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### VERSION CONTROL

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# What is a people policy

A people policy provides support, advice and guidance on what is expected from you, how you can expect to be treated, and how you can access help and guidance.

## Why we have this policy

The NHS People Promise is a promise we must all make to each other – to work together to improve the experience of working in the NHS for everyone. It says:

*“Wellbeing is our business and our priority. We’re considerate of each other’s time and mindful of each other’s workload and the physical and emotional impact this can have. And if we’re unwell ourselves, we are supported to get the help we need, take the time to recover, and return to work at our own pace.”*

This policy brings this part of the People Promise to life. It will provide you with the information you need, support you to have conversations and take steps towards working in a way that suits you best.

**Click here for more information about [‘Our NHS People Promise’](#).**

# What this policy covers

This policy provides guidance on how we support you with your health and wellbeing at work and how we support you during short- and long-term absences where you may be unable to work due to health concerns.

It will help you understand what is available to you and it provides information about:

- What health and wellbeing support is available to you
- How to have meaningful wellbeing conversations
- How to use your Wellness at Work plan to support your health when in or returning to work
- What you can expect when you are unable to work due to health concerns, where to get help, and how agreements should be reviewed
- Support with workplace adjustments that might be available

WWL has a statutory responsibility to protect our staff’s health and safety and against unfair dismissal. Our responsibility is shaped by the following UK employment law: Employment Rights Act 1996, Equality Act 2010, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Statutory Sick Pay.

## Why your wellbeing matters

At WWL, we want all our staff to feel empowered to thrive within their roles by creating the conditions which will help them stay healthy and engaged at work. Supporting you with health and wellbeing at work helps you to feel valued and confident in doing your job.

Everyone's health and wellbeing is important to do our work, and it is likely that you will have some health needs over the course of your career. We recognise that you may have different health needs and that the work environment can have an impact on your wellbeing and how we feel able to do our role. Looking after our own and each other's health will mean we stay well to do our job and provide better care to our patients and service users.

This policy encourages you and your managers to proactively look after your wellbeing and work together to put adjustments and other support in place to stay well in work. This includes better conversations about health and wellbeing, encouraging engagement with support services and taking a compassionate, individualised approach to managing health-related absences.

## How this policy promotes a kind and caring culture

We want WWL to be a place where we feel safe talking about our health and wellbeing and where these conversations take place regularly, not just at times of health-related absence.

This policy is for everyone working within WWL and encourages a holistic, supportive approach to wellbeing. The guidance helps you and your manager to think differently about wellbeing at work and what is possible to support you to stay well in work and to return to your role after periods of health-related absences.

The policy aims to provide managers with guiding principles of how to compassionately and fairly manage concerns about absences and how to put timely support in place to avoid significant impact at work. It will help you to understand what to expect when your health impacts on your ability to do your role and what options you and your manager have to support you staying well in work.

# Responsibilities

Everyone is expected to be considerate of each other's wellbeing and to treat each other with kindness and understanding when their health and wellbeing is affected at work.

It is essential that you take responsibility for looking after your own health and wellbeing and engaging with support offers that could help you stay well in work. You should let your manager know early on if you are beginning to struggle with your health at work or if you become unwell.

Managers are encouraged to build a culture where conversations regularly take place with everyone in the team about their needs, including health and wellbeing. Everyone should have a conversation about their health and wellbeing needs as part of their induction and regularly thereafter.

Managers will work with you to understand what keeps you well and if any workplace adjustments could be made to support you to do your job and stay well in work.

Adjustments can be made at any point in your career and may include flexible working options, changes to the physical work environment, additional equipment or changes to the way things are done at work.

People Services Team will provide advice and support regarding workplace adjustments and managing health-related absences. People Services will monitor sickness

absence centrally and how wellbeing concerns are managed to ensure everyone is being treated fairly.

Occupational Health and Trade Union representatives will offer advice and guidance on workplace adjustments and options to support you staying well at work.

## How do we know that this policy treats people fairly

Whenever we write a policy, we always do an 'Equality Impact Assessment' (EIA) to ensure it treats everyone fairly, does not disadvantage anyone, or discriminate against any protected group.

We also review our policies regularly to see how we are doing, which includes listening to colleagues' views and reviewing information about how the policy works in practice.

[Appendix 1](#) outlines the way in which this policy will be monitored to ensure it treats everyone fairly

## Language used in this policy

**Health and wellbeing:** The terms health, wellbeing or wellness in this policy are used to refer to any physical, mental or neurodevelopmental aspects of your health. When discussing your health needs, you may wish to consider a holistic view of health which includes any contextual factors such as financial, social or safety needs.

**Health condition and disability:** The policy refers to health

conditions or disabilities which can have significant impact on you at work, including physical, mental or neurodevelopmental health conditions. This can also relate pregnancy related health conditions. The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A long-term effect is one which has lasted or is likely to last for 12 months or longer.

People can develop a health condition at any point in their life, and it is likely that most of us will need support for a health condition at some point during our careers. People may use different terms to describe their health condition, including “disability”, “disabled”, or “long-term health condition” amongst others. We recommend you share with your manager the language you would like to use to refer to your health condition.

**Disability leave:** This refers to an episode of paid time off work to support managing a disability or long-term health condition (e.g., medical appointments, to receive treatment, or for rehabilitation related to your health condition). This is distinct from sickness absence and for this type of absence, the Special Leave Policy will apply which can be found in the policy library on the intranet.

**Sickness absence** This refers to an episode of an employee being absent and unfit to work due to illness or injury, this can be for any health-related reasons including disability or long-term health conditions

**Short-term sickness absence** Short-term sickness absence refers to an episode of sickness related absence lasting less than four

weeks.

**Long-term sickness absence** Long-term sickness absence refers to an episode of sickness related absence lasting more than four weeks.

**Workplace adjustments:** Workplace adjustments are any changes that are made to reduce or remove disadvantages you may experience in doing your work due to a health condition. Under the Equality Act (2010), managers are responsible for providing you with adjustments for your health condition(s) at work to enable you to do your role.

**Wellness at Work plan:** The policy refers to a Wellness at Work plan which provides guidance to support a conversation about your health and wellbeing and to discuss any adjustments which will help you do your role. The plan can also be used at any point during your employment as well when returning from a period of health-related absence to support recovery.

**Welcome back meeting:** ‘Welcome back’ meeting refer to manager led conversation with someone who returned from a period of health-related absence to discuss their wellbeing and any adjustment needs at work (formerly known as “Return to Work” meetings). These conversations should be documented in a Welcome Back to Work Form and signed by both parties.

# Supporting you to stay well at work

Our priority is to create the right conditions to help you stay well in work. This includes:

- Making sure that your working environment is safe for you and that you are provided with the personal protective equipment that is necessary.
- Considering flexible working arrangements which can support you with managing your health and wellbeing. You can find out more about flexible working in the Flexible Working Policy
- Holding regular wellbeing conversations or wellbeing check-ins with your manager to discuss your health at work and what support you need to perform well at work. They can be flexibly arranged depending on individual needs. You can find guidance and templates for a wellbeing conversation here (LINK).
- Developing your Wellness at Work plan with your manager to discuss workplace adjustments and support which will help you keep well when in or returning to work. You can find detailed guidance on workplace adjustments and the wellness at work plan here (LINK)
- Supporting you with specific health conditions, including mental, neurodevelopmental, sensory, and physical health conditions. You can find information on specific health conditions in our Wellness at Work Handbook here (LINK)

- Supporting with completing risk assessments. Please contact Health and Safety Team for further information at [health&safetyadvice@wwl.nhs.uk](mailto:health&safetyadvice@wwl.nhs.uk)

## Workplace adjustments

Workplace adjustments are any changes that are made to reduce or remove disadvantages you may experience in doing your work due to a health condition. The Wellness at Work plan provides you with guidance to have a conversation about your health and wellbeing and to discuss and record any adjustments which will help you do your role.

As an employer, we have a legal obligation to provide workplace adjustments for people who have a long-term health condition which meets the definition of a disability as set out in the Equality Act. Treating employees differently due to their long-term health condition or disability can be classed as discriminatory.

There are many adjustments that can be considered, including changes to working patterns, equipment, physical work environment or workstation, or access to wellbeing support offers.

Sometimes, conversations about adjustments can be challenging if changes are difficult to implement, carry health and safety risks, or incur costs. It is important to keep in mind that it is about working together to make every effort to find adjustments that are effective in reducing barriers to doing a role and balancing this with the practicability, impact on service or safety and cost implications of any adjustments.

If you think, or it has been suggested, that you may benefit from



having adjustments in place, you should arrange a conversation with your manager/practice supervisor to discuss any support or changes you may need. Your manager is there to support you and has a responsibility for helping to manage any adjustments.

Please find detailed guidance on workplace adjustments and developing a Wellness at Work plan ([LINK](#))

## Disability leave

All staff may be given paid time off for hospital/consultant or specialist appointments if they cannot be arranged outside of normal working hours (for more information, refer to the Special Leave Policy ([LINK](#))).

There may be times when you need to attend appointments to enable you to manage your long-term health condition or disability. This is referred to as 'Disability leave' and is paid time off work to attend medical appointments, to receive treatment, or for rehabilitation related to your health condition. This is separate to annual leave or sickness absence leave and can be classed as a workplace adjustment enabling you to stay well in work.

If you require disability leave, you can discuss this with your manager and complete an application for special leave ([LINK](#)). Your manager will consider requests for disability leave on an individual basis, aiming to support your wellbeing at work while balancing the needs of patients, services, and the wider organisation. Your manager may seek advice from Occupational Health or People Services when considering your request and will record any disability leave in ESR and/or health roster as paid special leave (by adding 'disability related' as secondary reason for absence). You and your manager may also record this as a workplace adjustment in your Wellness at

Work Plan.

You can find some examples of disability leave below:

- Specialist appointments
- Treatment related to your health condition
- Assessments for sensory impairment or neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g. ADHD diagnosis)
- Training with a guide or hearing dog
- Counselling/ therapeutic intervention
- Physiotherapy/ occupational therapy/ speech and language therapy
- Dialysis treatment
- Fitting equipment
- Blood tests for diabetes, or other conditions

## Bee Seen get Screened

As an organisation, we have signed the [Bee Seen Get Screened pledge](#) to support cancer screenings in Greater Manchester. We commit to giving you time off to attend your cancer screening appointments. This is in line with our Special Leave policy to support the attendance of any hospital or specialist appointments.

You should arrange appointments outside of work, at the end or start of your shift or use flexible working options if possible. However, if this is not an option, your manager will be supporting you to attend your cancer screening appointment.

# Wellbeing services

All staff have access to our comprehensive health and wellbeing services. These services are in place to keep you well at work and to support you going back to work where that is possible.

## Steps4Wellness service

The Steps4Wellness Service is there to provide proactive health and wellbeing support relating to the four key areas of physical health, mental health, keeping social and healthy choices. This includes:

- Steps4Wellness Toolkit on the intranet provides self-service resources to help you support your own and your team's health and wellbeing. You can find the tool here ([LINK](#)).
- Staff health checks to provide you with a personal health assessment including blood pressure, weight, BMI and body composition (visceral fat, muscle mass, bone mass, etc)
- Staff Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy service providing you with fast-track access to physiotherapy if you experience any musculoskeletal problems
- Health and wellbeing educational sessions, such as Steps4Mindful Living Programme, Steps4Wellness Conversations Training, Menopause Awareness Sessions and Personal Robust vs Resilience Training.
- Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) a peer support offer delivered by colleagues for colleagues who have been exposed to a traumatic incident in the workplace. You can request a TRiM assessment at any time for any incident. This can be done through the generic email address

TRiM@wwl.nhs.uk or locally through one of the TRiM practitioners.

All details to be found on the intranet and requests can be made by contacting Steps4Wellness Team ([EMAIL ADDRESS](#))

## Staff Psychological Support service

Our team of trained Mental Health practitioners provide assistance to staff across WWL, to access the most appropriate therapeutic support, based upon an individual's needs. These include:

- Support groups on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and bereavement which offer psychoeducation, peer support and training
- Counselling, a type of talking therapy with a trained counsellor
- Signposting to specialist support on a range of topics such as bereavement, domestic abuse/violence, addiction and pregnancy here ([LINK](#))

All details to be found on the intranet and requests can be made by contacting the Psychological Support team ([EMAIL ADDRESS](#)).

## Employee Assistance Programme

We offer our staff a confidential service designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could affect your home life or work life, health, and general wellbeing. It's free to access and operates separately to WWL.

All information on our Employee Assistance Programme can be found here ([LINK](#)).

## Occupational Health

The Staff Occupational Health service aims to protect and promote your physical and psychological health. It is open to all staff working within WWL and supports with:

- Advising you, your manager, and any representatives on the effect of work on health and health on work, with the aim of preventing ill-health and promoting health
- Assessing your medical fitness to perform your assigned duties and to ensure that work will not adversely affect your health as an employee
- Assisting in managing existing health problems and advise on rehabilitation back to work following ill health
- Protecting your health from workplace hazards through proactive activities such as vaccination (e.g. flu) and health surveillance

There may be times when you are referred to occupational health. For example, if you are off sick long-term because of a work-related issue or work-related stress, if you are undergoing treatment that might mean we need to seek advice about how to support you in work, or if your recovery is taking longer than was expected.

## Access to Work

You can get support by contacting Access to Work, a government initiative to support employees to stay well in work:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Access to Work can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability. The support you get will depend on your needs.

Through Access to Work, you can apply for: a grant to help pay for practical support with your work support with managing your mental health at work money to pay for communication support at job interviews.

We recommend that you speak to your manager about contacting Access to Work. Your manager will be the person responsible for reviewing and implementing practicable recommendations which means it is important to keep them informed

## Supporting you with out-of-work issues

We recognise that there may be things outside of work which affect your wellbeing and the way you feel when at work. The impact of these things will be different for everyone and may not be visible to others. For example, it can affect our ability to concentrate, how we communicate and how we cope with difficult situations at work.

You and your manager may want to consider if there is any support that can be put in place to help you manage out-of-work issues which affect you at work. This includes roster changes, flexible working requests, or short notice annual leave or special leave requests. You can also refer to the Special Leave Policy which includes guidance on different types of leave the Trust supports, such as bereavement,

emergency leave, carer's leave and career breaks.

Sometimes your manager may find it challenging to balance the service demands with supporting your requests for changes to your work. It is important that you and your manager work together to explore all options and consider if any changes can be made, even small ones, to support your wellbeing.

## Supporting you during sickness absence

### Reporting when becoming unwell

If you become unwell, inform your manager (or agreed contact) as soon as you can to discuss your health and wellbeing and if there is any support or adjustment that you need. You may discuss if you feel too unwell to work at all or if any adjustments could be made to allow you to continue working. If you don't feel well enough to work, let your manager know that you will need to take sickness leave and discuss when and how you want to keep in touch during that time. You and your manager may also discuss whether you could benefit from accessing wellbeing services or Occupational Health.

There may be times when you feel well enough to do some tasks at work if changes can be made, such as working from home or changing duties. Your manager and you can explore any adjustments that could be made to your work. However, you should not continue or return to work if you are not feeling well enough to do your work.

Any absence will be recorded by your manager, including any full

days you have been absent from your usual working days/shift due to ill health. If you become unwell within your working hours, then the time lost may not be recorded as a day of sickness for Statutory Sick Pay purposes. Instead, it will be recorded as a normal working day with early departure (e.g. "Gone home sick" in e-roster). If a pattern of becoming unwell during shifts emerges, your manager may initiate a wellbeing conversation to understand any underlying health concerns and explore appropriate support options with you. Where no health-related explanation is identified, your manager may raise concerns in line with our attendance management procedures to ensure fairness and consistency.

### Infection prevention and control

There may be times when due to infection prevention and control arrangements, you may not be able to attend your normal workplace when experiencing symptoms of an infectious disease or virus (e.g. diarrhoea or vomiting). If you are not well enough to work, your absence will be recorded as sickness absence. If you have tested positive for an infectious disease or are symptomatic but well enough to work, your manager will discuss with you if there is an option to work from home. Only Occupational Health can medically suspend an employee and give advice to your manager to record your absence as a medical suspension. Please refer to the Infection Control Policy.

### Keeping in touch during your absence

Keeping in touch when people are absent from work can help them feel supported, valued and more confident to return to work. It is important that you and your manager discuss how often you want to keep in touch during your period of absence, and with whom you will keep in touch. If the line manager is not the most appropriate person

to keep in touch, alternatives can be suggested.

These conversations are there for you to be able to update your manager on your health and recovery and discuss if there is any further support you may need during your absence or for you to return to work. This may include a focused discussion on what you may be able to do to return to work in some capacity (e.g., changing duties or being employed into a different team temporarily). Depending on how your recovery progresses, you may be able to discuss when you expect to return to work or when you want to check in again if you do not yet know when you will feel well enough to come back to work.

## Occupational Health referrals

Your manager may refer you to Occupational Health for advice and guidance. Your manager will make a referral to Occupational Health if:

- You are likely to be on long-term sickness absence
- There has been repetitive short-term sickness absence of same medical issue
- To seek recommendations on workplace adjustments to support you with your long-term health condition or disability at work
- If the work environment is affecting your health
- For risk assessment outcomes
- Medical advice is needed for any serious health conditions
- There are significant concerns regarding your fitness for work

If you have both agreed to seek advice, your manager can make an online referral with your consent via the Occupational Health intranet page here ([LINK](#)). The Occupational Health team will contact you to book an appointment with the most appropriate clinician and discuss your health and support needs.

Your manager will receive a report giving possible advice on how to support your health, timescales for return to work or recommendations about workplace adjustments including phased return to work or changes to work duties. Your manager will arrange to discuss the contents of the report with you.

Please refer to [Appendix 2](#) for further guidance regarding Occupational Health referrals.

## Returning to work

If you have experienced a period of poor health, going back to work can feel overwhelming. Both the length and reason for your absence may impact on how you feel when going back to work. Even though you can return, you may still be experiencing some symptoms following a health problem. You may be also worried about your workload, what colleagues may think, or if you are able to cope. It is important to think about support and strategies you and your manager can put in place to help you ease back into work. You may want to also implement any actions or strategies you have been advised by your treating practitioner to ensure you can do everything you can to remain well at work upon your return.

Your manager will ensure that they or the team welcome you and offer their support when you come back to work. Your manager will arrange a Welcome Back meeting as soon as practicable within the

first three days following your return. This meeting is there to check in with you about your health and review any steps that can be taken to support you to stay well at work following your absence. You and your manager will work together to agree to any support and actions which they will document in a Welcome Back to Work form.

You may not need any support if the absence was due to a one-off issue and therefore your manager may make a note to confirm this in the Welcome Back to Work form which will be held on your personal file held in local services.

It is important that every episode of sickness absence and your Welcome Back meeting is documented to identify any concerns or underlying conditions and have a record of agreed actions to help you stay well at work. The review date should be agreed between you and your manager to review actions that have been taken or if any changes are needed. If your manager is becoming concerned about your level of absence, they will discuss this with you. You will agree supportive actions that you and your manager will take to support your wellbeing.

## Planning return to work after long-term absence

If you have been off work due to ill health for a prolonged period of time, you may benefit from support to plan your return to work. You and your manager will discuss any specific actions that will aid your return and record it in your return-to-work plan.

Your manager may ask you to consider consulting with your GP or healthcare professional as to whether you are fit to work and who can write a fit note stating their opinion on your fitness to work. Whilst a fit note is not required to return to work, it may be helpful if you or your

manager are unsure if you are well enough to come back to work. Advice and support can also be requested from Occupational Health.

Your manager may also want to explore with you if any workplace adjustments could be put in place which support you to return and stay well at work. These adjustments may be temporary or permanent depending on the health condition and prognosis.

## Phased return

You and your manager may consider a phased return to work where you have had a prolonged period of absence. This includes changes to your duties, working hours or place of work until you feel well enough to take up your normal responsibilities. A phased return should be guided by Occupational Health or GP advice where available but can also be agreed based on individual needs in the absence of medical input.

You can discuss this with your manager at any point during your absence and formalise this once you are fit to go back to work. There are a few options you may want to consider, including:

- changes to work activity for an agreed time,
- reduced or changed working hours; hours can be increased over time up to contract hours (minimum of 50% contracted hours in the first week of return),
- alternative post on a temporary basis.

Phased return arrangements can last up to four weeks without any impact on pay and you will not be required to use any annual leave, time off in lieu or sick pay. This can be extended on the advice of



Occupational Health, and you may wish to discuss with your manager a further extension with the use of annual leave/time owing or temporary flexible working arrangements, should you not be quite ready to return to full duties.

## Managing sickness absence to support future attendance

We want all our colleagues to feel well and healthy and to make every effort to support your own health proactively, so you remain well at work. It is important that we can balance supporting you with your health needs with the ability to deliver our services effectively and safely. You and your manager can take proactive steps to support your wellbeing and reduce the chance of future health-related absences from work by having regular wellbeing conversations, putting workplace adjustments in place and agreeing actions that you and/or your manager can take to support you to stay well at work after returning from sickness absence. Please refer to [Appendix 3](#) and [Appendix 4](#) for a staff and manager guide to wellbeing and attendance support.

Your manager may become concerned about your wellbeing if you experience frequent episodes of poor health, if there is a pattern of absences, or if there is no indication to when you will be able to return to work. We expect that your manager will share with you if they become concerned and explore any underlying causes and options for support (e.g. workplace adjustments) in the first instance before issues become significant and impact on your work and the service.

## Short-term absence

Short-term absence is any absence lasting up to four weeks and can include self-certified or medically certified absences. You will need a fit note from your GP or healthcare specialist (i.e. nurse, occupational therapist, pharmacist and physiotherapist) if you are absent from work for longer than 7 calendar days. Please refer to [Appendix 5](#) for the flowchart of our attendance support process for short-term absences.

For every episode of absence, your manager should have a 'Welcome back' conversation with you, explore if there are any underlying reasons to your absence and agree with you any supportive actions that you and/or your manager can take to maintain your wellbeing at work.

These conversations are an important way to support you to stay in work and discuss any concerns about your wellbeing. You can both agree supportive actions which could include any workplace adjustments or access to wellbeing services to help you to maintain your wellbeing and do your job effectively.

## Informal Health Review

Your manager may consider holding an informal health review with you if:

- You have had four occurrences of absence in the last 12 months
- There is a pattern of absence

An informal health review is a conversation in which a manager can share their concerns about the level of your absence, review if all

support options have been explored to support you staying well in work and agree any additional support to prevent further episodes of absence.

The informal health review is an opportunity for you to provide information on any underlying health conditions and any issues inside or outside of work which affect your level of attendance and to discuss any adjustments or support options which may not have been explored yet.

It is important that you share with your manager if you have a long-term health condition or disability that affects your level of absence. If this is the case, your manager will be responsible for discussing with you any workplace adjustments to enable you to remain at work. Please refer to the detailed workplace adjustment guidance on this. This may include discounting absences that are disability-related sickness absences before considering a formal health review meeting.

Your manager may seek advice from People Services if they are concerned about the pattern of absence or if they need support to provide workplace adjustments for you.

At the end of an informal health review, you and your manager will agree:

- if an Occupational Health, Access to Work/Able Futures referral or GP advice is needed to receive medical advice and recommendations on suitable workplace adjustments
- any workplace adjustments that you and your manager will work towards with specific timelines for implementation and

review

- any improvements regarding your health and wellbeing and level of attendance you are aiming for and by when
- any supportive actions you and/or your manager will take to improve your wellbeing with specific timelines for when you expect these to have been put in place

The discussions and agreed actions will be documented in your wellness at work/action plan. You and your manager will agree the next review date to discuss any updates or changes to the action plan. It is important that you and your manager are clear on agreed actions, the timeline for completing them and when you will review these.

## Formal Health Review

If all support options have been exhausted and your level of absence continues, your manager will seek advice and guidance from People Services if a formal health review is appropriate. They may invite you to a first formal health review which you may wish to attend accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. A representative from People Services may also attend any formal health review meetings to support your manager.

During the formal health review, your manager will consider all the information and circumstances around your absences and will either advise you that the situation will be kept under review or give you a wellbeing concern notice.

In making this decision, managers will consider:



- Your previous attendance record.
- Any recent in or out of work factors that affected your wellbeing.
- The impact of any disability or long-term health condition.
- Whether treatment plans appear to be working.
- Whether there are any types of absence that should be discounted (e.g., disability related sickness absence, associated with pregnancy, injury at work, or to comply with infection prevention and control requirements)
- How many periods of sick leave you have taken within a relatively short time.
- If there appears to be a pattern of absence.
- The impact of your absence(s) on the delivery of services

Receiving an invitation to a formal health review and/ or a wellbeing concern notice can be stressful and feel overwhelming. Your manager will continue to be supportive and provide you with all information regarding available health and wellbeing services and discuss how you will stay in touch during this process, and how often.

We encourage you to look after yourself by taking up our wellbeing services during this time and contact the People Services Team or your Trade Union if you have questions or concerns about the process. You have the right to appeal if you are issued with a wellbeing concern notice. Please find all the information on the appeal process in this [section](#).

## Wellbeing concern notice

If your manager issues a wellbeing concern notice, it will provide you with a reasonable period, depending on your individual circumstances, to improve your wellbeing and attendance. Your manager will continue to have regular wellbeing conversations to see how you are and to support you to remain well in work. If you continue to experience episodes of poor health, your manager will continue to offer their support during your absence.

You may be invited to further formal health review meetings if your manager continues to have concerns about your level of absence and if any agreed supportive actions that would help with your wellbeing are not resulting in expected improvements. Your manager may continue to seek advice from People Services and will need to carefully consider your individual circumstances, the impact on service delivery in deciding whether to continue to review your level of absence or to issue a second wellbeing concern notice and agree an updated improvement plan.

A final formal health review may be considered if all support options, including changes to your role, have been exhausted and your level of absence continues. Please refer to the [section](#) for detailed information on when this may happen and what you can expect from this process.

If there are grounds to believe there is a pattern to your absence(s) that cannot be explained in wellbeing conversations and formal health review meetings, a fact-finding process will seek to understand the situation more fully. If this process finds evidence of potential wrongdoing or deliberate manipulation of this policy, e.g. sick pay

provision, not engaging in the process or wellness at work plan actions, taking sick leave when annual leave has been declined, consideration may be given to the disciplinary process in line with the trust policy.

## Long-term absence

If your sickness absence lasts for more than four weeks, it is classed as long-term. It is important that you and your manager (or appropriate deputy) keep in touch during your period of absence and that you discuss any support options available to you. Please refer to [Appendix 6](#) for the flowchart of our attendance support process for long-term absences.

### Informal Health Review (long-term absence)

If it becomes clear that your absence may extend to four weeks or more, your manager may invite you to an informal health review meeting within the first four weeks. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss your health needs, any medical advice or prognosis, and explore support options that may assist you during your absence and help plan for a possible return to work. Your manager may consider a referral to Occupational Health for further medical advice to aid those discussions.

This meeting is also an opportunity to discuss whether there are any underlying health conditions or disabilities which may contribute to your absence. Your manager will discuss with you any workplace adjustments that may be helpful upon your return to work. Please refer to the detailed workplace adjustment guidance on this.

## Formal long-term absence review

If you are absent for longer than four weeks, your manager will seek advice from People Services and may invite you to a formal long-term absence review (in writing and with 7 calendar days' notice). There may be occasions where a formal review meeting may not be appropriate, i.e. if there is a planned surgical procedure where a return to work date is agreed beforehand. Your manager will seek advice from People Services before issuing an invite to a long-term absence review meeting.

At this formal meeting, your manager will review whether you are likely to be able to return to work and explore whether any further support or adjustments can be made to aid your return to work. Your manager will refer you to Occupational Health to receive advice on your health prognosis and how to best support you to return to work. It is important to explore all options which could help you ease back into work quicker and provide you with reassurance that your wellbeing will be supported. If these conversations take place early on during your absence, you are more likely to feel supported and able to return to work. These options can be formalised once you are fit to come back to work.

You may wish to attend a formal long-term absence review meeting accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. A representative from People Services may also attend any formal health review meetings to support your manager.

You and your manager may discuss access to wellbeing services and explore options for your return to work, including:

- Phased return

- Workplace adjustments, and
- Flexible working arrangements.

An invitation to a formal health review can be stressful. Your manager will ensure that you are supported during your absence, receive all information regarding available wellbeing services and that they will agree with you how and how often you will keep in touch during this progress.

The outcome of the formal long-term absence review including any agreed actions will be confirmed in writing to you by your manager. If you continue to be on long-term absence after this meeting, you may be invited to further monthly formal long-term absence review meetings to review any updates on your health prognosis, review support options for your return to work.

Most people will be able to return to work and remain well at work with adjustments and support in place following a period of long-term absence. We recognise that there may be instances where this is not possible. If you or Occupational Health or your GP indicate at any time during your absence that you will not be able to return to your role in the foreseeable future, we may need to explore:

- Alternative work activities/duties
- Redeployment to a suitable alternative role
- If you wish to apply for an ill health retirement if you are not able return to your role due to ill health
- Progressing to final formal health review

For information on when it would be appropriate to progress to a final formal health review and what the stage involves, please refer to the following [section](#).

If you return to work from a long-term absence, your manager should have a 'Welcome Back' conversation with you when you are back at work and agree with you any supportive actions that you and/or your manager can take to maintain your wellbeing at work. Your manager will record this discussion, agreed actions and next steps in your Welcome back to work plan.

## Redeployment

You may wish to be considered for redeployment into an alternative role or alternative duties if you are unlikely to ever be able to return to your current role and are fit to work in an alternative capacity. This should be supported by Occupational Health, or your GP. We will make all efforts to support you to undertake redeployment into a new role.

Your manager will seek advice from People Services to discuss redeployment arrangements. You will be provided with details of these positions and if you meet the essential criteria for the position, or could do so with training or development, you will be given preferential access to these vacancies. In these circumstances, preferential access will be alongside anyone else who is being considered for redeployment on medical grounds or where an organisational change has placed someone at risk of redundancy.

Formal health review meetings will continue to be held leading up to or during redeployment. Should your redeployment be unsuccessful and all other options of support for you to return to work have been exhausted, you will be invited to a final formal health review meeting as described in this section below.

## Final Formal Health Review

A final formal health review may be considered if the following have been met:

- If you continue to experience periods of short-term absence due to ill-health which give cause for concern about your ability to stay well enough to work or
  - if you have been on an extended long-term absence with no planned return to work in any capacity within the foreseeable future
  - if any treatment you are accessing are not resulting in expected improvements
  - workplace adjustments and support have been explored and put in place but have been unsuccessful in supporting you to stay well in work
  - if alternative options have been considered (e.g. redeployment)
- or
- you have made an application for ill health retirement

This is not the preferred outcome and will be carefully considered based on your individual circumstances, health prognosis, and service factors. The final formal health review cannot be considered until agreed actions to support your wellbeing have been implemented by your manager or the organisation.

At this meeting, consideration will be given to terminating your employment with the organisation due to ill health capability. Your manager will seek advice from People Services before progressing to a final formal health review to make sure that you are being treated fairly, and your individual needs are being taken into consideration.

You have the right to appeal if your employment is terminated. Please find all information on the appeal process in this [section](#) below.

The meeting will be chaired by someone in the organisation with authority to dismiss who will ensure that the meeting runs appropriately, that all avenues of support have been explored and that you are supported with the opportunity to respond to any information that is being provided at the meeting. Please find all information regarding the process for the meeting and required documentation on the intranet policy library under Wellbeing and Attendance Support Policy.

Your manager will be supported by a member of the People Services team. You should be given at least seven calendar days' notice of the meeting in writing and can be accompanied by a representative from a trade union or a work colleague when attending the meeting. Any adjustments you may need for this process (e.g. breaks, accessible room etc.) will be agreed with you ahead of the meeting. There may be circumstances where a different approach to the format of the meeting is required, e.g. if you are too unwell to attend, which will be agreed between all parties involved in the process, including People Services. Your manager will confirm the discussion and outcome of the meeting in writing.

Your manager will continue to be supportive and provide you with all the information regarding available health and wellbeing services and discuss how you will stay in touch during this process, and how often.

We encourage you to look after yourself by taking up our wellbeing services during this time and contact the People Services team or your Trade Union representative if you have questions or concerns

about the process.

### Ill-health retirement

If you become too ill to work and are a member of the NHS Pension Scheme, you may want to discuss with Occupational Health the possibility of applying for early retirement on the grounds of ill health. You may also want to seek advice from your Trade Union representative.

If you have made the decision to apply, please contact your HR Representative for your Division, who will provide you with the AW33 application form from Payroll to complete. Once you have returned the application to your HR Representative, they will forward the application to Occupational Health for completion and submission to NHS Pensions.

Medical advisors at NHS Pensions will consider the application and the process can take several weeks. If approved the Pensions Agency will send you a copy of form AW8 or AW8P to complete and arrangements will be made for your benefits/ pension to be processed. Further information can be obtained from the NHS Pensions Agency website: [nhspa.gov.uk](http://nhspa.gov.uk).

### Sick pay

If you are absent from work due to illness, you will receive sick pay in accordance with national terms and conditions of employment, including Agenda for Change terms and conditions of service, or Medical and Dental terms and conditions of service.

### Sick pay

During the 1st year of service	1 month's full pay and 2 months half pay
During the 2nd year of service	2 months full pay and 2 months half pay
During the 3rd year of service	4 months full play and 4 months half pay
During the 4th and 5th years of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay
After completing 5 years of service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

Sick pay is calculated using your basic salary (excluding enhancements but including high-cost area supplements and locally agreed protection) unless you were:

- Employed by the NHS under Agenda for Change terms and conditions on 30 June 2018, and have a basic salary of £18,160 or less; or
- Are absent due to injuries, diseases or other health conditions sustained or contracted in the completion of the duties of your employment, which are wholly or mainly attributable to your NHS employment and where the employer has determined your eligibility for injury allowance.

- Full pay is inclusive of any statutory benefits (e.g. statutory sick pay) so as not to make sick pay greater than normal working pay. The combined addition of statutory sick pay to half pay must not exceed full pay.
- Should your employment come to an end, sick pay stops from your last day of employment.

## Industrial injury allowance

If you have experienced a workplace accident or one related to your job, you may be eligible for industrial injury allowance to cover any related sickness absence. If you have injured yourself at work, you must complete a Datix incident form, an industrial injury assessment form and report the incident through the Trust's Management of Incidents Procedure.

You will receive confirmation if your absence will be accepted as an industrial injury. If so, the periods of absence as a result of an industrial injury will be discounted for the purpose of managing sickness absence.

The injury allowance payment is subject to National Insurance contributions and income tax but is not subject to pensions contribution deductions. Contributory state benefits received for loss of earnings will be offset at the rate at which they are actually received by the employee. All other benefits or payments received

should be ignored. The allowance will be restricted to a period of up to 12 months per episode.

The following circumstances will not qualify for consideration of injury allowance:

- Injury whilst on a normal journey travelling to and from work, except where the journey is part of their contractual NHS duties
- Sickness absence as a result of disputes relating to employment matters, conduct or job applications
- Injury, disease or other health condition due to an employee's own negligence or misconduct.

## Annual leave during sickness absence

During episodes of paid sickness absence leave, you can accrue contractual annual leave allowance. You are entitled to request a period of annual leave during sickness absence, and you may follow the usual process of requesting annual leave. If you wish to take annual leave during paid sickness absence leave, you may not be entitled to receive both sick pay and leave for that period. If you are in half pay and request annual leave during sick leave, you will be entitled to full pay for the annual leave period.

If you have requested annual leave during your sickness absence and remain absent after the requested period of annual leave, this will count as one absence.



Where continued sickness absence bridges an annual leave year, you can carry over a maximum of one week of basic contracted hours at the discretion of your manager. If you have not been able to take your statutory minimum entitlement of 20 days pro rata due to long-term sickness, you can carry over additional days to ensure you receive the statutory minimum leave for each annual leave year.

## Appeals

If you believe your formal health review was not handled correctly, or you feel that the reasons for you receiving a wellbeing concern notice or your employment contract being terminated due to ill health capacity is unfair or unjustified, then you could decide to raise an appeal.

You should follow the instructions included in the letter you have received. This will ask you to write a letter to outline the reason(s) you wish to appeal. It will also confirm the name of the person you should write to and the date you should complete this by. The appeal letter will need to be received within 14 calendar days of the date on which the wellbeing concern notice or decision to terminate the employment contract was sent or given.

You will be asked to attend a meeting with a panel of people who have not been involved in your formal health reviews to discuss your wellbeing concern and the reasons for your appeal. You can be accompanied at this meeting by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

After the meeting, the panel will consider the information and ensure

you receive a written outcome. The letter will confirm if your appeal has been upheld or not upheld and the reasons for this. It will also provide information about what will happen next. The decision from the appeal panel will be final.

## Right to be accompanied

Any informal health reviews or welcome back to work meetings are held between you and your manager. You can be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a workplace colleague if you are invited to any formal health review meetings or appeal meetings.

If there is a conflict of interest or if your representative is unavailable or cannot be released to attend the meeting, your manager may ask you to consider alternative representation.

For any meetings, it is not permitted to make any visual or audio recordings. If any party at the meeting does not adhere to this, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

## Getting help and advice

If you are worried or have questions about the formal process you should speak to People Services, a health and wellbeing lead, a staff network colleague, Occupational Health, a Trade Union representative, the Freedom to Speak up Guardian or someone else that you trust.

Your manager may ask for advice from People Services or Occupational Health to explore adjustments and support for your

health needs, to support you to return to work after a period of absence, or if they have concerns about your wellbeing.

You can find useful contact information below:

Freedom to Speak Up Guardian:  
(EMAIL ADDRESS)

People Services Team:  
(EMAIL ADDRESS)

Occupational Health Service:  
(EMAIL ADDRESS)

Steps4Wellness Service:  
(EMAIL ADDRESS)

Disability and Wellbeing Network (DaWN):  
(LINK)

[Sickness Absence Toolkit | NHS Employers](#)

[Building disability inclusive workplaces](#)

[An inclusive approach to disability leave | NHS Employers](#)

[Examples of adjustments in practice - EHRC](#)

## Forms and guidance

You can find all relevant forms, letter templates and guidance for the Wellbeing and Attendance Support Policy in the Human Resources section of the policy library on the intranet.

## Resources

[Wellness at Work and adjustments guidance](#)

[Making workplace adjustments support disabled staff](#)



# Appendices

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Occupational Health Referral
- Staff guide to wellbeing and attendance support
- Manager guide to wellbeing and attendance support
- Attendance support process for short-term absences
- Attendance support process for long-term absences

## Equality Impact Assessment Form - POLICY / GUIDELINES

### STAGE 1 - INITIAL ASSESSMENT

For each of the protected characteristics listed answer the questions below using  Y to indicate Yes and N to indicate No	Sex (male / female)	Age (18 years+)	Race / Ethnicity	Disability (hearing / visual / physical / learning disability / mental health)	Religion / Belief	Sexual Orientation (Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual)	Gender Re-Assignment	Marriage / Civil Partnership	Pregnancy & Maternity	Carers	Other Group	List Negative / Positive Impacts Below
Does the policy have the potential to affect individuals or communities differently in a negative way?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	(see details below in Stage 2)
Is there potential for the policy to promote equality of opportunity for all / promote good relations with different groups – Have a positive impact on individuals and communities.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Policy has been redesigned to support our staff proactively with their wellbeing at work before, during and after they have experienced challenges or sickness absence related to health conditions. The redesign contributes to taking a more person-centred, compassionate approach to wellbeing and attendance support.
In relation to each protected characteristic, are there any areas where you are unsure about the impact and more information is needed?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	<b>If Yes:</b> Please state how you are going to gather this information.

Job Title	Head of Staff Experience	Signed	A. Hartwig	Date	29/07/25
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**FULL ASSESSMENT / IMPROVEMENT PLAN**  
**have been identified in Stage 1**

**MUST be completed if any negative issues**

<b>Title of Service / Policy being assessed:</b>		Wellbeing and Attendance Support Policy		
<b>Assessment Date:</b>		29/07/2025		
<b>Is the service aimed at a specific group of users?</b> (e.g. men, women, older people etc.)		All staff		
Protected Characteristic	What negative impacts were identified in Stage 1 and which groups were affected?	What changes or actions do you recommend to improve the service to eradicate or minimise the negative impacts on the groups identified?	Lead	Time-Scale
<b>Sex</b> (male / female)	Pregnancy or maternity related health needs may need to be considered as a disability and adjustments need to be made. There is a separate policy for pregnancy and baby loss related concerns	Policy includes reference to pregnancy related health conditions qualifying under Equality Act. Manager will need to refer to Pregnancy and Baby Loss People Policy and Maternity leave policy for information		
<b>Age</b> (18 years+)	People are more likely to acquire a long-term health condition or disability throughout their lifetime, thus care needs to be taken that staff of any age group are being supported via this policy	No action needed: This new policy has been developed to enhance our focus on proactive wellbeing and individualised support for all colleagues –		
<b>Race / Ethnicity</b>	Some health conditions may have different levels of prevalence for different ethnic communities. The CORE20PLUS5 has also highlighted existing national health inequalities related to ethnicity	The policy promotes proactive wellbeing support and signposts to various wellbeing services and toolkits. We will continue to add resources for specific health conditions to our Wellness at Work Handbook which addresses those identified as health inequalities	Staff Experience	Q3 2025
<b>Disability</b> (hearing / visual / physical / learning disability / mental health)	People with long-term health conditions or disabilities may require workplace adjustments and any escalation via attendance support policy will need to be carefully considered in alignment with our duty under the Equality Act	The Policy includes definitions of terms regarding health conditions covered under the Equality Act. We have formalised the offer of Disability Leave for people who may need leave to manage their long-term health condition which will help to minimize impact on their ability to perform at work. We have also developed a Wellness at Work Handbook, Wellness at Work Plan and Workplace Adjustment Guidance to support managers and staff in agreeing workplace adjustments		

<b>Religion / Belief</b>				
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> (Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual)				
<b>Gender Re-Assignment</b>	People who intend to or have transitioned may require leave to attend health appointments or may experience impact of the transition on their health. Depending on the nature of appointment and leave required, staff may need to follow the Wellbeing and Attendance Support policy or, alternatively, the Special Leave policy	Our policy is designed to promote proactive wellbeing support for all our staff at any point in their employment with us.  Our Special Leave policy includes an option to take a limited number of leave days to support any appointments for transitioning, staff are asked to follow the policy and only apply the Wellbeing and Attendance Policy if any sickness absence is needed.		
<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>				
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>	There is a separate policy for pregnancy and baby loss related concerns	Policy includes reference to pregnancy related health conditions qualifying under Equality Act. Manager will need to refer to Pregnancy and Baby Loss People Policy and Maternity leave policy for information		
<b>Carer</b>				
<b>Other group</b>				

<b>How do you intend to communicate or engage in relation to the actions and proposals for improvements?</b>	Updates on wellbeing and health resources are being socialised in WWL comms and intranet page  Comms plan for the roll out of the policy to ensure managers and staff are aware of new process and expectations
<b>How will actions and proposals be monitored to ensure their success? Which Committee will you report this to? (i.e. Divisional DQEC / Governance)</b>	People Committee
<b>When is the date of the next review?</b>	September 2026
<b>Who will be responsible for monitoring these actions?</b>	<b>Job Title: Head of Staff Experience</b>

## Appendix 2: Occupational Health Referral

The main aim with a management referral is to receive a report that is fit for purpose.

**Provide Comprehensive Information:** Include objective and factual information, provide relevant background and context, along with details of any workplace adjustments already explored.

**Ask Specific Questions:** Obtain specific advice and a useful report by asking detailed questions relevant to the employee's situation. Clearly state the medical opinion you are seeking.

Please note that Occupational Health professionals do not have access to medical records and rely on the information provided by the staff member.

Recommendations are advisory and please ask for clarification if they are not clear. Referrals would be inappropriate to use as a punitive measure or to challenge absence from work due to reported illness.

### Appropriate reasons for referral

- Long-term absence
- Repetitive short-term absence if same medical issue
- Health condition impacting work
- Work environment affecting health
- Risk assessment outcomes
- Serious health conditions

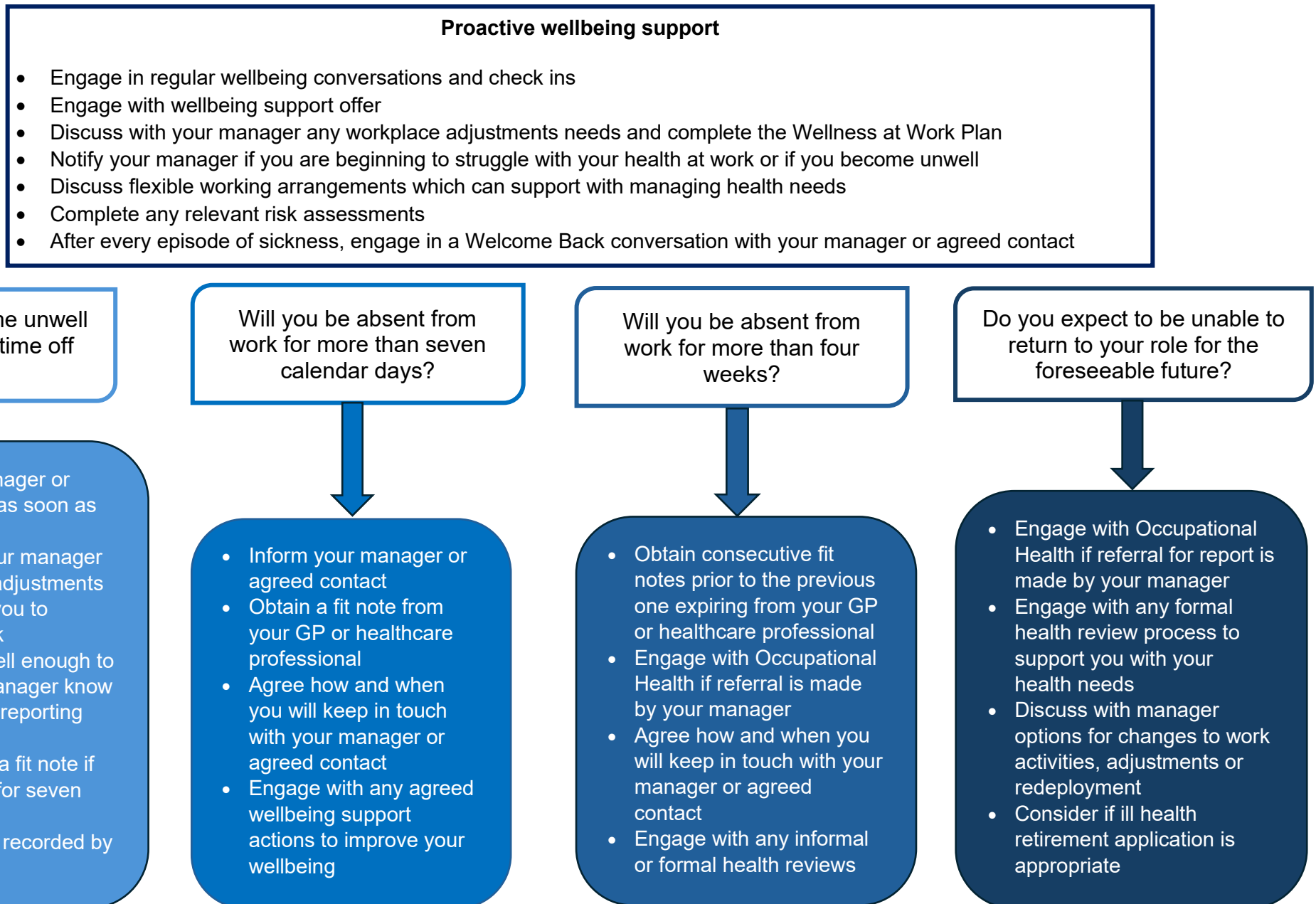
- Significant concerns regarding fitness for work: may include erratic behaviour, difficulties retaining information etc.

In all cases the reasons for referral must be sensitively discussed with the staff member, and agreement reached prior to referral.

### Potential in-appropriate reasons for referral

Certain situations where referral to Occupational Health may/is **not** appropriate, for example:

- Bereavement
- Elective Surgery – Defined Recovery Period
- Sole purpose of a Phased Return
- Cases of repetitive short-term absence (unless potential escalation to final stage)
- Disputes between colleagues
- Sole purpose of providing 'support'
- Pregnancy risk assessment unless it is high risk
- Wellbeing conversation that should be held with manager
- Minor amendments to working pattern or hours - this can be agreed as part of a wellbeing conversation and implemented at manager's discretion dependent on what can be accommodated.



## Appendix 4: Manager guide to wellbeing and attendance support

### Proactive wellbeing support

- Arrange regular wellbeing conversations and check ins
- Access wellbeing services to support with health needs
- Consider any workplace adjustments for long-term health conditions or disabilities and complete the Wellness at Work Plan
- Discuss flexible working arrangements which can support with managing health needs
- Complete any relevant risk assessments

### Supporting during absence

During any period of health-related absence, offer support to the colleague to:

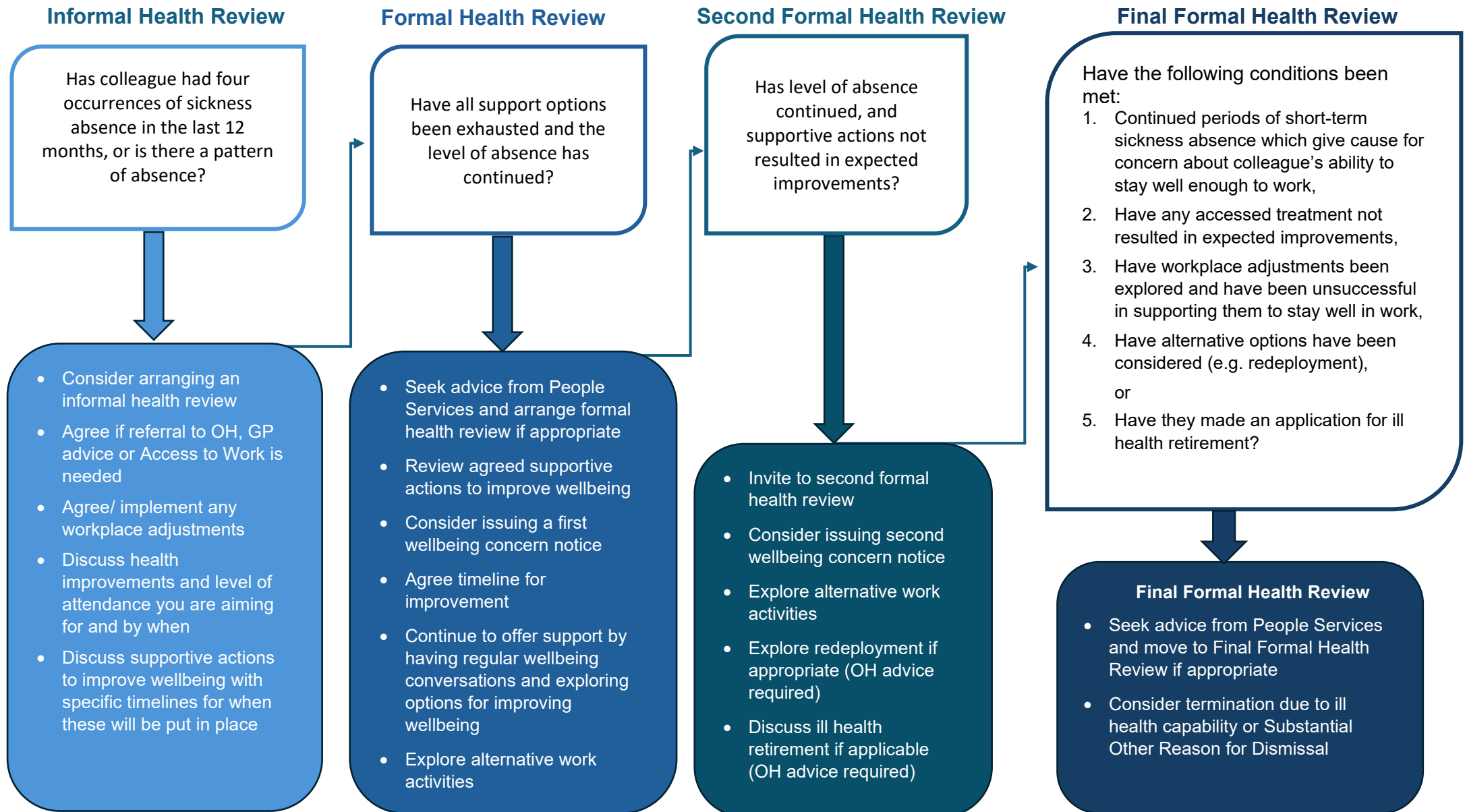
- Agree how and when to keep in touch with your colleague
- Signpost wellbeing services
- Seek Occupational Health referral for medical advice on sickness related absence due to disabilities or long-term health conditions, and for long-term absence
- If sickness absence is related to disability or long-term health condition, discuss any workplace adjustments needed upon return to work

### Returning to work after absence

After any period of health-related absence, make sure to:

- Arrange a Welcome Back to Work meeting
- Complete Welcome Back to Work Form
- Discuss any wellbeing support or flexible working arrangements to support with health needs
- Ensure reason for sickness absence is recorded correctly in ESR and/or e-rostering
- Complete or update Wellness at Work Plan if any adjustments need to be made
- If you have a concern about your colleague not following the correct notification procedure, seek advice from People Services

## Appendix 5: Attendance support process for short-term sickness absence





## Appendix 6: Attendance support process for long-term sickness absence

