

Sickness Absence (incorporating Stress) v.1.0

Document reference:	POL 024
Document Type:	Policy
Version:	1.0
Purpose:	This policy has been designed for managers and staff to ensure appropriate management of sickness absence across the Trust
Responsible Directorate:	Human Resources
Executive Sponsor:	Hazel Wyton, Director of Workforce
Document Author:	HR Divisional Manager
Approved by:	Board of Directors
Date Approved:	27/03/2017
Review Date:	27/03/2020
Related Controlled documents	Sickness Absence Procedure Managing Stress Procedure Recruitment Policy Alcohol and Drugs Policy Health and Safety at Work Policy First Aid Policy Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy Manual Handling Policy Annual and Special Leave policy Performance and Capability Policy Dignity at Work Policy Raising Concerns Policy Rostering Policy Supporting Staff involved in traumatic events Policy Organisational Change Policy
Relevant External Standards/ Legislation	Equality Act 2010 NHSLA 3.2 NHS Injury Benefits Scheme
Target Audience:	Human Resources Department Managers across Trust Payroll, Finance, Workforce Information All staff
Further information:	HR Divisional Manager

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Version History:

Version No.	Date of Release	Document Author/Changes	Ratified by	Date Ratified
1	27/03/2017	Amalgamation of Sickness Absence Policy with the Stress Policy and the production of two supporting procedures.	Board	27/03/2017

Summary of changes from last version:

- Update of policy names
- Amalgamation of the Stress Management Policy and the Sickness Absence Policy
- Supported by two procedures Managing Stress Procedure and Sickness Absence Procedure
- Within the Sickness Absence Procedure the following amendments have been made:
 - Trigger points - Informal Review, Formal Review and Final Review are now referred to as Informal Review Meeting, Formal Review Meeting and Final Review Meeting.
 - Clarity provided over rolling 12 month monitoring period
 - Medical Suspension added at paragraph 13.3
 - Sickness absence during annual leave at paragraph 11.4

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1 Policy Statement

The Trust is committed to promoting and maintaining the health, safety and welfare of all employees. This Policy and the related Sickness Absence and Managing Stress procedures have been developed in conjunction with Staff Side, Operational Managers, Occupational Health and Wellbeing and HR will set out the standards for the management of Sickness Absence and Stress, in a fair, sensitive and supportive way.

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all Trust Employees and is part of the Trust on-going commitment to Equal Opportunities.

3 Definitions

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

4 Policy Framework

The Trust recognises the considerable commitment which many of our staff demonstrate on a day to day basis and we wish to support staff to deliver our service, based on the best quality care standards for patients. This Policy and the related procedures are intended to provide a balanced approach to managing [Sickness Absence](#) and [Stress](#) for both individuals and the Trust.

Employees who are unable to attend work through illness or injury will be treated fairly, consistently and sensitively. The mechanisms within this policy and procedure are intended to support staff through sickness absence, focusing on wellbeing and to facilitate a successful return to work, wherever possible.

The Trust has other policies and other guidance documents for example annual and special leave, maternity leave, discipline and equal opportunities as detailed below. These may be referred to as necessary when handling other types of absence from work.

- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Alcohol and Drugs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy
- Manual Handling Policy

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- Annual and Special Leave Policy
- NHS Injury Benefits Scheme
- Dignity at Work Policy

As all cases of Sickness Absence and Stress need to be treated on an individual basis, it is intended that this Policy and the related procedures will support that approach. The related procedures ([Sickness Absence](#) and [Stress](#)) will be reviewed and updated by the Operational Workforce Team.

The Policy and the related procedures will support individuals to maintain attendance at work whilst at the same time recognising the significant impact that Sickness Absence, ill health and Stress has on the delivery of patient services.

It is the duty of every employee to attend work in accordance with their contract of employment. It is recognised that staff may on occasions be unable to attend work due to illness or injury.

All employees will be made aware of the Sickness Absence Policy and related procedures, during local induction, through local procedures for reporting absence within their own team /department and during the management of sickness absence.

Sickness Absence levels in the Trust will be monitored and reported to the Trust Board through HR KPIs.

5 Responsibilities Sickness Absence

5.1 Responsibility of the Director of Workforce

It is the responsibility of the Director of Workforce to ensure that the Policy is regularly developed and updated. It is the responsibility of the Workforce Directorate to provide initial training and on-going support in the application of the Policy for individual cases, and for all managers in their application of the policy.

5.2 Responsibility of Managers

It is the responsibility of managers to:

- Ensure that they are familiar with the Sickness Absence (Incorporating Stress) Policy and related procedures and their responsibilities under the policy and to comply with its requirements.
- Ensure that employees are made aware of the Sickness Absence Policy and related procedures and their responsibilities under those documents.

- Take timely appropriate action to deal with absence from work or Stress.
- To consider the needs of the individual with the needs of the service.
- Be aware of their responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act (see Health & Safety Policy).
- Be aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
- Maintain attendance records and complete attendance returns in a timely manner.
- To ensure staff are aware of any adjustments to salary prior to it taking effect and any action required by the employee. Advice must be sought from the HR Consultancy Team before suspending payments.
- To ensure that they maintain contact with employees who are absent from work due to illness or injury, in accordance with the guidance document.
- Ensure that documented return to work interviews are undertaken with staff who have been absent due to sickness after every period of absence. Refer to Appendix 1 for return to work form.
- Manage absences which meet or exceed above triggers in accordance with this procedure and guidance document in order to assist employees to sustain their attendance at work.
- Take all reasonable steps to provide a safe and healthy work environment for employees.
- Maintain contact with the employee on a regular basis throughout the period of absence.

5.3 Responsibility of Employees

It is the employees' responsibility to:

- Be aware of the Sickness Absence (Incorporating Stress) Policy and related procedures and to comply with requirements.
- To ensure that they maintain contact with their manager during absence in accordance with departmental guidance.

- To attend review meetings when required to do so
- To attend Occupational Health and Wellbeing Reviews when requested to do so by the manager.
- Comply with the notification arrangements (see Section 7)
- Attend review meetings and occupational health and wellbeing appointments as arranged/requested.
- Maintain regular contact with their Line Manager during periods of sickness absence.
- Be responsible for ensuring their own health and well-being.
- Whilst on sick leave should not undertake any activity detrimental to their recovery which may delay/postpone/compromise their return to an optimum level of health. Employees should do their utmost to facilitate a speedy return to fitness and work

5.4 Role of Staff Side

It is the role of staff side to negotiate, raise concern, or provide support and advice on a member's behalf as necessary in relation to this policy.

5.5 Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service

The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service will provide impartial advice about the health of employees to managers who are responsible for the monitoring and control of sickness absence.

5.6 Health & Safety Team

The Health & Safety team will provide advice and support to manager in using the HSE management standards to identify potential sources of stress, they can also support managers in undertaking stress risk assessments. In conjunction with Occupational Health and Human Resources they will support the Wellbeing group to monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

5.7 Payroll and Workforce Information Teams

- Ensure employees receive sick pay in accordance with the sickness entitlements.

- Record and maintain accurate centralised sickness absence records.
- Notify, as soon as practicable the relevant manager when an employee enters half pay and a nil pay situation.
- Advise managers and individuals of estimated benefits under the NHS pension scheme.
- Action applications for 'Ill Health Retirement Benefits' upon notification from Human Resources.
- Maintain appropriate records for Injury Allowance payments
- When advised by the relevant manager and HR Advisor, to withhold pay for any period of sickness absence not covered by a medical certificate.
- The Workforce Information team should monitor and provide reports on sickness absences trends across the Trust.
- The recruitment team in partnership with the HR Consultancy team should identify potential posts which could be considered for re-deployment as appropriate.

6 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring – See Appendix A

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if required.

Appendix A Monitoring Matrix

MONITORING OF IMPLEMENTATION	MONITORING LEAD	REPORTED TO PERSON/GROUP	MONITORING PROCESS	MONITORING FREQUENCY
Board Reports	Divisional HR Managers	Divisional Boards Workforce Committee	Monthly reports detailing the sickness absence for each directorate, group and Trust wide position: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor effectiveness of Sickness Absence Policy % in month and MAA • Analyse the reasons for Sickness Absence identifying trends and hot spots 	Monthly to Board Quarterly to Workforce Committee
Assessing levels of stress within the organisation	Occupational Health & Safety	Divisional Boards Safety Committee JNCC	Monitor stress related activity via CiC	Quarterly