



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

People and Development

Absence Management Policy

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**What we must
do well**



**How we support our
communities**



**We value and support
the people we employ**



**We efficiently manage
the Service**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) recognises the attendance of employees at work is vital if it is to offer an effective, high quality service to the communities it serves. HFRS cares about the health, wellbeing and safety of all its employees but also recognises that absence from work is costly in terms of:

- The effect on the quality and level of service.
- The additional workload on others and its impact on health and morale.
- The direct cost of occupational sick pay.
- The extra cost of temporary cover, including overtime.

The guidelines in this policy provide a framework for managers to help them manage sickness absence in a fair, consistent and professional manner.

Examples given in this policy are for illustration purposes only and are neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

Core Code of Ethics

HFRS has adopted the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. The Service is committed to the ethical principles of the Code and strives to apply them in all we do, therefore, those principles are reflected in this Policy.

National Guidance

Any National Guidance which has been adopted by HFRS, will be reflected in this Policy.

2. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and a commitment, to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services nor in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees and service users.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This policy aims to provide guidance to managers and employees on sickness absence processes and how absence will be managed within HFRS.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- [Equality Impact Analysis](#)
- Legal References
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Working Time Regulations 1998

- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)
- National Guidance
There is no specific National Guidance relevant to this policy.

5. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of HFRS.

The policy does not seek to detail all the support and guidance that is available. Further advice can be sought from Human Resources (HR) and Occupational Health (OH).

It is important to take account of the circumstances surrounding each individual case when deciding appropriate action. Managers are actively encouraged to consult with HR for additional support.

Although employees are responsible for their own attendance at work, managers are responsible for managing absence.

HR will play a supporting role, providing regular information and advice to managers and employees.

The OH Team is also available to support managers and employees.

When an employee is absent from work, there is a dual responsibility to maintain contact:

- The employee must report their absence, on time and in line with the absence reporting procedure using the automated 'Click to book sick/book fit' system (see [Appendix A](#)).
- The employee must keep their manager informed of their progress either by regular phone calls, emails, visits, etc.
- The manager must keep in contact with the employee at reasonable intervals, record details of the contact using Welfare Contact Notification form SSC01a (see [Appendix B](#)) and return it at the earliest opportunity to the Absence inbox. This is particularly important with long term absences.

It is important to understand that all reasons for absence are confidential. There may be situations in which an employee will not wish to disclose information to their immediate supervisor/manager and should be given the opportunity to speak to HR or OH.

If it is found that an employee has abused/not complied with HFRS's Absence Management Policy, then disciplinary action may be taken, and occupational sick pay may be suspended.

6. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees should ensure they:

- Take proactive steps in seeking medical advice and treatment when appropriate.
- Use the automated 'Click to book sick/book fit' system to notify HFRS of their absence from work.
- The employee may give permission to the Manager to complete the booking sick and booking fit forms on their behalf.
- Maintain regular contact with their line manager (if inappropriate, another manager will be nominated).
- Follow any recommendations made by their GP, OH or any other specialist or expert that may expedite their recovery.
- Attend welfare meetings.
- Attend appointments arranged by OH.
- Cooperate fully with any rehabilitation and/or retraining programme.
- Comply with any reasonable adjustments e.g. modified duties, phased return to work etc.
- Ensure an absence exceeding 7 days is covered by a Statement of Fitness for Work which, once received, is forwarded immediately to the Absence inbox.
- Raise concerns with their line manager or OH, if they believe their job is contributing to their illness or welfare at work.

Have adequate and relevant insurance if they participate in a sport as a professional, or an extreme sport (e.g. rock climbing, scuba diving, surfing). Employees who are absent from work due to an accident caused by active participation in a sport as a professional or an extreme sport, will be required to repay their sick pay on receipt of any compensation/insurance payment.

Failure of any employee to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken, suspension of occupational sick pay and/or be construed as a breach of contract.

7. LINE MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

Line managers have a responsibility to motivate their team members and create a working environment that encourages maximum attendance at work.

Line managers must ensure they:

- Apply the policy in a fair and consistent manner, whilst acknowledging that every case will be different.
- Maintain regular contact with their employee to ensure appropriate and relevant support is being offered, record on Welfare Contact Notification form SSC01a (see [Appendix B](#)) and send all completed forms (i.e., every time contact is made) to the Absence inbox.
- Reassure the employee and ensure that any matters discussed will be dealt with sensitively and be kept strictly private and confidential.
- Contact the employee if the latter does not provide a Fit Note and is absent for more than 7 days.

- Provide clear, comprehensive referrals to OH, with appropriate questions being raised which have been previously discussed with the employee wherever possible.
- Monitor employee absence and carry out Return to Work Interviews (see [Appendix C](#)) and Absence Review Meetings as appropriate and in a timely manner and send all completed forms to the Absence inbox.
- Consider whether meaningful modified duties or a phased return can be accommodated at the earliest opportunity so as to actively support the employee's return to work.
- Contact OH to arrange a return to work fitness assessment with the Fitness Manager or Assistant Fitness Manager for an employee who has been absent for 28 days or more (excluding annual leave and any other periods of 'fit' leave) – before they are permitted to resume operational duty and/or risk critical training.
- Complete and submit a People Form to HR, when appropriate, stating the nature of the modified duties to be undertaken and/or the working pattern of the phased return.
- Are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to disability related absence.
- Not authorise or accept any holiday requests to cover any period of sickness absence.
- Managers should keep HR updated on any long-term cases
- Request a Fit Note in circumstances where, for example, an employee is absent on the day before or after annual leave, school closure, statutory holiday or following a refused annual leave request.

8. REFERRAL TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Occupational Health and Wellbeing is increasingly allied to employee wellbeing. Occupational health services have a key role not only in managing health issues in the workforce, for example supporting staff who return to work after periods of sickness absence, but also in proactive sickness prevention and wellbeing promotion.

OH will work closely with HR, managers and health and safety. The specific role for OH includes:

- Monitoring staff members' health
- Helping to identify health problems and fitness for work issues at an early stage
- Identifying where staff members may potentially be protected by the provision of the Equality Act
- Providing advice and support on adjustments and alterations to staff members' working environments or lifestyles
- Formulating and/or supporting the formulation of return to work plans
- Conducting health surveillance to detect work related illness or diseases

Employees may already have been referred to OH by their line manager prior to them being off work for 28 days or more, depending on the circumstances.

Employees who have not already been referred to OH and submitted a Fit Note which indicates that the length of absence will be 28 days or more, will automatically be referred to OH by their manager. Referral should be made online using the OH OPAS G2

Employees whose reasons for absence would benefit from early intervention, e.g. absences related to mental health problems or musculoskeletal conditions, should be referred as soon as the employee is off sick.

Employees referred to OH will be reviewed, and a medical report provided to the manager and HR as to the employee's fitness to undertake the duties of their post at the present time and, possibly, in the future.

OH may ask the employee for their consent to obtain a medical report from their GP or specialist. Such a request would be made to help establish a clear prognosis in relation to the employee's health and full transparency will be afforded as to whom any copies of the documentation would be sent. The employee has the right to refuse to give their consent; however, it should be noted that the Service is then entitled to make a decision based upon the information available to it at the time. Employees are encouraged to share their own medical evidence at any stage of the process to ensure they are fully supported throughout.

Operational employees who are absent for 28 days or more will be required to complete a return to work fitness assessment before undertaking operational duties and/or risk critical training.

Where there is no underlying medical condition, operational employees who do not pass the Service fitness test may be removed from emergency response and will be required to commit to a programme of improvement to achieve the fitness test standard within 28 days. Operational personnel absent from duty for 28 days or more are to complete a return to work fitness assessment before undertaking operational duties and/or risk critical training. Operational staff who remain unfit and unable to pass a service fitness test for a period in excess of six months may be referred for assessment to the Service Medical Adviser who will consider whether the situation constitutes grounds for ill health retirement. In the event that ill health retirement is not appropriate, the employee may be dealt with via the Performance and Capability Policy.

9. WELFARE

All welfare contact must be summarised by the line manager or designated Welfare Officer on the Welfare Contact form (SSC01a) and sent through to the Absence inbox after every individual contact so that the individual's record can be continually updated. Accurate and comprehensive records should be kept of welfare discussions with the employee (see [Appendix B](#)).

Welfare meetings should be conducted at a frequency agreed by both parties, either on HFRS premises, by telephone or Teams, or any other venue deemed by both parties to be a suitable environment.

10. MEDICAL SUSPENSION

On occasion, it may be necessary to suspend an employee on medical grounds in order to safeguard their health and wellbeing. This decision must be based on the findings of a risk assessment which should identify any hazards, harm associated with the same, control measures (both actual and additional) and the possibility of these hazards being realised. Medical suspension would only be a consideration if an employee has been deemed fit to work by a medical professional, but the Service reasonably believes the employee is not fit to undertake their particular role. Advice should be sought from HR and OH in the first instance as such occurrences would be rare.

Prior to an employee being suspended on the grounds of ill health, the manager will investigate whether it is possible for reasonable alternative duties to be offered on a temporary basis. If not, and the employee is suspended on the grounds of ill health, this should be for the shortest period possible whilst further medical evidence is obtained. A referral to OH should be made for an appointment and/or to obtain consent for a medical report from their GP and/or Specialist Consultant. If, having obtained the further information, the Service considers that it is reasonable to believe the employee is unfit to work, the Absence Management policy will apply. If not, but the Service still believes they are not safe to be at work, the employee will be medically suspended for five days and this will be reviewed weekly thereafter.

The employee will be entitled to their normal pay for the period of suspension; however, should the employee have unreasonably refused suitable, alternative duties, such payments will not be made.

11. RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS

Return to work interviews should take place every time an employee returns from sickness absence and as soon as possible following their return (preferably on day one).

The return to work interview should be carried out by the manager and not be delegated. The employee should meet with their manager at the earliest opportunity, preferably on the first duty shift or first day back.

However, where circumstances would result in the return to work interview being delayed, the interview may be carried out by another, appropriate, manager.

The purpose of a return to work interview is to:

- Welcome the employee back to work
- Ensure the employee is fit to return to work.
- Enable employees to discuss the cause of their absence in private/confidence.

- Discuss the details of any agreed return to work programme based on advice provided by the employee's GP and/or OH. However, managers should have already agreed the return to work in principle during regular contact throughout the absence.
- Offer a referral to OH if this has not already been undertaken and remind the employee of the support available to them via OH, including counselling and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if appropriate.
- Enable managers to check whether a work-related reason has caused the absence, including an accident at work.
- Enable managers to ascertain if there are any tensions at work that require investigation.
- To explore alternatives to sickness absence e.g. special leave, flexible working options, reasonable adjustments if appropriate.
- To update the employee on any news or changes within the organisation or team which may have occurred whilst they were off, but which were not raised during any welfare contact.

Any instance of an accident and/or work-related ill health should be investigated with a view to identifying the underlying cause(s) and identifying suitable and sufficient actions to prevent recurrence.

Managers should take note of whether an individual's record has a few, or many spells of short or long-term absences. Any patterns identified can be discussed, as well as the impact on the wider team through the employee being absent. This may also identify any recurrent underlying problems.

The Return to Work Interview Form should be completed (see [Appendix C](#)) and the information provided should be accurate and detailed, as it may be referred to in the future. The completed form should be returned to the Absence inbox.

During the return to work interview, the following should also be discussed and considered with the employee:

- Are they approaching any of the trigger points?
- Are there any work-related issues which need to be addressed?

12. SHORT TERM ABSENCE PROCESS

Managers will regularly receive a 'trigger report' from HR highlighting any employee's absence which is deemed to be unacceptable together with any employees who have hit a trigger point.

The use of trigger points helps to identify employees whose attendance is regularly poor.

The trigger points are:

- Three separate absences in any six months period.
- 8 working days absence in a twelve month period (pro-rata for part-time employees).

- Certain patterns of absence e.g. after annual leave, the weekend or a bank holiday; or any pattern that arises from an employee regularly avoiding hitting a formal trigger.

Informal Stage: Short Term Absences

The aim of the informal route is to improve and encourage good attendance and to allow individuals the opportunity to bring their attendance up to satisfactory levels. Any employee who hits a trigger point must be informed of this via a Cause for Concern meeting with their manager. The meeting should provide the opportunity to:

- Facilitate a confidential discussion to take place in which the employee can discuss the cause of the absence.
- Indicate the level of absence is of a concern.
- A referral to OH to be considered. The employee must be referred to OH for advice if there is any reason to believe that an underlying health condition may exist.
- Advise the individual to seek further advice from their doctor if they are concerned about their health.
- Consider whether any other assistance is appropriate such as temporary adjustments, change of hours, etc.

The manager, during or following the meeting, may decide that the employee's absence is not a cause for concern and no further action will be taken. However, a file note should be completed to document that the meeting has taken place and sent to HR.

An employee who has had 28 or more consecutive days sickness absence will be subject to the Long-Term Absence Process.

Trigger points are for guidance only and are neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Therefore, if an employee's attendance record is a cause for concern, this should be reviewed prior to the receipt of trigger reports.

A record of the informal interview should be made on the Cause for Concern Form (see [Appendix D](#)). Should an informal warning be appropriate, then this must be recorded clearly on the Cause for Concern form and sent to the Absence inbox.

If the standards set out in the Cause for Concern meeting are not met, the Service reserves the right to invoke the formal process.

To ensure the necessary support is given, managers should arrange regular follow up meetings.

Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at an informal absence review meeting by either their trade union representative or a workplace colleague.

Formal Short-Term Absence Review Meeting: Stage 1

The purpose of an absence review meeting is to improve attendance.

At all formal stages (1, 2 or 3), employees have the right to be accompanied at an Absence Review Meeting by their trade union representative or a workplace colleague. HR will also be in attendance to support the process.

The employee will be invited to attend a Stage 1 meeting with their supervisor.

The meeting should take place as soon as possible. If this is not possible owing to annual leave for example, it should take place as soon as possible on return.

The employee will be advised in writing of their right to be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or work colleague if they so wish and reasonable notice will be given to allow this to be arranged (five working days).

During the meeting, the information contained in the absence records will be discussed and verified and the reasons for the absence will be discussed.

The employee will be afforded the opportunity to offer their views and comments and to identify the causes of the absences.

The employee may also be referred to OH for an assessment if it is felt necessary or appropriate.

If, following the discussion, the manager feels no further action is required at this time, this will be confirmed to the employee in writing. If, however, the outcome of the meeting is that a significant improvement in attendance is required, then the employee will be placed on Stage 1 of the procedure.

Usually a review period of 6 months will be set, however, all circumstances must be considered when setting the review period. A midway review will be held during that time with the employee to discuss attendance to date and offer feedback. The manager will monitor the employee's attendance closely and conduct a further review meeting if necessary. Before taking any further action, the following points must have been considered and the manager should be satisfied that:

- There has been no improvement in attendance.
- An absence review meeting has been held.
- The employee has been afforded the agreed period in which to improve their attendance.
- The reasons given by the employee have been given fair consideration.
- A medical opinion has been sought from OH to ensure there are no underlying health issues.

If the employee's attendance improves in accordance with the standards set by the manager, no further action is required, and this will be confirmed in writing by HR.

However, if the employee's attendance remains a cause for concern during or at the end of the stipulated period in Stage 1, then the employee will be required to attend a further meeting, which may result in the employee being placed on Stage 2 of the policy.

Formal Short-Term Absence Review Meeting: Stage 2

The employee will be invited to attend a Stage 2 meeting with their supervisor. The employee will be advised in writing of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague if they so wish and reasonable notice will be given to allow this to be arranged (five working days).

The employee will be given the opportunity to offer their views and comments and identify the causes of the absences.

The employee may also be referred to OH for an assessment if it is felt necessary or appropriate.

If, following the discussion, the manager feels it is not necessary to place the employee on Stage 2 at this time, they may instead extend the monitoring period set in Stage 1 for a further 12 weeks.

If, however, the outcome of the meeting is that no significant improvement has been made during a Stage 1 sanction, the employee will be placed on Stage 2 of the procedure. A review period for improvement will be set for six months.

The manager will monitor the employee's attendance closely, with regular review meetings. If the employee's attendance improves in accordance with the standards set by the manager by the end of the Stage 2 period, no further action will be required, and this will be confirmed in writing by HR.

If, however, the employee fails to achieve the required standard as identified at Stage 2, they will be required to attend a Stage 3 meeting. The result of a Stage 3 meeting may lead to the employee's contract being terminated on grounds of capability

Formal Short-Term Absence Review Meeting: Stage 3

If an employee fails to achieve the required standard following a Stage 2 meeting, they will be required to attend a Stage 3 absence meeting. The employee will be invited to attend a Stage 3 meeting with an appropriate manager.

The employee will be advised in writing of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague if they so wish and reasonable notice will be given to allow this to be arranged (five working days).

If, following the Stage 3 review, the review manager feels it is not necessary to place the employee on Stage 3 at this time, they may instead extend the monitoring period set in Stage 2 for a further two months.

If, however, the outcome of the Stage 3 meeting, after hearing all the evidence presented, is that no significant improvement has been made during Stage 2, this may lead to the employee's contract being terminated on the grounds of capability once the following factors have been taken into account in reaching a decision as to dismissal:

- Has the correct procedure been followed?
- Has advice from HR and OH been taken account of?
- Has there been any improvement in the level of absence following warnings being issued?
- Would it be reasonable to wait before deciding to dismiss to see whether improvement is sustained?
- What is the absence history like? Is this only a recent problem?
- Is there a pattern to the absences?
- How does the staff member's attendance record compare to others?
- What impact is the staff member's absence having on their department/the organisation?
- Has all reasonable support and assistance been offered?
- Termination of employment under this procedure will be dismissal with contractual notice.

The outcome will be confirmed in writing and the employee will have the right to appeal the decision to dismiss within seven days from the date of receipt of the letter. An appeal should be sent, in writing, to the appropriate manager.

Appeals

An employee has the right of appeal at each stage of the formal process. Employees will be allowed to appeal within seven days from the date of receipt of the letter. The employee must state their grounds of appeal in writing.

The appeal will be heard by the next senior manager and will review the reason for the decision and any new information presented. The outcome of the appeal will be notified to the employee in writing. There will be no further right of appeal.

Further Guidance

If, during the stipulated periods of improvement on Stage 1 or Stage 2, the employee reached one or more of the trigger points, the line manager may implement the next stage of the procedure.

The manager may extend the stipulated periods during Stage 1 or Stage 2 in exceptional circumstances are reasonable, such as the absence has improved but not quite to the expected level and advice should be sought from HR in the first instance.

If the employee is absent from work for another reason e.g. maternity or parental leave, the stipulated period should be suspended until the employee returns to work.

In exceptional circumstances, for example, if an employee has been on Stage 1 of the procedure multiple times, the line manager may, in consultation with HR, invoke the next stage of the procedure, for example Stage 2 as a first course of action.

Where an employee is on Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Absence Management Policy and subsequently goes off on long term ill health, the Stage 1/Stage 2 monitoring

period will be suspended and then resumed on return to work at the same point at which it was interrupted.

13. LONG TERM ABSENCE PROCESS

Long term absence is defined as any absence lasting 28 days or more. Managers and employees are jointly responsible for maintaining regular contact during the absence. All welfare contact must be summarised on the Welfare Contact Notification Form SSC01a (see [Appendix B](#)) and sent to the Absence inbox.

The primary aim in dealing with cases of long-term absence should be to facilitate the employees return to work at the earliest reasonable opportunity. Employees should be treated fairly and consistently.

Where an employee is unable to attend an appointment with OH, they must contact OH in a timely manner, providing a valid reason for their non-attendance. If this is reasonable and legitimate, a new date will be arranged.

Failure to attend OH appointments without a valid reason may be seen as a breach of this policy and disciplinary action may be taken and/or suspension of contractual sick pay.

Long Term Absence Review Meeting

Employees who have been absent from work due to sickness for 28 days or more may be invited to a Long-Term Absence Review Meeting with their line manager and HR representative to discuss their current sickness absence and what support is necessary to assist the employee back to work. Employees will be given five working days' notice, in writing, of the requirement to attend a Long-Term Absence Review Meeting.

Long-Term Absence Review Meetings may be held at any convenient location as deemed appropriate by all parties. A representative from OH may be invited to discuss support in more detail, if necessary.

At the Long-Term Absence Review Meeting, the manager will:

- Offer support
- Gather details regarding absence and establish the current position
- Determine the likely length of absence, if possible
- Establish if the employee is undertaking any treatment plans
- Explore barriers to preventing an early return to work
- Determine a period of modified duties, if appropriate

Following the Long-Term Absence Review Meeting, HR will write to the employee confirming the discussions that have taken place and any actions agreed.

Should an employee fail to attend the arranged Long-Term Absence Review meeting, the meeting may still take place in their absence.

14. CASE CONFERENCES

A Case Conference will be held when, following a Case Review Meeting, there appears to be no indication of a return to work date. It may also be necessary to hold a Case Conference once a member of staff has exhausted their contractual rights to sick pay.

The purpose of the Case Conference is to consider all the relevant facts of the case, possible options and to agree a way forward.

A possible outcome of the Case Conference could be redeployment or dismissal due to ill health, if the indication is that there is no likely return to work date in the foreseeable future and the sickness absence has already exceeded what a reasonable employer may be expected to accept.

The employee will be advised in writing of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague if they so wish and reasonable notice will be given to allow this to be arranged (five working days).

Where the date arranged by the manager is unsuitable for the employee or their representative, the employee will offer an alternative date no later than five days following the original date of the Case Conference.

The line manager, in conjunction with HR, will be responsible for arranging the Case Conference and will retain responsibility for the outcome(s) of the Case Conference. An HR and OH representative will attend to provide appropriate advice and guidance to the manager.

Case Conference Process

The process for convening and conducting a Case Conference is as follows:

- The manager may initiate the Case Conference in consultation with an HR and/or OH representative and may recommend that a Case Conference is appropriate in the circumstances.
- HR will organise the Case Conference and invite the relevant parties in writing. The possibility of dismissal must be made clear in the letter to the employee.
- The employee's line manager or section head will attend the Case Conference to present the management case and this will be heard by a director.
- The employee will be responsible for arranging the attendance of their chosen trade union representative or workplace colleague.
- The director will chair the Case Conference meeting and will retain responsibility for the case. Advice will be sought from HR and OH.
- Those involved in the Case Conference must be aware that the primary aim of the process is to support the individual in a return to work if possible although, if not, dismissal may be a possible outcome.
- HR will ensure that a record of the meeting is taken.

- The director will open the meeting and explain the format of the proceedings and the reason(s) for convening the Case Conference.
- The manager will then brief the meeting, giving the background details related to the case, including any action that has previously been taken.
- The employee will be invited to address the meeting and provide any relevant information. The employee's representative will be permitted to address the meeting but will not answer questions on the employee's behalf.
- Having established the facts of the case, both parties may seek advice/clarification from HR and/or the OH.
- When the director is satisfied that all relevant information related to the case has been disclosed, the Case Conference will be adjourned for a short period of time to enable a decision to be made.
- In order to determine the next course of action/outcome, the director will need to consider the following:
 - The frequency and causes of repeated absences, or the length and nature of the long-term absence
 - The medical evidence sought and obtained from OH
 - The nature of the employee's job
 - Available, suitable and alternative employment
 - The potential for redeployment
 - Eligibility for ill health retirement
 - Reasonable adjustments
 - Capability on ill health grounds
- The director will, in agreement with HR, make an appropriate decision whilst also taking responsibility for ensuring that a consistent approach is applied in all cases and that the position of the individual is fully recognised.
- On reconvening the Case Conference, the director will inform the employee of their decision which may be dismissal on the grounds of ill health capability.

The manager, on conclusion of the Case Conference, will complete a report of the proceedings on the form, 'Outcome of Case Conference'. A copy of the report should be provided to the employee. Further copies should be retained by OH and HR. The report will include the following:

- The background to the case including confirmation of the employee's previous sickness record.
- Confirmation of the measures taken to address the sickness absence by HFRS and the individual.
- An indication of the timescales for returning to full duties and whether, in the interim period, modified duties should be considered or continued
- Guidance from OH on whether the sickness absence is as a result of disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.
- Confirmation that, where feasible and appropriate, alternative measures including redeployment, revised working patterns etc., have been explored on a temporary or permanent basis.

Where advice from OH indicates that the employee is likely to be permanently unfit to continue in their current role and alternative measures have been explored and

discounted, then ill health retirement may be explored (if the employee is a member of a pension scheme).

15. APPEALS

In the event of a decision to dismiss, an employee has the right of appeal.

Employees will be allowed to appeal within seven days from the date of receipt of the letter. The employee must state their grounds of appeal in writing to the Chief Fire officer.

The appeal hearing will review the reason for the decision and any new information presented. The outcome of the appeal will be notified to the employee in writing. There will be no further right of appeal.

16. EQUALITY ACT: REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is classified as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect of their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Day-to-day activities include things such as, for example, using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport.

Where a disability is causing absence from work, HFRS will always consider reasonable adjustments which the employee may find beneficial in preventing future absences or enable an earlier return to work

Reasonable adjustments may include but are not limited to consideration of the following:

- Changing of working arrangements, such as shift patterns
- Providing extra or specialised equipment
- Providing something in the workplace to support the employee such as an accessible car parking space

HFRS must be able to demonstrate that it is not discriminating against an employee on the grounds of their disability and/or other protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010. It must also be able to demonstrate that reasonable adjustments have been considered and/or made. Particular consideration should be given to employees whose reason for absence fall within the definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010.

‘Substantial’ denotes an activity that takes much longer than it would usually do to complete a daily task like getting dressed. ‘Long term’ means twelve months or more.

Special rules exist about recurring or fluctuating conditions and some conditions are not covered by the Act, for example, addiction to non-prescription drugs, nicotine, alcohol or hay fever.

Managers must discuss with the employee the nature of their disability and must seek advice from OH in an effort to, wherever possible, make reasonable adjustments to enable a disabled employee to continue working.

OH will advise whether they believe the employee's condition falls under the Equality Act 2010 and will advise of any suitable reasonable adjustments they believe will enable the employee to continue working.

Reasonable adjustments should still be considered if the employee is not likely to meet the criteria for having a disability if this will assist with the employee returning to work.

17. MODIFIED DUTIES/PHASED RETURN

Modified Duties

Should an employee be insufficiently fit to be able to carry out the full requirements of their role, they may be able to undertake modified duties.

Modified duties cannot be carried out indefinitely and are not a shift pattern in their own right but act as a bridge between sickness absence and a return to full duties. It is the line manager's responsibility to consider the use of modified duties when an employee is unable to fulfil their normal/full role.

Where an On-Call employee is absent due to sickness, then owing to the nature of their role, whilst modified duties may be considered in exceptional cases, it is unlikely that meaningful modified duties can be accommodated within an On-Call FF role.

Line Managers will ensure that any employee assigned to modified duties is provided with meaningful, reasonable work. The line manager will also monitor the progress made by the employee to support them on their return to full duties. If no meaningful work is available within the line manager's District, then the line manager should consult with other Districts and departments to identify if other meaningful work exists elsewhere.

Where an employee wishes to return to work on modified duties but due to either the seriousness of their condition, the risk to their own health and safety a return would pose, or the limitations imposed by their condition results in no meaningful modified duty work is available then they must remain on sick leave. This also applies when there is no meaningful work available. This decision will be made following full consultation with the Head of OH and the Head of HR.

Modified duties are not expected to exceed a period of three months and should be reviewed by the manager during that period to support the individual in a return to full duties. Where a line manager is concerned the employee is not progressing as expected and may never be able to return to full duties, a case conference should be convened to discuss and agree an appropriate course of action. However, it should be noted that this timescale is intended as a guide for the purpose of consistency.

Each case will be considered individual and a degree of flexibility to the timescale may be applied if the employee has exceptional circumstances.

Guidance and advice should be sought from OH as to the appropriate tasks and activities that may be undertaken by an employee whilst they are on modified duties. The manager should put into place a plan with the employee, supported by HR to support the employee in a return to their full normal duties within the three month period.

Physical activities should be agreed with OH prior to being undertaken and where such activities are prohibited, duties may be limited to non-physical training activities plus non-physical work as instructed by the line manager.

If medical advice received states that an employee is likely to be unfit for operational duties for a period of 12 weeks or more, the employee may be compulsorily moved from their substantive post and HR would write to the employee after eight weeks of sickness absence to advise of this possibility.

If an employee is moved in this way, the resulting vacancy may be filled on a permanent basis. This means there would be no guarantee that the employee will be able to return to their former post once fit. However, all cases will be reviewed on their own merits, with all medical advice being taken into consideration. HFRS will make every effort to return an employee to their respective post upon their return to full fitness.

It should also be noted that a Statement of Fitness to Work ("Fit Note") provided by a GP is for statutory sick pay purposes only. The advice provided is not binding and on occasions, OH may advise that an employee is fit to return to work on modified duties whilst they are in receipt of a Fit Note from their GP.

Phased Return

A phased return to work is an arrangement whereby an employee who has been absent from work for a long period of time, returns to their full duties on reduced hours/days for a specified period of time to support them on their return to the workplace. There are a number of benefits associated with a phased return, which may include the rebuilding of an employee's self-confidence.

Recommendations relating to any return to work will be made by OH and, wherever possible, will be accommodated. However, it is for the line manager, in consultation with HR, to determine whether the recommendations are feasible, based on the needs of the Service. Each case will be considered on its own merits and any decision will be made in consultation with the employee, their line manager and OH

It is anticipated that a phased return to work will last no longer than four weeks. Should the phased return continue beyond four weeks, consideration may be given to the employee taking annual leave or a reduction in pay.

The phased return plan will be bespoke to the individual employee and will take into account both the health of the employee and the needs of the Service. It will usually include the following:

- Date of return to work
- Objectives (e.g. return to full duties) how these are to be measured, when and by whom
- Arrangements for receiving any further medical treatment/support
- Date for review with the employee and the name of the individual carrying out the review.

A phased return to work applies equally to all full time and part time employees (including job share). Where part time hours are considered as part of a more permanent reasonable adjustment, pro rata pay will apply.

A return to work plan may be discussed with the employee's GP or specialist consultant in order to ensure appropriate measures are being implemented. Should a difference of medical opinion arise, HFRS will try to resolve the matter through the divergence of medical opinion process. Where there is a difference opinion between OH and the employee's clinician, an independent medical opinion will be sought to try to resolve the matter. HFRS and the employee will agree on an independent person to provide such a view. If agreement cannot be reached regarding the person's independence, the matter will be referred to the National Joint Council Joint Secretaries for a decision. If an employee refuses to return to either full or modified duties when OH deem them suitable to do so, this may result in a reduction or stoppage of occupational sick pay. Where the findings of an independent clinician are in the employee's favour, any reductions or stoppage in pay shall be reimbursed.

Where an employee is returning to work on modified duties and/or phased return schedule, the line manager should prepare a plan with HR, OH and the employee so that it is clear from the outset for all parties what is expected and the timescales for increases in hours or amendment to workload and duties. Progress should be documented by the manager, ideally weekly, until the employee has returned to full duties/hours. If necessary, the review should be supported by OH.

Employees may also benefit from attending one of The Fire Fighters Charity rehabilitation centres. Attendance is coordinated by The Fire Fighters Charity Representative and further details can be found in the Compassionate/Family Related/Parental Leave policy.

If, due to health reasons, the employee is experiencing difficulty continuing with a phased return or modified duties, a further referral will be made to OH.

If the employee is absent because of illness on one of the days when he or she has agreed to be at work during the phased return, then this must be recorded as a sickness absence. Where an employee does not make a successful return to employment, then a Case Conference may be convened to discuss the next steps.

18. MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

Occupational sick pay will only be paid where the process for certification of sickness (i.e. production of a Fit Note) has been followed, including when an employee is on notice of termination of employment through ill health. Occupational sick pay may not be paid to any employee who fails to produce medical statements and any other relevant documentation in line with this policy and in a timely manner.

19. TERMINAL ILLNESS

The Service will look to take all reasonable measures to support an employee who receives a terminal diagnosis to ensure they are able to meet this challenging time without undue financial loss. The employee's dignity and peace of mind will be a priority.

The Service will appoint a Family Liaison Officer to support the individual and their family.

20. MENOPAUSE

The Service recognises that the effects of the menopause can have a detrimental impact on some female employees. The Service is committed to supporting affected employees in a compassionate and empathetic manner. This may include reasonable workplace adjustments to enable the employee to manage the symptoms associated with this process.

21. LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

Annual leave continues to accrue during all periods of sickness absence. Where a bank holiday falls during an employee's sickness absence, the employee will be recorded as being on statutory leave and there will be no entitlement to claim back bank holiday days.

Where an employee falls sick whilst on annual leave or is absent on account of sickness when their annual leave falls, they shall be regarded as being on sick leave provided such absence is covered by a Statement of Fitness for Work certificate (Fit Note).

In circumstances where an employee leaves HFRS following a period of long-term sickness absence, a payment in lieu of untaken leave will be made to the employee on termination, which may include up to a maximum of 4 weeks carried forward statutory leave in accordance with the Working Time Regulations 1998 from the previous leave year.

Any employee whose absence commences and ends during the same annual leave year, should take any outstanding contractual leave prior to the end of the current leave year where possible. Where insufficient time remains, the employee is allowed to carry over up to a maximum of four weeks statutory leave in accordance with the Working Time Regulations 1998, the remaining balance to be taken throughout the following complete leave year in accordance with the individuals contract.

The organisation will allow an employee to take their holiday entitlement whilst on long term sick leave. This means that an employee on long term sick leave can take holiday and be paid for it, even where they have exhausted their right to statutory and/or contractual sick pay. An employee wishing to take holiday whilst on long term sick leave should acquire the approval of all holiday dates in accordance with the organisation's normal policy.

Sickness Absence Adjoining Leave Periods/Bank Holidays or During a Period of Previously Declined Leave

A doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work may be required when sickness absence occurs adjoining any period of approved leave during a period where annual leave has previously been refused.

Sickness Whilst on Leave

An employee who is taken ill during any period of leave and as a result is certified unfit for work by a doctor, is to notify the Absence inbox as soon as possible, carry out the relevant procedures on the 'click to book sick/fit' process and forward the doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work to the Absence inbox without delay. The period of leave will then cease and become sick leave. Compensatory leave for the period covered by the doctor's statement will be granted on request after the employee is certified fit to return to work. HFRS will determine the dates on which the compensatory leave is taken.

Disciplinary Issues

Where an employee is subject to a disciplinary sanction and subsequently is absent due to long term sickness, then the disciplinary sanction may, depending upon the nature of the illness, and relevant medical advice, be suspended for the period of the absence and will then be resumed on the employee's return to work at the same point at which it was interrupted.

Cosmetic Surgery

When an employee undergoes elective cosmetic surgery (e.g. laser eye surgery, facial surgery etc.) this should not be classed as a sickness absence episode unless specifically supported by a doctor and/or consultant. Annual leave or unpaid leave may be granted in such circumstances.

Industrial Injury

Any absence which an employee claims, via completion of an appropriate accident form, has arisen 'out of or in connection with a work activity' will be investigated and verified by the line manager, including appropriate notification to the Health, Safety & Environment section. The incident will be recorded on the Health and Safety electronic recording system. The line manager must inform the employee of the outcome of the investigation and discuss the implications for the employee's pay for the absence if deemed to have 'not arisen out of or in connection with a work activity'.

An employee who falsely submits that their absence has arisen 'out of or in connection with a work activity' will be subject to an investigation and possible action under the Disciplinary Policy.

An operational employee on authorised sick leave as a result of an illness or injury arising out of authorised duty shall be entitled to full pay for 12 months. Thereafter, the Service may reduce pay by up to half for up to 6 months.

Industrial Diseases

Any absence which an employee claims is due to an industrial disease, as defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) will be investigated by the line manager in liaison with Health and Safety and OH.

The employee will be referred to OH via HR by completing the usual referral for assessment form and confirmation (or not) that the absence is due to a reportable industrial disease. Where diagnosed, the disease is recorded by Health and Safety who will inform the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) accordingly.

Infectious Diseases

An employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with an infectious disease as determined by their doctor or OH will be entitled to receive normal pay and the absence will not be counted for purposes of sick pay entitlement. However, the absence will still be counted as sickness absence in line with normal recording procedures.

The Service does not want to encourage employees to attend work when they are not well enough to do so. The responsibility rests with the employee to ensure their health does not pose a risk to colleagues, our communities or others. Therefore, in the interests of infection control, employees who have had one or more of the following conditions must consult their line manager for advice before returning to work:

- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting. The employee should stay away from work for 48 hours after the last symptom (without medication to control it).
- Infectious rashes (e.g. chicken pox, shingles, herpes or scabies) or a purulent (green or yellow) discharge from the eyes or ears
- Have an undiagnosed persistent cough with or without fever

During normal working hours, employees or their managers can contact Occupational Health and Wellbeing for telephone advice on 01482 398513.

All employees are reminded of the importance of maintaining hand hygiene whilst at work, to greatly reduce the risk of transmitting infections to our service users and to protect other members of staff.

Insurance Claims

Employees must ensure that they inform their line manager if they are absent from work as a result of an accident or injury e.g. road traffic accident, sporting injury etc. Employees who are absent from work due to an accident or injury will be required to pay back their sick pay to HFRS on receipt of any third-party compensation/ insurance.

Absence During Industrial Action

Employees who report sick once a period of industrial action has been announced will be required to submit a medical certificate covering the period of sickness from the first day of absence. Where a charge is made by the doctor, HFRS will provide a refund.

22. NOTIFICATION OF ENTITLEMENTS TO SICK PAY

Service accrues during an absence due to sickness, paid or unpaid.

Contractual sick pay will be paid in accordance with the employee's conditions of service.

Information regarding uniformed and support staff entitlements are in accordance with their respective National Conditions of Service.

For On Call employees, their entitlement will be calculated using 1/7th of their average weekly wage per day. Where this applies it will mean the employee's average weekly wage or remuneration in the previous 12 weeks excluding any week in which s/he has been on sick leave or received no pay. Where there has been an increase in the rates of fees or payments during that 12 weeks reference period, the new rate will be used to make the calculation as if it applied throughout the reference period. As the annual retainer will continue to be paid during a period of paid sick leave, payment of the retainer will be disregarded when calculating the average weekly wage.

Any injury arising out of authorised duty must be supported by the relevant injury on duty form to order to qualify for full pay for 12 months and this documentation must have been submitted within three days of the injury occurring. Where the employee cannot complete the form due to sickness, then their line manager must ensure that it has been completed on their behalf.

The period during which sick pay shall be paid, and the rate of sick pay in respect of any period of absence, shall be calculated by deducting from the employee's entitlement on the first day, the aggregate of periods of paid absence during the twelve months immediately preceding the first day of absence.

Absence in respect of illness or injury arising out of authorised duty shall be recorded on FireWatch. Periods of absence in respect of injury or illness arising out of authorised duty shall not count against any other periods of sickness for the purposes of calculating sick pay entitlement.

The entitlements to half pay and no pay for Support Staff are set out in Part 2, Section 10 of the Green Book.

Support staff employees are entitled to receive sick pay dependent upon the employee's length of service. This includes previous service with other organisation covered under the 'Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc) (Modification) Order 1999, (which covers Local Authorities and related bodies).

During 1 st year of service:	1 month full pay and (after completing 4 months service) 2 months half pay.
During 2 nd year of service:	2 months full pay and 2 months half pay.
During 3 rd year of service:	4 months full pay and 4 months half pay.
During 4 th & 5 th year of service:	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay.
After 5 years of service:	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

Employees will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in addition to their half pay until the SSP expires. Thereafter documents will be sent out to the employee by the Payroll provider, in order to claim other benefits that may be applicable.

Employees are required to notify HR immediately of any other entitlements to additional benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, or Employment and Support Allowance by sending in a copy of the relevant letter.

Employees will normally be written to by Payroll four weeks prior to the date they are due to be reduced to half pay (or as soon as is reasonably possible depending on their entitlement and where in the salary payment cycle their pay reduces) informing them of their half pay and no pay date.

Where an employee has been notified of their reduction in pay as above and has returned to work, further periods of absence within the same 12 month rolling period may result in an immediate reduction in pay. This will be dependent on the amount of sickness absence they have had within the rolling 12 months period.

23. APPLICATIONS FOR EXTENSION OF FULL PAY (ALL EMPLOYEES)

Employees may apply for an extension of pay which warrant exceptional circumstances.

Applications will be considered by the Executive Director of People & Development who will determine whether there should be an extension to pay and if approved for what period. 'Exceptional circumstances' are likely to include only extreme conditions or situations like life limiting illness.

Applications should be made on the 'Application for Extension to Full Pay Sickness Entitlement' form (see [Appendix E](#))

Upon receipt of the application, the Executive Director of People & Development will consider

each request on its own merits and employees will be notified of the outcome of application in writing including the length of time any extension to pay will apply for, within 14 days of receipt of the application.

24. INDIVIDUAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT (ISRA)

The Service aims to reduce the stress of its workforce wherever possible. The ISRA will support this aim by enabling the individual to identify sources of stress before engaging in a confidential discussion with their line manager to try and implement positive and constructive measures to address any stressors.

Work-related stress may be identified through any/all of the following:

- The line manager's observations of a change in the employee's behaviour
- An OH report in which stressors are raised
- The employee raising the issue themselves

The ISRA should be completed by the employee after which a meeting should be arranged with the line manager to discuss the assessment. The meeting should take place at a mutually convenient time, at an appropriate venue which affords privacy to the employee. Strict confidentiality should be observed throughout the process and the purpose of the meeting is to offer support to the employee and agree on appropriate actions to be taken to try and reduce the levels of stress being experienced by the individual.

A review date should be agreed, 4 weeks from the date of the original meeting, to explore whether the agreed actions have been successful. A copy of the ISRA form can be found in [Appendix F](#).

25. WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT OR ADVICE (TO EMPLOYEES)?

We are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive work environment for everyone. Below are internal and external routes staff can use to speak up, raise a concern and get support.

Most speaking up happens through conversations with supervisors and line managers where challenges are raised and resolved quickly. We strive for a culture where that is normal, everyday practice and encourage you to explore this option it may well be the easiest and simplest way of resolving matters. However, you have other options: Station Managers, Group Managers, TLT and SLT member with responsibility for the subject matter you are speaking up about.

Via your line manager

Your line manager is a key point of contact for reporting concerns and seeking support. They are here to listen, provide guidance, and ensure that your concerns are addressed appropriately. Whether you have questions about workplace policies, encounter issues with colleagues, or require assistance with personal matters affecting your work, your line manager is there to support you.

If, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable discussing your concerns with your line manager, we have established multiple channels for reporting concerns anonymously or confidentially.

Through our Policies and our Professional Standards Policies

Various routes are included in our Policies and our Professional Standards Policies listed below:

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption
- Complaints
- Dignity at Work (anti Bullying and Harassment)
- Disciplinary
- Exits From the Service
- Equality and Inclusion
- Grievance
- Menopause
- Mediation
- Personal Relationships at Work Policy
- Safety Event Reporting Recording and Investigation Arrangements
- Whistleblowing

Further Whistleblowing Support

[Protect](#) is the UK's whistleblowing charity, who aim to stop harm by encouraging safe whistleblowing. Their free, confidential [Advice Line](#) supports more than 3,000 whistleblowers each year who have seen malpractice, risk or wrongdoing in the workplace.

Independent Speak Up (Powered by Crimestoppers)

This service aims to provide a safe space for staff to speak up when something isn't right in the workplace:

- Discrimination, victimisation and harassment (on gender, sexual orientation, disability)
- Misogyny and violence against women and girls
- Health and safety breaches
- Fraud and corruption
- Poor or unsafe working practices

The service is available online or via phone [here](#).

Service users can remain anonymous or can choose to provide their name and contact details which will then be shared for confidential use by the Fire Service.

Our internal bullying and harassment hotline

Bullying will not be tolerated within Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. Our Dignity at Work policy clearly defines bullying and how to report it.

The Service's 'Zero Tolerance' campaign has a very simple strapline - **SUPPORT - CHALLENGE - REPORT** - and we encourage our employees to do just that.

Contact HR

You can contact your HR team, in complete confidence, on: 01482 567572.

This number will take you through to one of our HR advisers who will listen to what has caused you to feel the way you do.

You don't need to provide names and you will receive completely confidential advice as to how to manage any issues you raise.

HMICFRS Independent reporting line

The independent reporting line (IRL) form is a tool for fire and rescue service staff to confidentially pass information to HMICFRS, which as an independent body is responsible for inspecting fire and rescue services on their efficiency, effectiveness and how well they look after their people.

The reporting line can be accessed [here](#).

Employee Assistance Programme

As part of an ongoing commitment to employee wellbeing, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Occupational Health Team are very pleased to offer all employees confidential support, with free access to emotional and practical support through CiC's Confidential Care Service.

The service is provided by CiC, an external organisation, who are entirely independent, so support and advice is completely confidential. You can call the Confidential Care line as often and for as long as you need to discuss any issues you would like support with.

The Confidential Care service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is accessed by calling the freephone number: 0800 085 1376.

Internal Freedom to Speak Up Routes

The Freedom to Speak Up model was developed in health and has six key elements; we have used the model as the basis for the HFRS process. How we implement 'Valuing' and 'Modelling' Speaking Up within HFRS will be developed from the 'ground up' by listening to staff about how line managers and the organisation can value and model Speaking Up.

Our 'Freedom to Speak Up Guardian' can support you to speak up if you feel unable to do so. The Guardian will ensure that people who speak up are thanked for doing so, that the issues they raise are responded to, and that the person speaking up receives feedback on the actions taken. You can find out more about the guardian role [here](#).

Additional information relating to Freedom to Speak Up Routes can be found [here](#).

You may also wish to speak to:

- A colleague
- A trade union representative
- The Humberside Fire Authority Counselling Service

You may wish to discuss the concern with a colleague or trade union representative first and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are other colleagues who share the same concerns. A trade union representative or work colleague may accompany a member of staff at any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

**If you require any further guidance in relation to this policy,
please contact Human Resources**

APPENDIX A: ABSENCE REPORTING

First Day of Absence/Sickness Notification

Employees who are unable to report for work because of sickness or injury must register their absence via the 'click to book sick' function on the Service's SharePoint homepage before the start of the next period of duty and must supply the following information:

- Full name
- Point of contact - this should confirm the address and telephone number where the employee can be contacted. The employee should indicate if the given number is different to that previously provided for their personal records
- Reason for absence
- The first date of illness, if this is different from the first date of absence from work or the first date of notification
- Whether the absence is due to an injury at work
- The anticipated length of absence

It is important that the notification procedure is strictly adhered to in order to facilitate the efficient administration of contractual and statutory sick pay. All employees should ensure that they are fully aware and comply with the procedure. Notification will go directly to your manager via the automated 'Click to book sick' system.

For employees who have more than one job with HFRS, the procedure must be followed in respect of each job held.

In cases where the reason for sickness absence is mental health related or a musculoskeletal condition, the employee will be immediately referred to OH by the line manager.

Where an employee refuses to answer or provide information relating to the nature of their illness, HR will follow this up directly with the employee.

Eighth Day Absence/Statement of Fitness for Work

Where a period of sickness extends beyond seven calendar days, a doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work Form must be obtained by the eighth day and sent directly to the Absence Inbox. The payment of further sick pay is dependent upon the production of Statements of Fitness for Work which cover the whole period of absence. Where an employee's doctor does not support their sickness by providing a statement of Fitness for Work, they must return to work immediately.

If any doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work is not received when due, with the employee still absent, the line manager is to make enquiries with the individual concerned (OH may be able to assist from a medical perspective). The circumstances are to be reported to the relevant line manager/head of section who will consider if the matter warrants initiating disciplinary proceedings. The Service also reserves the right to withhold contractual sick pay in these circumstances.

The advice on the Statement of Fitness for Work is not binding and HFRS reserves the right to obtain further advice from OH.

Booking Fit for Duty

Once fit for duty, the employee must immediately inform the Service using the 'click to book fit' automated system on SharePoint. Failure to do this may result in incorrect payment of salary. HR will then send the Return to Work Interview form to the line manager for completion, attaching a sickness summary for the return to work interview to be completed.

Failure to make contact or the notification procedure has not been followed correctly

Should an employee fail to make contact within one hour of their start time, the line manager should try to establish contact with the employee. A discussion should then take place with the employee to determine why they have not complied with the procedure. If the line manager is satisfied with the explanation, no action needs to be taken other than a reminder about the importance of reporting sickness in a timely manner in order to comply with Service procedure.

If the line manager is not satisfied with the explanation given, or contact cannot be made, the line manager should consult with HR as to the most appropriate course of action. The Service reserves the right to withhold contractual sick pay in these circumstances. In some circumstances, action may be taken under the Disciplinary Policy.

APPENDIX B: WELFARE CONTACT NOTIFICATION - SSC01a

Is the sickness work related?	
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Employee's Full Name	Service No.	Location
Date of Welfare Contact:		
First Day of Sickness:	Reason for Sickness:	

Welfare Contact Record:

**Human Resources
Absence Management Policy**

Line Manager Signature		Date:	
Line Manager Name		Service No:	
Date of next Welfare Contact:			

APPENDIX C: Return to Work Interview Form

To be completed by the line manager at the return to work interview	
Employee Name:	
Job Title:	
Manager's Name:	
Absent from:	Absent to:
Absence Reason:	
Number of periods of absence? Total number of days absent in the last 12 months?	
Is this a single episode or is it a repeat of a previous illness?	
Does the individual consider they have a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010?	
Is the individual experiencing any other health problems (e.g. pregnancy related)?	
Is there another reason for the individual taking sick leave? (e.g. carer issues for elderly family members, children/young people with disabilities, elective procedures)	
Is it appropriate to refer the individual to Occupational Health at this stage?	
Has the individual been subject to a Stage 1 or 2 sickness meeting, or is one being arranged? Yes or No: Date of meeting:	
Any warnings issued previously relating to sickness absence or is a meeting being arranged? Yes or No: Date of meeting:	
Does the individual have a sickness monitoring action plan?	

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Is any further action required?

--

Employee:
Signature:
Print Name:
Date:

Manager:
Signature:
Print Name:
Date:

Please forward the completed form to the HR team at Service Headquarters

APPENDIX D: CAUSE FOR CONCERN MEETING

Employee Details:

Full Name:

Title:

Service Number:

Station/Location:

Watch/Section:

Details of Absence Reported:

First Day of Absence:

Injury on Duty: Yes/No (If yes, inform employee that Health and Safety have been or will be notified)

Duration: days

Reason for absence:

Reasons for Concern:

Ensure the following are discussed:

- Explain to the employee that their sickness record is giving cause for concern and discuss the absence/pattern trigger points that have been breached
- Explain that formal action may be taken if their attendance fails to improve
- Any patterns of absence etc.
- Discuss any underlying medical issues/recurring health problems
- Any reasonable adjustments needed (if so, liaise with HR)
- Any work or domestic issues that need to be considered?

Line Manager's comments:

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Has the employee been to see their Doctor regarding their absence(s)? Yes/No

Has the employee consulted OH regarding their absence(s)? Yes/No

Does the employee need a referral to OH? If so, complete the OH Referral Form Yes/No

Advise the employee that this form will be placed on their personal record Yes/No

Line Manager's Declaration:

I confirm that a Cause for Concern Meeting has been conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Absence Management Policy.

Full Name (Printed):

Service No:

Title:

Signed:

Date:

Employee's Declaration:

I consider that the meeting was conducted in a fair and reasonable manner and confirm that the information I have provided is correct. I understand and recognise that any outcomes are in accordance with the provisions of the Absence Management Policy.

Signed:

Dated:

Where the employee has declined to sign in accordance with the statement above, the reasons should be given below:

Please return this form to the HR Team at Service Headquarters

APPENDIX E: Application for Extension to Full Pay Sickness Entitlement

Name of Employee:	
Role:	
First Date of Sickness:	Reason:
Station/Location:	
Line Manager:	
Line Manager's Comments:	
Signed Employee	Date
Signed Manager	Date
Executive Director's Comments and Decision:	
Executive Director:	
Signed:	
Date:	

On completion, please submit to HR

Appendix F: Individual Stress Risk Assessment

Risk assessment for (name of employee):		Name of manager:	
Employee's signature:		Manager's signature:	
Date of assessment:		Date of review:	

Guidance for Completion of Individual Stress Risk Assessment Tool¹

Purpose of the Individual Stress Risk Assessment (ISRA) form: It is intended that the ISRA will assist in identifying **sources of stress** (“**stressors**”) in the workplace¹. The ultimate aim where possible is to reduce these **stressors** for the member of staff.

When to use it: Work-related stress may be identified through the following:

- Manager's observations of staff member's behaviour
- Occupational Health report
- Employee raising the issue

Who completes it: The ISRA form will be completed by the **employee** and then discussed with the line manager or another manager from the same directorate or an appropriate nominated person from within the organisation, for example a Human Resources representative?

How to use it: The form will be given to the employee to complete prior to the meeting with the manager. The employee will type in any issues or concerns in the column titled **ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY EMPLOYEE**. *(It is recommended that the form is completed on a computer: the boxes will expand automatically as you type; links assist with navigation of the document. Managers should facilitate employee access to a computer in a private place for this purpose. If the employee prefers to write answers on a sheet, they should be provided with a paper version).* The aims are that a supportive and meaningful dialogue then takes place between employee and manager and that some short-term solutions/actions are agreed. These actions are typed/written by the manager in the column titled **PLAN**. The conversation *must* take place in a confidential setting and every effort made to remove sources of interruption.

What to do with it: once the ISRA has been completed, a review date will be agreed to review that the recommended actions have taken place. Due to the confidentiality of the ISRA, copies will only be held in the member of staff's personnel file/record.

DEMANDS/PRESSURES		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS	ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY EMPLOYEE	PLAN³
HOW MUCH WORK IS THERE? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you comfortable with the amount of work set? • Are you able to manage your workload within the timescales set? • Is the intensity of the workload too great or too little? • Is the work repetitive / distressing in nature? • Is the work physically manageable? 		
TRAINING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you had appropriate training so that your skills and abilities are matched with your job? 		
COMMUNICATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel able to raise concerns? • Do you feel concerns you have already raised have been addressed? 		
ENVIRONMENTAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your working environment and availability of resources/ equipment have any negative impact on your ability to do your job? 		
OTHER		

CONTROL/HAVING A SAY		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS	ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY EMPLOYEE	PLAN⁴
FEELING ENABLED TO HAVE YOUR SAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel involved in deciding what work you do, and when and how to do it? • Do you have a variety of activities to do? • Is your working time flexible? • Can you decide when to take breaks? • Are you consulted over your work patterns? 		
SKILLS AND ABILITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you encouraged to use your initiative? • Are you encouraged to take on new challenges? • Are your skills being used appropriately? • Are you given opportunities to develop your skills? • Are your skills and abilities considered when work is being planned? 		
SUPERVISION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your work regularly monitored? • Does this feel too much or too little? • Do you have regular meetings with your manager / supervisor / mentor? 		
OTHER		

SUPPORT FROM MANAGERS AND COLLEAGUES		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS	ISSUES IDENTIFIED	PLAN⁵
<p>HOW MUCH SUPPORT ARE YOU GIVEN?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you offered adequate managerial support for new work issues / everyday work issues / personal issues if needed? • Are you regularly asked for your opinion and feedback? • Are you given regular constructive feedback? • Are you well supported by colleagues? • Do you have a mentor? • Is your appraisal up to date? • Do you know how to access counselling support? • Have you been offered a Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)⁶? 		
<p>TEAM WORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you encouraged to have a healthy work/life balance? 		
<p>LISTENING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel listened to? 		
<p>OTHER</p>		

RELATIONSHIPS/RESPECT & FAIRNESS		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS	ISSUES IDENTIFIED	PLAN⁷
<p>RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE TEAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any conflicts within the team that affect you? • Do you have any concerns about fairness that affect you? • Are there any problems with bullying or harassment? • Are unacceptable behaviours dealt with? • Do you know what to do if you feel that you need to raise concerns about another member of staff? • Do you feel safe to raise concerns? 		
<p>DOES THE ORGANISATION CARE?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that the organisation is caring / trustworthy? • Are your contributions recognised? • Are your achievements celebrated? • Do you receive feedback on your ideas or concerns? 		
<p>OTHER</p>		

ROLE		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS	ISSUES IDENTIFIED	PLAN⁸
<p>ROLE AMBIGUITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you clear what is expected of you? • Are you experiencing any role conflicts with other staff members? • Do you have a clear plan of work agreed with your manager? • Are you encouraged to speak to your manager at an early stage if you are unclear about priorities? • Are you struggling with multiple roles? • Do you know how your role fits in to the overall plan? • Do you have the training and experience to fulfil your role? • Do you have access to development opportunities? • Do you have equal access to development opportunities? 		
<p>NEW STAFF MEMBERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been allocated a mentor / buddy for your initial 3-6 months in the role? 		
<p>OTHER ROLE RELATED ISSUES</p>		

CHANGE		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS	ISSUES IDENTIFIED	PLAN⁹
<p>CHANGE MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that you receive adequate and regular communication about organisational change? • Do you feel you are given sufficient advance notice of change? • Do you feel involved with organisational change? • Do you feel consulted about organisational change? • Do you feel your opinions and suggestions for change are listened to? • Do you understand why organisational change needs to occur? 		
<p>OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO CHANGE</p>		

PERSONAL FACTORS		
These may be present and exacerbating/compounding work stress		
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS – ‘7 Ds’	ISSUES IDENTIFIED	PLAN¹⁰
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorce, separation or breakdown of relationships • Death and bereavement • Debts and financial difficulties • Drugs – coping with substance misuse in self or close relatives • Drink – alcohol issues in self or close relatives • Diseases – especially terminal illness in close relatives or friends • Disasters – tragic accidents, fire, floods, mishaps etc. 		

CONTROL MEASURES TO CONSIDER

DEMANDS

How much work is there?

If there are insufficient resources seek guidance from managements or help the employee with advice on priorities.

- Consider renegotiating guidelines if you are able.
- Can workloads be covered when staff are absent?
- Adjust work patterns to cope with peaks (these need to be fair and agreed with employees).
- If people are 'under loaded' think about additional tasks / responsibilities.
- Develop personal work plans to ensure that the staff know what their job involves.

Are they able to do their job?

- Review training needs
- Devise systems to keep training records up to date, to ensure that employees are competent and comfortable in undertaking the core functions of their job.

Communication

- Encourage staff to talk at an early stage if they are feeling that they are unable to cope
- Take time to talk to the team regularly and update them on business aspects.
- Take time to understand the challenges the team are facing.
- Discuss ways of sharing work sensibly and agree a way forward.
- Gain understanding and commitment to unplanned tight deadlines and the needs for additional hours.
- Lead by example.

Environmental

- Ensure risk assessments are up to date.

- Consider environmental factors that may impact on efficiency of work demands.

CONTROL

Are staff enabled to have their say?

- Can you consider giving staff more control by enabling them to plan their own work, or let them make decisions on how their work should be completed?
- Can tasks be varied if repetitive to make the day more interesting?
- Are they able to decide when to take a break?
- Can their working hours be flexible?

Skills and abilities

- Employees may feel more enriched if they are able to use a variety of skills to get tasks completed.
- Are the employee's skills being used to full potential?
- Consider how employees can be part of work planning – assign projects or five objectives and goals.
- Consider how employee can be given opportunities to develop further.

Supervision

- Only closely monitor employees' output if it is essential
- Encourage employees to talk to their managers about how work is going, and to raise any concerns at an early stage. This creates a “safety culture” that is helpful to both employees and the organisation.

SUPPORT

How supportive are you?

- Give support and encouragement to staff, even when things go wrong.
- Encourage staff to share their concerns with you – this helps to create a “safety culture” of open dialogue and feedback.

- Hold regular team meetings to discuss any pressures or issues.
- Hold regular one to one meetings to talk about any emerging pressures or issues.
- Ask the employees how they would like to access managerial support and agree an appropriate method- open door / agreed one to one sessions etc.
- Ensure induction programmes are undertaken for new staff.
- Review on-going training needs.
- Guide staff if they have conflicting priorities. A coaching approach is helpful.

Team / working time

- Encourage staff to take annual leave at regular intervals.
- Ensure that staff have appropriate meal breaks in a working day.
- Consider offering flexibility in working hours (following the Flexible Working policy) if staff have domestic situations / commitments.

Listening

- Ensure that you actively listen and agree a plan of action when staff are discussing issues with you.
- Identify if there are any supportive measures available through the organisation if an individual is experiencing personal issues.
- Discuss other resources.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships within the team / Unacceptable behaviour

- Ensure that there is an effective bullying / harassment / disciplinary / grievance policy in place so that situations can be handled if they arise.
- Agree and implement procedures to prevent or quickly resolve conflict at work. Mediation can assist if necessary.
- Set up a confidential reporting system to enable the reporting of unacceptable behaviour.

- Communicate the policies so all employees are aware of the process as well as the consequences if the policies are breached.

Does the organisation care?

- Develop ways of encouraging team achievements and recognising the contributions of all of the team members.
- Develop skills within the team for listening / coaching / mentoring if appropriate.
- Identify ways to celebrate success.

ROLE

Role ambiguity

- Make sure that staff have clear job descriptions and clear job plans which enable them to understand exactly what their role is.
- Encourage staff to communicate at an early stage if they are unsure about aspects of their role / nature of a task.
- Meet with staff so that they are clear about what is expected of them.
- Review work plans at least annually – check if they understand what is expected of them if their role changes.
- Give guidance or advice on any work conflicts – you may need to negotiate if staff are expected to meet deadlines for different projects.
- Address role conflicts and role confusions amongst staff (such as when roles overlap, and it is unclear who is responsible for different tasks).
- Encourage staff to speak up if they are unclear or concerned about theirs and others' role.

New staff members

- Make sure that new staff members receive a comprehensive induction to their role.
- Make sure other staff understand the role and responsibilities of the new recruit.

CHANGE

Change management

- Communicate regularly and at all stages when change is likely to occur, and when change is in the process of occurring.
- Ensure that lines of communication are open – even if there is nothing to tell. It is easy for staff to think the worst if nothing is being said. It is better to communicate that there is no news to tell at present than to say nothing at all.
- Be transparent in communications with staff.
- Communicate new developments quickly to avoid the spreading of rumours.
- Where possible involve employees in the change management process and ask for their ideas. Staff have important contributions to make and are more likely to accept change more readily if they feel involved in the process.
- Consider the impact on role and ensure that this is clarified after a change process so that there are no role ambiguity issues arising

PERSONAL FACTORS

- If personal problems and stressors are impacting on an employee, they may be referred to the psychological support services via
- Occupational Health, EAP Advice & Counselling Service or Human Resources.
- Ensure that actions and interventions are guided by other HFRS Policies
- Further guidance is available and information about mental health support on the OH portal.
- Suggest GP support if appropriate
- Consider whether there is any possibility of flexibility in job role or temporary adjustments / secondments.