



University Hospitals
Bristol and Weston
NHS Foundation Trust



Health & Wellness at Work

Policy Guidance



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Introduction

We recognise that work is an important part of your wellbeing. We know that colleagues who are supported to keep well at work improve patient outcomes. However there will be times when you cannot come to work due to illness or health-related reasons. When this happens, we want to ensure that you are properly supported and treated fairly, so that you can return to work as soon as possible. We also need to review and manage your absence to minimise the potential impact on UHBW. This guidance accompanies our Health & Sickness at Work Policy.

Keeping in Touch

During the time you are off work you need to stay in touch with your manager so we can continue to support you. Your manager will let you know when you need to contact and update them on how you are doing. Your manager may also need to contact you from time to time and will agree with you how and when to keep in touch with you.

It is important to stay in contact with your manager as well as providing Fit Notes where necessary. You should contact your manager, at the latest, the day before your Fit Note expires to let them know if you will be returning to work. You should also keep them updated on any new information about your sickness and how you are progressing.

If you feel the reason for your absence is because of work, talk to your manager or another senior colleague immediately so we can try to resolve any issues and help you get back to work. If appropriate, we can refer you for an Occupational Health Assessment to find out what we can do to support you including any workplace adjustments.

Sickness Certification

You can self-certify for the first 7 calendar days of your sickness using the self-certification section on the Welcome Back to Work and Self-Certificate, which you will usually be asked to complete at a Return to Work meeting. If you're going to be off for more than 7 calendar days, you will need to get a Fit Note from your doctor or other healthcare professional to cover your absence from the 8th day onwards. You need to provide your manager with the Fit Note without delay.

Any sickness absence needs to be covered by self-certification or a Fit Note. Any uncertified gaps may be classed as unauthorised absence.


Occupational Sick Pay

Occupational Sick Pay is paid in accordance with national NHS terms and conditions as per the table. The amount of sick pay is calculated on a 12-month rolling year basis. If you take part in any salary sacrifice schemes, such as child care vouchers, please let your manager know as we will need to talk to you about this if you are to go into a period of nil or half sick pay.

Years of Service	Sick Pay allowance
During the 1 st year	1 month full pay, 2 months half pay
During the 2 nd year	2 months full pay, 2 months half pay
During the 3 rd year	4 months full pay, 4 months half pay
During the 4 th & 5 th years	5 months full pay, 5 months half pay
After completing 5 years	6 months full pay, 6 months half pay

Occupational Health Referrals

Your manager may offer to refer you to Occupational Health to get advice on your condition and any adjustments that may help you return to work or to support you and prevent future absence. Occupational Health advice plays an important part in supporting you. Please be aware that if you do not engage with referrals to Occupational Health, we can only support you and make decisions based on the other information we have available.

Guidance on making an Occupational Health referral is 

Manager's Discretion

Your manager in knowing you has the discretion to adjust your review prompts and any improvement plan. This will be with support and advice from HR or Occupational Health where necessary. Examples of where it may be appropriate to apply discretion include planned surgery, episodes of known conditions such as migraines or absence following bereavement or other compassionate situations.

Pregnancy Related Sickness

If the reason you are sick and absent from work is related to your pregnancy, your manager will have a return to work meeting on your first day back to ensure you are well enough to return and to put in place any reasonable adjustments you may need. Pregnancy related absence will be excluded when reviewing Short Term Absence Prompts.



Further information including the Maternity Policy can be found on the Maternity, Childcare, Carers and Family Friendly pages of HR Web.

Return to Work Meetings

When you return to work your manager will contact you on your first day back or as soon as possible to welcome you back to work. The aim of the meeting is to,

- understand if you have an underlying health condition
- confirm the dates, frequency and pattern of your absence and ensure that you are aware if you have met a review prompt or improvement plan
- discuss what support could be offered to help improve your health and wellbeing and attendance, including a referral to Occupational Health
- let you know what may happen if you have more absences e.g. attend an absence review meeting
- review any ongoing or new adjustments

You should complete the Welcome Back to Work and Self-Certificate with your manager. Your manager will make a record of the meeting and keep a copy of the form in your personal file. You may have a copy of the record and the form.

Phased Return to Work

A phased return can be considered if you are returning from a period of long-term sickness absence as a supportive measure. This provides the benefit of a gradual increase in hours and/or duties usually over 2 or 4 weeks. If a colleague is not fit to return to their contracted hours or full duties by the end of the phased return then a longer term resolution may need to be found.

Not everyone returning from a period of long-term sickness absence will need a phased return to work. A decision to use a phased return should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking advice as appropriate such as from the GP, Medical Specialist or HR. Occupational Health guidance may be sought, however it is not a prerequisite to a return to work when a suitable arrangement can be agreed between manager and team member.

A phased return should be considered where someone

- has not fully recovered but is able to return to work with the expectation that they will increase to 100% of their hours and activities by the end of the phased return.
- will start a trial period under the Redeployment Policy with Occupational Health guidance.
- has a specific medical recommendation to implement a phased return to support their recovery

Although phased returns commonly focus on the gradual increase in hours, other adjustments should be considered such as a change in shift pattern. A reduction in hours during the phased return may not be necessary in addition to other adjustments.

A 4 week phased return example

Week 1: 40% of contracted hours
Week 2: 50% of contracted hours
Week 3: 75% of contracted hours
Week 4: 75% of contracted hours
Week 5: 100% of contracted hours

Temporary adjustment to Working Conditions

Where Occupational Health advise that colleague's health would benefit from a temporary change in working conditions, for example, a change in location, change in duties or reduction in responsibilities or hours, and where this can be accommodated, the following guidelines should be applied:

- A temporary change should be no longer than 12 weeks.
- The temporary change should be confirmed in writing with a review date after the first four weeks.
- Where an employee returns temporarily on a lower grade this should be in line with the Pay Protection Policy.

Workplace Adjustments

Wherever possible, UHBW will support employees that have a known health and wellbeing condition or disability. This support may be a legal requirement under the Equalities Act 2010, or good practice in supporting colleagues with long-term health conditions. Please see the guidance [\[redacted\]](#)

Disability Leave as a Workplace Adjustment

Disability leave is time off from work for a reason related to disability or long-term condition. It is a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act. It is paid time away from work for colleagues who need treatment, rehabilitation or assessment related to their disability. It may be for a long or short period of time, can often be planned in advance and is for a fixed period of time. It can also cover unforeseen but clearly appropriate circumstances. Please see the guidance [\[redacted\]](#)

Working from home

Working from home may be appropriate in certain circumstances such as

- The fit note provides options for you to continue working in a different capacity instead of going off sick entirely.
- as part of a rehabilitation programme and as step towards a return to work after an accident or illness.
- a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010 when it has been agreed that working from home is necessary.

Ill-health retirement

If you are a member of the NHS pension scheme you may be able to apply for ill-health retirement. Advice is available from the Pensions team, the NHS Pensions website or your union.

The decision to approve ill health retirement is made by NHS Pensions Agency not UHBW.

Working elsewhere when sick

Working elsewhere whilst on paid sick leave from UHBW, without permission may be seen as a conduct matter and may be dealt with formally and addressed by the Local Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy.

You will normally be required to refrain from any secondary employment (paid or unpaid) if you are on sick leave from UHBW and the secondary work is of the same or similar nature or could be detrimental to your recovery.

You must talk to your line manager, if you are considering continuing any secondary employment while you are unfit for work in your primary UHBW role. Your manager must seek advice from HR in this situation and advice from Occupational Health may also be sought to establish the benefits of the secondary employment for your recovery and wellbeing. Please see the UHBW [\[redacted\]](#).



Sickness and Annual Leave

You continue to accrue annual leave during sickness absence. You will not accrue bank holiday leave unless this would take you below your statutory leave entitlement of 5.6 weeks per year.

Where sickness absence is broken by a period of annual leave the sickness before and directly after the period of annual leave will be treated as a single absence.

If you are off sick for an extended period and are unable to take all your annual leave before the end of the annual leave year, your manager will work with you to arrange for the leave to be taken as soon as possible. You should try to take the accrued annual leave within the remaining leave year, or the normal carry over provision will apply please see the [REDACTED]

If you are off sick and have pre-booked annual leave that you are too unwell to take, you can ask for the leave to be cancelled so you can take it another time.

If you are already on holiday and you become so unwell that you wouldn't have been able to attend work, you can ask for the annual leave to be cancelled if your illness seriously disrupts your holiday. You will need to follow the absence reporting procedure and provide a Fit Note from your doctor or other healthcare professional covering the entire period of holiday you were unwell (including the first seven calendar days).

If you wish to take annual leave while on sick leave you need to let your manager know so that the annual leave can be recorded as usual. You must continue to provide Fit Notes to cover this period. You may be asked to check with your GP or Occupational Health to ensure going away will not be detrimental to your recovery.

Sickness during unpaid leave

You will not receive sick pay if you are sick during a period of authorised unpaid leave such as an employment break.

Part day sickness absence

If you have worked at least 50% of your hours on the day you fall ill, it will not be counted as an episode of sickness absence. If you work less than 50% of your hours, it will count as sickness absence.

Work related absence

In line with Health and Safety legislation, you have a responsibility to report accidents which occur at work. Any work injury should be recorded on Datix, within 24 hours of the incident by you or your manager.

If you have long-term sickness absence because of an accident at work, you may be entitled to Injury Allowance. Guidance on Injury Allowance is available [REDACTED]



Medical Suspension

If by being at work we believe you pose a risk to yourself or others, we may suspend you on medical grounds. This is to allow us to obtain medical advice to confirm if you are fit to be at work. This is a precautionary measure and you will receive your normal pay.

Patterns of sickness absence

If you have a record of absences over an extended period, your manager may use a percentage attendance calculation. This is to calculate your attendance as a proportion of your total working hours available over a 3-year period, taking account of underlying health conditions and any workplace adjustments.

Such cases should be referred to Occupational Health and upon receipt of this advice a Health & Wellbeing options meeting should be held to determine whether escalation to a Final Absence Review is appropriate [REDACTED]

Your manager may also identify if you have an identifiable pattern of absence such as the days either side of the weekend, after a bank holiday or frequent half day absences.

Conduct Concerns

In some cases, the Respecting Everyone Policy may apply rather than, or as well as the Health & Sickness at Work Policy. This may include, but is not limited to, conduct issues such as

- not following the absence reporting procedure
- not following the Keeping in Touch procedure
- we have reasonable grounds to believe that your sickness absence isn't genuine
- you give inaccurate or misleading information about your sickness absence
- we have reasonable grounds to believe you are doing activities such as other work, sports or hobbies that may delay your recovery or make your condition worse.
- you undertake any other employment, whether paid or unpaid without prior consent

More information on Respecting Everyone is available [REDACTED]



Sources of Support

– Free, confidential counselling and advice is available 24/7

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UHBW Wellbeing resources [REDACTED] email [REDACTED]

HR Services – [REDACTED] or call [REDACTED]

Unions - [REDACTED]

Able+ for colleagues with disabilities and underlying health conditions

Occupational Health - [REDACTED] call [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Manual Handling - [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Flexible working [REDACTED]

██████████ the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service
