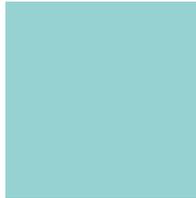
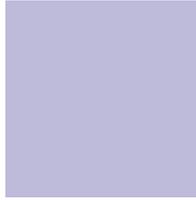




**Mersey Care**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Community and Mental Health Services



**STAFF GUIDE TO THE**

# **MERSEY CARE SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE**

Supporting Attendance is a quality indicator

[merseycare.nhs.uk](http://merseycare.nhs.uk)

At Mersey Care, we acknowledge that our organisational strength is our people and as we continue our journey towards a Just and Learning Culture, we need to place emphasis on fair process, staff support and joint accountability to improve staff attendance and wellness.

There are many reasons which result in people not being in work, and we do recognise that all staff have, through their working life, periods of ill health which we want to support them with. We equally recognise the importance of a positive approach to the management and support of sickness absence to enable us to deliver high quality services and provide the necessary support to staff. This ensures that they are all treated in a consistently fair manner when they are unwell.

Mersey Care absence levels are considerably higher when we compare ourselves to our peers locally and nationally. This places additional pressure on remaining staff working within a service or department as the people in work try to cover for their staff who are not in work.

If supporting staff attendance is not managed in a timely and appropriate way with the right levels of support, staff can become demotivated, staff turnover may increase and overall standards and efficiency may decline. It presents a real risk to the quality of care that we can provide at Mersey Care.

**Joe Rafferty**

Chief Executive

**Amanda Oates**

Executive Director of  
Workforce

**Trish Bennett**

Executive Director of  
Nursing and Operations

**Ian Raven**

Chair, Staff Side

**Amanda Gregory**

Chair, Staff Side

In order to create a positive and effective working culture that supports and celebrates regular attendance and equally encourages positive health and wellbeing for us all, collectively we need to take ownership and responsibility for our physical and mental wellbeing.

Working together we wish to reduce absence to ensure we can deliver Perfect Care for the people we serve.

Our staff guide to supporting attendance procedure outlines responsibilities for:

- **You, our staff** – What you need to do when you are unwell and unfit to attend work?
- **Line managers** – What are your responsibilities as a line manager and how do you support a positive return to work?
- **Trade Unions** – How they can support you?
- **HR team** – When absences need some additional expertise to lead, support and advise managers.



## HEALTH AND WELLBEING @ WORK

Mersey Care's health and wellbeing services are made up of occupational health physicians, specialist nurses, physiotherapists and counsellors. They will provide advice on your wellbeing and will actively support you to stay in work.

Our occupational health services do not replace your GP or other NHS services; they provide an additional layer of guidance to you and Mersey Care on how to help keep you healthy in work and to aid a speedy recovery if you are unable to attend due to illness or injury.

Mersey Care believes that prevention is better than cure so if you feel that something at work is affecting your health discuss this with your line manager and ask them to refer you to occupational health (OH). Alternatively staff can also self-refer into occupational health services if they feel that this would be beneficial.

If your absences are due to long standing recurrent medical conditions, occupational health will be asked to advise Mersey Care on how attendance can be improved and sustained. Staff are expected to comply with any advice from occupational health and their own GP/ specialist to support their own health and wellbeing.

The list opposite explains what you can expect from our health and wellbeing services. In addition to all of these services we also offer a range of interventions as part of Mersey Care's wider health and wellbeing offer.

Some of these include:

- exercise sessions – yoga, pilates, lunchtime walks
- seated acupressure and massage
- discounted gym membership
- cycle to work scheme (including Active Sefton info).



STAFF SUPPORT	OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH	STAFF PHYSIOTHERAPY
Full colleague assistance programme offering free confidential counselling services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24/7 telephone advice line</li> <li>• Colleague health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Bespoke training courses.</li> </ul>	Conduct medical reviews and provide advice and guidance to Mersey Care on how to support you.  <b>0151 471 2451</b>	Provides comprehensive assessment and treatment of musculoskeletal conditions. Your manager does not need to refer you to physiotherapy. You can self refer directly to the service by ringing <b>0151 471 2451</b> to arrange a telephone appointment (available between 8.30am and 4.30pm daily)
24/7 telephone advice line <b>0151 330 8103</b>	Liaise with GPs/specialists when necessary with your consent.	Treatment may include advice and education, exercise prescription, active rehabilitation, manual therapy and acupuncture.
Stress management and reduction	Arrange referrals for you to external resources (where appropriate) if this can support the occupational health advice given.	Provides a telephone appointment within 72 hours of referral.
Management support and consultation	Maintain patient confidentiality to ensure that your specific medical condition is not discussed or disclosed to any non-occupational health personnel without your consent.	With clients consent will liaise with your GP or other specialist services if onward referral is required.
Trauma management	Information kept in your occupational health record will remain confidential to the occupational health team and will only be released with your consent.	

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Overview of staff and line manager responsibilities



Staff contacts supervisor/line manager personally by **phone** prior to the start of their shift, or working day, of absence (not via text message.)



If the return date is known at this point, this should be confirmed together with the reason for absence. If not, then daily contact should be maintained.

Staff must ensure they ring to confirm once they are fit for work regardless of whether they are scheduled to work the next day or not. Absences are ended once staff ring to notify they are fit to resume; otherwise absences are ended the day before they return to work.



The line manager or supervisor will report this through to the divisional HR officer where all sickness absence records are kept centrally.

Attendance tables for each individual are updated and maintained, and all absences are reported via a centralised monthly database.



Depending on the absence reason (musculoskeletal or anxiety/stress), the line manager or supervisor may refer staff to the health and wellbeing service for help and support to enable a return to work.

If the absence exceeds four days then a self certification form should be completed. Absences which then exceed seven days must be covered with a GP fitness to work note.

All self certification forms/GP fit notes should be sent direct to the line manager or supervisor. If the absence continues for a consecutive 28 days, then the long term sickness process will begin. The divisional HR officer will confirm this with the supervisor or line manager at the time.



Line manager and supervisor contacts divisional HR officer to confirm staff member has resumed work. The self certification form and/or GP fit note should be emailed through for saving centrally. The attendance table is updated and confirmation of any trigger stages is discussed.



Line manager or supervisor arranges to meet with staff for a return to work discussion and to confirm which trigger stages, if any have been met.

If a stage one review is required, the supervisor or line manager can utilise the return to work meeting to conduct the stage one review, if staff is happy to do so. Otherwise, seven working days notice is required to staff, of the review date. See page 8 for stages.



Managers complete all required documentation (return to work form, stage confirmation letter) and provide copies to both staff and to the divisional HR officer who will save all documents to the individual sickness file.



## MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

### SHORT TERM

#### TRIGGER:

Three occasions of absence or ten days (single or cumulative sickness absence in a retrospective rolling 12 month period).

#### REVIEW:

Staff will be reviewed for 12 months and if there are no further absences monitoring will cease.

### LONG TERM

#### TRIGGER:

Four weeks from the start of the absence.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL

Immediate referral where absence is stress or musculoskeletal.

### SHORT TERM

Where absences are self-certified and there is no medical evidence - the manager may refer or recommend colleague self-refers to establish any underlying reasons or the need for medical treatment.

### LONG TERM

Where it is not possible to establish a return to work date.

#### STAGE

# 1

### SHORT TERM

#### TRIGGER:

Within the 12 month review period there are two further occasions of absence or seven cumulative days since the date of the return to work.

#### REVIEW:

Staff will be reviewed for 12 months and if there are no further absences monitoring will cease.

### LONG TERM

#### TRIGGER:

Within three months of the start of the absence.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL

### SHORT TERM

Self-referral as per stage one. Managers do not receive a copy of the report if staff self-refer.

Exceptionally the manager may refer to rule out any underlying reasons or need for treatment.

### LONG TERM

Where medical advice is needed to establish prognosis of a return to work.

#### STAGE

# 2

### SHORT TERM

#### TRIGGER:

Within the 12 month review period there are two further occasions of absence or seven cumulative days since the return to work.

#### REVIEW:

Staff will be reviewed for 12 months and if there are no further absences monitoring will cease.

### LONG TERM

#### TRIGGER:

Within five months of the start of the absence.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL

Referral by line manager required prior to stage three review meetings for both long and short term absences.

#### STAGE

# 3

### FINAL HEARING

#### CONSIDER DISMISSAL

Within the review period if there are a further two occasions of absence or seven cumulative days following the return to work.

#### TRIGGER:

Within seven months of the start of the absence.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL

Manager should request an update prior to stage four review meetings for both long and short term absences.

#### STAGE

# 4

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This section covers the questions and answers that are commonly asked when staff are unfit to attend work. Your health matters and understanding how Mersey Care's supporting positive attendance procedure works will help create a just and learning culture which promotes wellbeing.

### CONTACT

If for any reason you are absent from work, you must call your line manager prior to your working start time **on the first day of absence**.

The purpose of this call is to understand:

- your reason for absence
- when you are likely to return
- any medical advice of which we need to be aware
- any alternative duties that you could do to allow you to return to work
- agree the next time and contact date to discuss your progress
- details of the fit note (where applicable)
- details of the occupational health referral (where applicable)
- signpost to additional early intervention supportive services (staff support and staff physiotherapy).

### I CAN'T GET IN TOUCH WITH MY LINE MANAGER. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

In addition to having the contact details of your line manager, your manager should inform you of the local reporting process in the event of their absence and supply all staff with the appropriate information.

All staff should have this information as part of their local induction.

If you do not have this information, you should ensure that your line manager provides you with the relevant details.

## SUPPORT

### MY LINE MANAGER HAS ASKED ME TO ATTEND A RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW. WHAT HAPPENS AT THIS MEETING?

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- discuss and review your absence
- identify any actions that may help to support and maintain your attendance
- update you on any workplace changes or developments.

### MY LINE MANAGER HAS ASKED ME TO ATTEND A FORMAL MEETING. WHAT HAPPENS AT THIS MEETING?

If the frequency or length of your absence triggers a formal stage review you will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss improving your attendance and how, as an organisation, we can support you to do this. At this meeting you may be counselled on the need to improve your attendance and be advised of the impact of any future absence.

### CAN ANYONE ACCOMPANY ME TO THIS MEETING?

During a formal meeting you can be supported by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

### MY LINE MANAGER HAS ASKED ME TO ATTEND AN APPOINTMENT WITH OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH. WHAT HAPPENS AT THIS MEETING?

The completed referral form received from your manager/human resources gives them the opportunity to give details of their concerns about your health and to ask questions from a standard list. We will attempt to answer their questions and give an opinion or advice based on the information you have provided during the appointment. The written report we send to management may include some of the following:

- suggestions about a supported phased return to work
- advice on a likely reasonable timescale for your return to work
- temporary support or adjustments to help you when you return to work
- advice on reasonable adjustments for permanent disability.

We will discuss with you what we are planning to include in the report and will not give confidential information without your consent.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## HOSPITAL ATTENDANCE OR SPECIAL MEDICAL TREATMENT

- This relates to either inpatient hospital treatment or outpatient treatment for day surgery
- You must inform your line manager in advance of any treatment and agree the intended time that you will require away from work
- You must provide proof of hospital appointments and treatment
- With your consent occupational health may liaise with your medical practitioner to agree reasonable adjustments or suggested recovery times with your consent.

## PROCESS AND DOCUMENTS

When should I provide a medical certificate?

<b>4 TO 7 DAYS</b>	You will need to complete a self-certificate.
<b>8 DAYS OR MORE</b>	You will need to provide a fit note to cover the remaining period of your absence.

Both certificates will need to be sent to your manager within eleven days of the first day of absence. Occupational sick pay may be affected and other action taken if staff do not provide the correct medical certificates.

## I UNDERSTAND THAT I CAN BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE ATTENDANCE STAGE PROCESS THROUGH A RECOVERY PERIOD, WHAT IS THIS?

If you are being supported with your attendance and have a 12 month period where you have had full attendance you will come out of the monitoring process.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I REACH THE EMPLOYMENT STAGE 4 FINAL HEARING?

At this point Mersey Care will review your last two years attendance records and make a decision on your future employment within the Trust in line with recommendations from the occupational health professional final stage review.

There may be occasions when it would be appropriate to seek permission from the head of human resources to produce a longer reference period for the timeline. For more information please refer to the [Supporting Attendance Policy](#).