

Supporting attendance at work
Recurring short-term absence



everyone fit
for the future

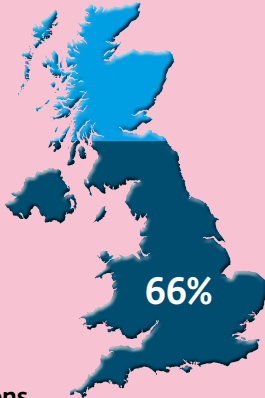
We know supporting the health and wellbeing of their teams is important to all of our people managers and this brief guide has been developed to provide information on good practice related to health and wellbeing.

Did you know?

That across the UK:

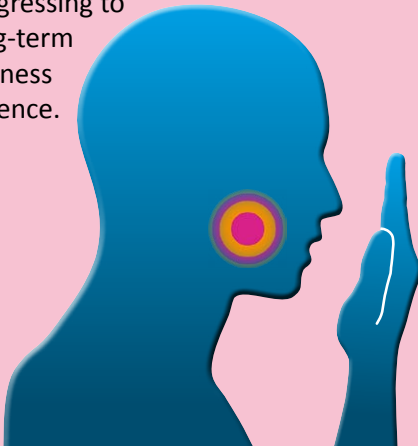
The average worker is absent from work for both short- and long-term absences, for **6.5 days** per year.

66% of working time is lost due to short-term absence, of up to 7 days.



Early interventions

Early interventions help to prevent short-term sickness absence from progressing to long-term sickness absence.



Short-term absences of less than 20 days duration in the workplace, can occasionally develop into a long-term issue if they become recurrent. Most short-term absences are due to unrelated common illnesses; however there may be an underlying issue which may not be related to an employee's health, for instance, personal issues such as caring duties, or even domestic violence.

As a line manager you can play a key role in reviewing attendance history in order to identify any patterns of recurrent short-term absence. By observing any trends, such as whether there are more frequent or longer periods of absence than previously recorded, you might be able to pick up an emerging issue, such as stress, before it becomes serious. By doing this, you can also identify what support needs to be put in place to reduce future absences.

What do I need to do?

1 Review

Conduct a review into the number of absences from work, including the reason for each absence, in the previous six months. You may wish to conduct this review with the support of HR Direct and/or your local HR Business Partner.

When conducting the review, look for any emerging patterns, for instance, recurring absences after a deadline has been met, as this may highlight potential excessive workplace pressures.

② Meet with the employee

Speak to the employee about their absence to see if there is an underlying issue/reason. Sometimes having a sensitive conversation with them will highlight what we, or the employee can do to address the issue.

When discussing the issue with the employee, be supportive and sensitive at the same time. There may be personal circumstances which are causing short-term absence.

③ Your role

Remember that your role is as a line manager and not a medical expert. If a medical history is raised and you or the individual need advice, then you should refer the employee to occupational health. That said, often the support needed is simple and obvious and within a line manager's ability to resolve.

Should the issue stem from an underlying disability, then as a line manager you should discuss and agree some reasonable adjustments to help the individual with their attendance.

④ Employee's role

Remind the employee that their health is also their responsibility and that there are various support services available in the business.

Visit the online health services menu:

<https://www.safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing>
(click on Healthy Rewards and Benefits)

⑤ Referral to OH

Consideration should also be given as to whether there is an underlying medical reason for the recurrent absence. In this case, a referral to occupational health may be required to get an opinion as to whether this is the case.

The occupational health report will provide further information, based on the questions provided in the management referral, including whether there are any reasonable adjustments that need to be considered.

Any occupational health report should be discussed with the employee as soon as it is received, in order for any adjustments to be discussed and accommodated if appropriate.

⑥ Other reasons for absence

Should other reasons be identified that may be causing the recurrent short-term absence, which are unrelated to health, consider utilising appropriate Network Rail policies, such as flexible working, reasonable adjustments or special leave policies.

Reasonable Adjustments Policy:

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/CorporateServices/HR/InformationCentre/EmployeeHandbook/ReasonableAdjustmentPolicy.pdf>

Reasonable adjustments guide:

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/UsefulResources/DisabilityIssues/Everyone-Managing-Disability-in-the-Workplace-Reasonable-Adjustment.pdf>

Flexible Working Policy:

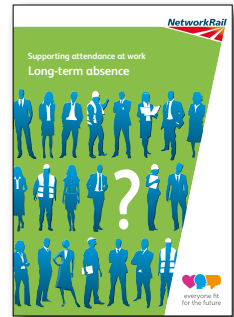
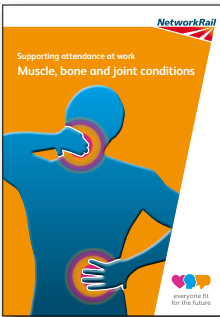
<http://connect/CorporateServices/HRonline/WorkingArrangements/flexible-working.aspx>

If there are no easily identifiable reasons for the recurrent short term absence issue, further support will need to be sought from HR Direct and/or your local HR Business Partner.

Recap

Review sickness absence: this will assist you in identifying if there are any issues that need to be addressed.

Refer to appropriate support services, like occupational health and Employee Assistance Programme: to identify if there is an underlying medical condition and if reasonable adjustments are needed.



Supporting attendance at work

At Network Rail there are various resources and support mechanisms available to you if you are concerned about your employees' recurring short-term absence.

1 Employee Assistance Programme

Call 0800 358 4858 or
0330 332 9980
www.validium.com/vclub

2 Occupational health provider

<https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing/HelpingOthers/Supporting-wellbeing-at-work/Occupational-Health>

3 HR Direct

Call 0800 0 546 547

4 Flexible Working Policy

<http://connect/CorporateServices/HRonline/WorkingArrangements/flexible-working.aspx>

5 Reasonable Adjustments Policy

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/CorporateServices/HR/InformationCentre/EmployeeHandbook/ReasonableAdjustmentPolicy.pdf>

6 Reasonable adjustments guidelines

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/UsefulResources/DisabilityIssues/Everyone-Managing-Disability-in-the-Workplace-Reasonable-Adjustment.pdf>