

Management of Absence 1 - Overview

All members should be familiar with their employer's management of absence policy

Irrespective of a Council's Policy in relation to the Management of Absence the employer has a duty of care to implement that policy in **CARING** and **REASONABLE** manner which is **SUPPORTIVE** and **NON-THREATENING**.

The SSTA, however, accepts that an employer:

1. bears an additional cost as a result of staff absence
2. is entitled to attempt to minimise absence
3. is entitled to set absence triggers

Return to Work Meetings

These are normally informal "chats" with the direct line manager (PT). For example "How are you?" "Glad to see you back." "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Triggers (e.g. 3 absences within a 6 months period)

If a member is ill and takes 2 days sick leave and then returns to school early (usually because a NAB needs to be done or Reports have to be written) for 2 days and then needs to be absent again this will count as 2 absences despite it being the same illness.

If a member is ill and unfit for work they should remain absent from work until are fit to return irrespective of the needs of the service.

Members should not continue at work while clearly unfit simply out of fear of "hitting" and absence trigger. A member's health must always be the first priority.

Occupational Health – Employer's Medical Advisers

A referral to Occupational Health should be seen as a positive and supportive act by an employer. Members are encouraged to engage openly and honestly with such referrals.

If your employers seeks access to personal medical records they are shared with the Occupational Health Adviser only and not with your employer directly.

Members with underlying medical conditions may be covered by the Equalities Act 2010. In such cases employers may need to consider making reasonable adjustments in order to support a member's continued attendance at work.

*Members are encouraged to contact the SSTA **PRIOR** to attendance at such a referral to seek reassurance, support and advice.*

Attendance Review Meetings

Members should seek representation from the union at any such meeting.

Members need to be aware that school managers (normally DHT or above) may be instructed to follow a prescribed script during Attendance Review Meetings. Comments such as:

- a. You are paid to be at your work
- b. There is an increased burden placed on your colleagues when you are absent
- c. Pupils' education is negatively affected by absence

These comments are not personal and members must try not to take them to heart. The Council's Policy is a corporate one and is for all council workers. It was not negotiated nor agreed by the SSTA but imposed on all unions. The same script will be given to all staff whose absence(s) meet the triggers.