitoring, a referral to Occupational Health may assist in eliminating or identifying any medical concerns that would need to be taken into account by the manager when moving onto the medical capability review procedure.

It is important for the employee to have a copy of the referral, to ensure they are fully informed as to the reasons they have been referred and to open lines of communication between the manager and employee about the issues of concern.

The manager must include details of actions taken so far to address attendance.

Assistance with the referral procedure can be obtained by contacting the Occupational Health Unit direct (**020 8825 7400**) or from the relevant HR Adviser.