Absence - Managing Wellbeing Guidance

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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is so you, as the manager/headteacher, can understand what support is available to you to create a healthy working environment

The health and wellbeing of all employees is essential to the Council’s desire to create an environment where employees are provided with support that has a positive impact on physical and mental wellbeing, enabling them to perform well at work.

This guidance covers the key principles to support you in making decisions about health and wellbeing. It is not possible to provide definitive answers about every potential scenario. If you have doubts about how to apply this guidance to a specific case, please contact HR/HR provider for further support.

As the manager/headteacher, what can I do to support an employee with their health and wellbeing?

You should check on the employee’s health and wellbeing in regular one to one meeting you have with them as part of everyday work.

It may be a good idea for you and your employees to complete a Wellness Action Plan (WAP). WAPs are an easy, practical way of helping you and others to support your own mental health at work. Everyone can complete a WAP, you don't need to have a mental health problem to feel the benefits. It just means you already have practical steps in place to ensure you are supported when you aren't feeling great.

It is better if you can support your employee’s before they have any health or wellness issues if possible. Checking in with employees regularly is one way to do that.

What can I do if an employee has health or wellbeing concerns?

If an employee raises a concern or issue with their health or wellbeing, or you suspect there may be a problem, it is good to talk to them about it straight away. This may allow you to address the matter before it becomes worse or results in absence.

You may be able to make short term adjustments to workload, working hours or specific tasks that may be causing the issue. If you can be creative in making adjustments this may help the employee to sustain attendance and performance. You will also need to balance the needs of the employee with the requirements of service delivery. If you have doubts about how to apply this guidance, please contact HR/HR provider for further support.

What additional support is available?

* 1. **Occupational Health and/or specialist advice** – If you need further advice the Occupational Health service is available to advise you about how best to support an employee. You do not need to wait until an employee is absent due to ill health as Occupational Health can help you in considering reasonable adjustments or other measures to try to ensure the employee is fully supported while in work.

If you identify an employee, who is currently in work, but struggling due to issues of health or wellbeing you should suggest a referral to Occupational Health. You must have consent from the employee for this referral as Occupational Health will not consider a consultation without this.

For a mental health/stress related illness/condition, work related injury or musculoskeletal injury, you should make an immediate referral.

**Counselling** – You can advise the employee that a self-referral counselling scheme for Council employees is operated by Occupational Health Service also operates for counselling

[Self Referral for Counselling](https://legacy.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/employeeinformation/wellbeing/support.asp)

* 1. **Adjustments** – This may include adjusting working hours, tasks, the use of equipment and/or improving access to facilities. Such adjustments can be made on a phased, temporary, or permanent basis. Advice may already have been given by Occupational Health to support the above, if not, you should obtain this. You will also need to assess whether these changes can reasonably be accommodated without having a detrimental effect on the service.
	2. **Further health and wellbeing support and information** –

A wide range of additional support is available to you and your employees online: [Employee information - Health and Wellbeing - Wellbeing support and resources | Westmorland and Furness Council](https://legacy.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/employeeinformation/wellbeing/support.asp)

This includes advice on topics such as stress, menopause, neurodiversity as well as contact details for national helplines and web sites.

You can also encourage your employees to complete a wellness action plan or contact a workplace wellbeing champion who can signpost them to relevant information.

If required, contact HR/HR Provider for further clarification and guidance.