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The College is committed to improving the health, well-being and attendance of all employees and values the contribution they make to our success. So, when any employee is unable to be at work for any reason, their contribution is missed.

1. As a responsible employer the College undertakes to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness. (See your contract of employment)
2. Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment – the College expects each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance
3. The College will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence. This support includes:
 - a. authorised, unpaid leave in certain circumstances
 - b. a flexible approach to the taking of annual leave
 - c. access to counsellors where necessary
 - d. return to work programmes in cases of long-term sickness absence, bearing in mind the need to deliver operational commitments

- your responsibilities; what the College expects from YOU, as a manager
- the responsibilities of ALL employees when dealing with absence
- why we need to work together to reduce levels of absence

Most sickness absences are genuine but are difficult to manage because they are often sudden and unexpected. This leaves some managers feeling unsure about what they can do. The toolkit will help you develop the knowledge and skills required.

anything from a cold to a complicated medical condition requiring an operation and recuperation.

e.g. an employee is unable to come to work because of family or caring responsibilities (or perhaps they simply do not want to come to work – they may be unhappy, or lack motivation). Sometimes employees take sickness absence because they feel they cannot ask for annual leave at short notice.

1. absence calculations are always done on a rolling 12 month / 52 week basis
2. the College defines short-term absence as anything up to 20 days
3. long term absence is defined as an absence of more than 20 days
4. All the forms you will need relating to this toolkit can be found under 'Absence Management Toolkit' on the A-Z of forms and policies, on the HR website

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The obvious cost of absence is financial, ie. the cost of sick pay, but there are also 'costs' due to some or all of the following:

- hiring temporary replacement staff
- missed deadlines due to a lack of trained, experienced employees
- reduced customer satisfaction levels
- low morale among colleagues expected to take on extra responsibilities
- diminished reputation with customers (internal and external), potential employees and even lost business

Absence is often unplanned so you need to manage staff to cushion the impact of absence on the overall flow of work. High absence levels affect everyone at the College and we need managers and staff to work together in order to maintain job satisfaction, manage workloads, increase productivity and control costs.

The toolkit will now explain how to carry these out effectively and with confidence.

The most effective ways to improve absenteeism and reduce costs are for all line managers to:

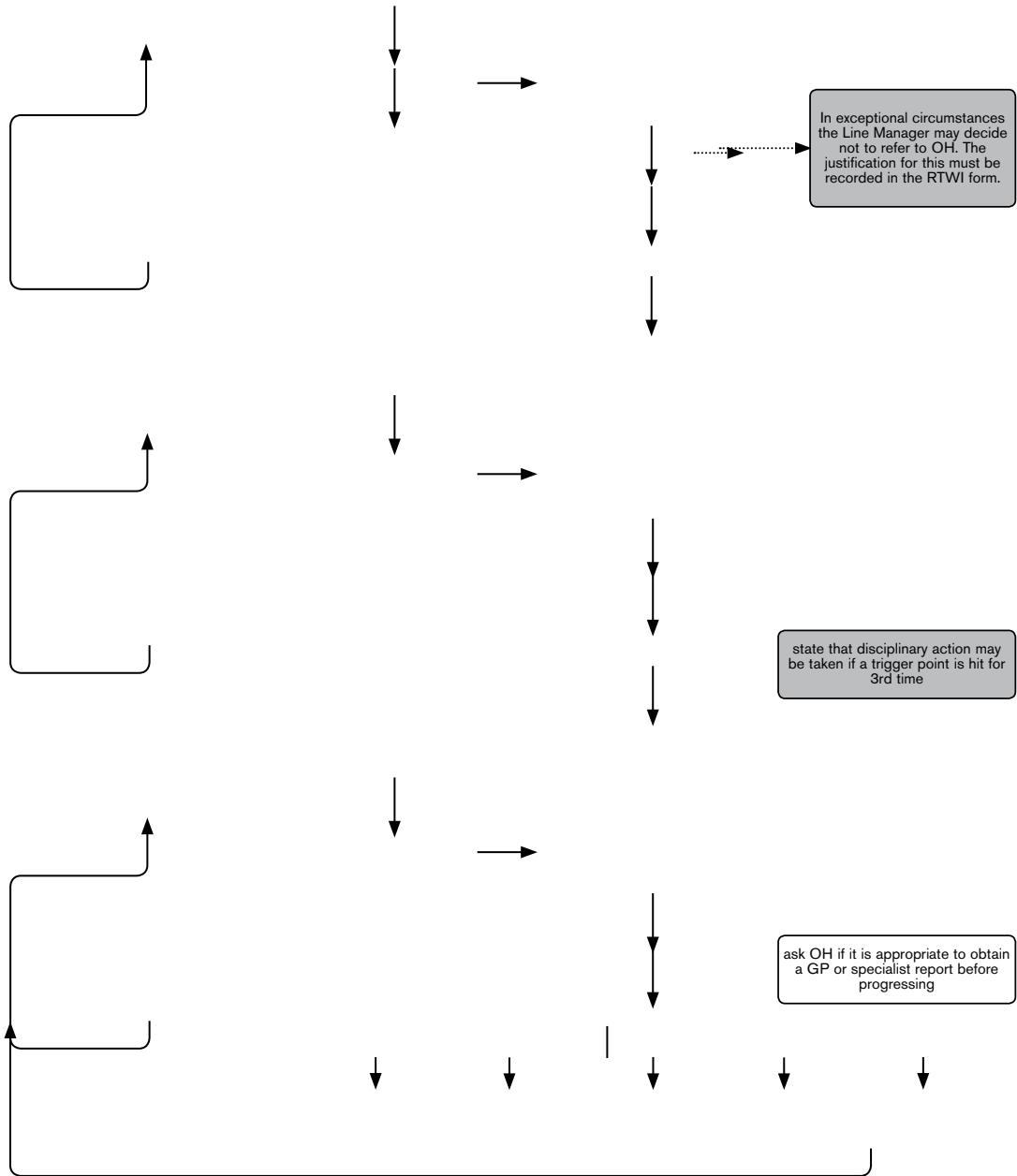
1. ensure attendance in line with firm, well publicised absence policies
2. implement absence monitoring
3. conduct return to work interviews after every single absence, no matter how short

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We have developed a simple 3 (Occupational Health, Return to work interview, Review Meeting) to managing absence:



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1. Ensure there are written local procedures regarding the management and reporting of absence in their area, including:
 - a. who to notify and when
 - b. the 3 stage approach flowchart
 - c. when to complete a self certificate or supply a doctors certificate
 - d. how trigger points are worked out etc.
2. Give all staff a copy and ensure they understand
3. Give a copy to every new starter at induction – ensure they understand.
4. Accurately record all staff absence and return this information to Human Resources (HR).
5. Conduct () for all absences using the RTWI proforma.
6. Establish prior to the RTWI whether the employee has hit a trigger point using the Bradford factor formula, and tell the employee during the interview.
7. Refer an employee to 6 0.167-2.0 () -40()100(.) . 40(.) (-1 -1.3 .) (= 0 040(.

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THE THREE STAGE APPROACH GREEN, AMBER, RED

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- 1 Employee notifies manager (or nominated contact in exceptional circumstances) of absence, in line with local procedures, and gives likely duration of absence or date of return to work (if possible) so that you can reschedule work.
- 2 If the absence is likely to be brief then you don't need to make further contact (but you can if you wish). It is reasonable to expect an employee to keep you up to date with what's happening during their absence, and their likely return date. If the employee doesn't maintain good contact then it is appropriate to contact them and 'keep in touch' (keep a note of how and when you do so), but get the balance right and don't hassle them. The College would not wish any employee to feel under pressure from their manager to return to work before they should.
- 3 Prepare for the RTWI – calculate the Bradford factor and arrange to see the employee on their first day back at work.
- 4 Certification – the employee will either bring a doctor's note if the absence was for 8 days or more, or will need to complete a self-certification form if the absence was for 7 days or less. This should be done at the RTWI. No exceptions; all absences.
- 5 Look for patterns – e.g. frequent Monday absences or absences that tend to occur at particular times, possibly just before an important monthly deadline or towards the end of a busy shift cycle.
If a pattern is apparent, check out the box.

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If a pattern is apparent, speak to your employee about it. Do so in a factual way without making any accusations. Take care not to make assumptions and remain open minded. The simplest way to put the matter to the employee is first to state the facts, and second to ask them if they can explain the pattern. For example:

You're always off on Mondays - that's very strange, don't say you think?

I suppose you'll have some excuse or other.

You always seem to be off when some important job has to be done. We can never rely on you.

You are no use to us if you can't cope with the shift cycle. We need you at work and not off sick.

I have noticed that six out of your 10 absences have been on Mondays.

Would you like to comment on that apparent pattern?

Is there any reason why nearly all your absences have been in the final week of the month?

The records show that you tend to be absent towards the end of your shift cycle. Is there any problem we can help you with in relation to shift working?

Your main aim in speaking to an employee about a pattern of absence should be to try to establish the underlying reason or reasons for the frequent absenteeism. It is only when the underlying cause is identified that it will be possible to decide what to do about the problem.

Even if the employee is unable or unwilling to put forward any explanation, such a discussion will have the advantage of alerting them to the fact that you have noticed the pattern. This in turn may deter any further casual absence.

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1 The process is almost exactly the same as Stage 1:

- if there is no Bradford trigger hit you take no further action except to monitor absence
- if there is a hit they will be referred to OH (again)

2 The process is almost exactly the same as Stage 1. **2** is that you must inform the employee at the review meeting that if there is a Bradford trigger hit for a third time within a rolling 12 month period, then disciplinary action may be taken

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1 The process is almost exactly the same as Stages 1 and 2

- if there is no Bradford trigger hit you take no further action except to monitor absence
- if there is a hit they will be referred to OH (again)

2 The process is almost exactly the same as Stages 1 and 2. **3** is that you must now consider what options are open to you including:

- disciplinary action
- incapacity hearing
- ill health retirement
- re-deployment
- no further action

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There are several different triggers; the general guidance is as follows:

1. When someone has been off work continuously for 4 weeks. (Remember, one absence of 20 days or more is classed as long term).
2. OH recommends early intervention when someone is absent due to mental health issues, so refer after only 2 weeks.
3. When someone has hit the Bradford factor trigger point.

These are guidelines only and there may be occasions when you feel it necessary to refer



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- apply standards consistently
- look after your employees' well-being
- look after the best interests of the employee
- look after the best interests of the College
- keep within the law

1. Know what you need to do to manage attendance.

Know what you need to do to manage attendance.

2. Investigate!

You may discover that absence has been caused or exacerbated by problems with colleagues. If the absences are due to relationship problems discuss ASAP with HR.

3. Talk to staff

It can be difficult talking to staff about why they have been absent from work. Some people naturally find it difficult to discuss personal medical problems. Also, many managers shy away from what they perceive as a 'showdown' with their staff – particularly if they suspect that the sickness has not been genuine or if they wish to discuss high levels of sickness absence ASAP with HR.

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Employers are increasingly making the link between absence and the health and well-being of their employees. The College wishes to consider issues like smoking, alcohol and stress alongside traditional occupational health issues such as noise, dust and chemical hazards. Many of these issues are critical to developing an effective and committed workforce. However, the right policies and procedures won't work unless they are used in the right way by managers who feel confident to do so.

The starting point for supporting employee well-being is good quality management and effective work organisation.

It is wise to recognise that there is increasing focus on the benefits of encouraging a good 'work-life balance'. Individuals have reasonable and legitimate reasons for needing to be absent from work – for example, they may have caring responsibility for an elderly relative. Also, parents of children aged 16 and under (18 and under for disabled children) and carers of adults have the right to request a flexible working arrangement and this must be considered.

If you believe that high levels of absence are linked to family commitments you might investigate possible flexible working arrangements, maybe for a short period, if

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Long-term sickness can be one of the most difficult problems to tackle. The College aims to consider if such problems can be eased through more flexible working arrangements, if possible.

You need to assess what impact the long-term sickness is having. Ask yourself:

- just how much damage is being caused by this absence?
- is there an immediate crisis, or could we afford to continue for some time without a replacement, with some re-organisation?

Lots of issues must be explored and it is vital that everyone remains objective and focuses on facts.

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- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • acute medical conditions | • stress |
| • back pain | • acute medical conditions |
| • musculoskeletal conditions | • mental health problems |
| • stress | • musculoskeletal conditions |
| • mental health problems | • back pain |
-



You have to consider the following:

- in the opinion of the employee's GP/medical consultant, or of the College's OH advisor, when will a return to work be possible?
- would a 'phased return' – working part-time or flexible hours – help the employee to get back to work?
- will there be a full recovery or will a return to the same work be inadvisable?
- could the employee return if some assistance was provided? Could some re-organisation or re-design of the job speed up a return to work?
- is alternative, lighter or less stressful work available, with retraining if necessary?
- is there a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to make a reasonable adjustment?

In some cases, it may be appropriate to simply keep in touch with the employee and give them the time they need to recover. This is particularly true where there is a possibility that the illness has job related causes.

- maintain contact with the employee.
- use OH and seek medical advice
- be clear about arrangements for sick pay
- develop a 'return to work' programme

Employees are often understandably anxious about returning to work after a long absence. They may have lots of questions to ask you. For example:

	If the sickness was work-related they may be concerned about using the same equipment, for example. Have you reviewed your risk assessment?
	If they are disabled, or have become disabled, you are required to make reasonable adjustments to help them back to work.

A tailored return to work programme will be led by OH in consultation with you as the manager and could include:

- shorter or flexible hours in the first few weeks
- assistance to catch up on any new developments within the College
- training on new equipment or new processes/procedures
- a friendly chat about what's been going on at work – for example, any social events they may have missed or that are coming up



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Where an employee genuinely suffers from long-term ill health, or frequent related bouts of short term sickness which interfere with their job performance, by following the 3 stage approach it will become evident that their absence is due to capability and not conduct.

- An eligible employee may be entitled to statutory sick pay for up to 28 weeks - as well as any contractual sick pay.

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- Stress is “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or demands placed on them”
- Stress is a very personal issue
- Over 12 million working days are lost per annum because of it
- It affects people both mentally and physically, taking many forms including anxiety, depression, heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, alcohol and drug dependency
- Each new case leads to an average of 31 days off work
- Employers are obliged by law to assess the risk of work-related stress and to take measures to control these risks

- help employers measure their performance in managing key causes of stress at work
- identify areas for improvement

1. ... made on employees
2. ... they have over their work
3. ... they receive from managers and colleagues
4. ... clarity
5. ... at work
6. ... and how it is managed

- do something about the underlying causes of stress,
- help employees cope with the symptoms of stress,

Common themes which can ... the underlying causes of stress emerging:

- clear policies
- setting objectives
- effective communication
- working together

The ... of tackling work-related stress:

- quality of life – employees feel happier at work and perform better
- attendance and sickness – attendance goes up and sickness goes down
- management of change – changes are easier when ‘stress’ is managed effectively
- employee relations – problems can be resolved at work rather than at a tribunal

<p>1 Overload</p>	<p>Employees often become overloaded if they cannot cope with the amount or type of work they are asked to do.</p>	<p>Pay attention to the way the job is designed, training needs and whether it is possible for employees to work more flexible hours.</p>
<p>2 Disaffection</p>	<p>Employees can feel disaffected and perform poorly if they have no say over how and when they do their work.</p>	<p>Think about how employees are actively involved in decision making, the contribution made by teams and how reviewing performance can help identify strengths and weaknesses.</p>
<p>3 Discipline</p>	<p>A failure to build relationships based on good behaviour and trust can lead to problems related to discipline, grievances and bullying.</p>	<p>Check College policies for handling grievances, unsatisfactory performance, poor attendance and misconduct, and for tackling bullying and harassment.</p>
<p>4 Sickness</p>	<p>Levels of sickness absence often rise if employees feel they cannot talk to managers about issues that are troubling them.</p>	<p>Give employees the opportunity to talk about the issues causing stress, provide a sympathetic ear and keep them informed.</p>
<p>5 Anxiety</p>	<p>Employees will feel anxious about their work (and the organisation) if they don't know what's expected of them.</p>	<p>Review the induction process, work out an accurate job description and maintain a close link between individual objectives and College goals.</p>
<p>6 Change</p>	<p>Change needs to be managed effectively or it can lead to huge uncertainty and insecurity.</p>	<p>Plan ahead so change doesn't come out of the blue. Consult with employees so they have a real input and work together to solve problems.</p>

1. Job Design - (Job Design - Job Design)

Two employees work doing the same job as part of a small team. A new manager arrives and divides up the work slightly differently, resulting in one of the employees doing the more difficult work, while the other is given the more routine, repetitive tasks.

The employee with the challenging work begins to work longer hours in order to get his work completed on time. After a few weeks he is frequently off sick due to the pressure of work.

The other employee does the routine work easily and has time left with nothing to do. She soon feels bored and starts to make mistakes and not complete tasks due to lack of motivation.

The manager holds a meeting with the employees to discuss the problems. The manager admits he might have acted too hastily and agrees to look at the job design and reorganise work duties. Training is arranged so that both employees can undertake some of the more challenging work to the standard required and the routine work is distributed more fairly.

2. Job Design - (Job Design - Job Design)

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