



ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Partnership
Forum

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Partnership
Forum

Signature

Signature

Signature

Identifier:

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This policy will
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Partnership
Forum.

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The provisions of this policy, which was developed by a partnership group on behalf of Grampian Area Partnership Forum, apply equally to all employees of NHS Grampian.

**NHS GRAMPIAN
ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

If you have difficulty understanding the English language, this policy can be made available to you in a language of your choice.

This policy can also be made available, on request, in other formats e.g. in large print or on a computer disk.

For all requests for copies of this policy in another language, or in an alternative format, please call the Corporate Communications Team on 01224 554400.

NHS GRAMPIAN ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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NHS GRAMPIAN ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aim of this policy is to make sure that managers throughout NHS Grampian (NHSG) adopt a fair, consistent and supportive approach to employees with health problems and to make sure that sickness absence levels are maintained within those acceptable to NHSG.

1.2 The purpose of this document is to:

- ensure that all managers and staff understand that unacceptable absence levels adversely affect NHSG's commitment to delivering a quality service to the people of Grampian
- provide a framework for encouraging attendance which will assist in controlling and reducing both staff absences and the associated costs and
- create an opportunity for positive and supportive action to be taken to improve the welfare of employees by assisting them to overcome any difficulties which affect their ability to attend work

1.3 While NHSG aims to secure the attendance at work of all employees, it is recognised that a certain level of absence due to sickness may occur and that the sensitive management of health problems and the promotion of good health contributes to staff retention.

NHSG also recognises that there will be occasions where, after consideration, employees who cannot attend work due to their health problems may not be able to continue working in their post, or within the organisation.

1.4 Implicit in the operation of this policy is the recognition that:

- employees have a responsibility to attend work on a regular basis
- effective attendance management is an essential part of every manager's job
- all employees should be treated with fairness and consistency
- due regard should be paid to the welfare of employees and that appropriate support and advice should be offered and provided to staff in order to retain them in employment, wherever and whenever possible

- where it is necessary to redeploy, terminate, or retire employees on health grounds, they should be dealt with sensitively and appropriate support mechanisms should be implemented
- it may be appropriate to invoke the provisions of the appropriate conduct policy where, despite the support and advice offered, the attendance record of an employee becomes unacceptable
- employees have the right to state their own case at all stages of the procedure outlined in this policy and are entitled to be accompanied by a Trade Union or Staff-Side Organisation representative (including full-time Trade Union Officers), or a fellow member of staff, or a friend or relative not acting in a legal capacity, at any meetings convened under the provisions of this policy.

In addition, employees who have little or no experience of working life and employees with learning difficulties, also have the right to be accompanied by a parent/guardian at each stage of the procedure.

2 SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to all employees of NHSG.

3 POLICY

- 3.1 All employees are entitled to receive sick pay in accordance with their terms and conditions of service. There will not normally be any extension of sick pay provisions.
- 3.2 As NHSG has a range of work/life balance policies e.g. the Policy on Special and Carer Leave for Domestic, Personal and Family Reasons and the Flexible Working Policies document, both managers and employees should ensure that only absences as a result of illness are taken and recorded as, sick leave.
- 3.3 Instances where employees fail to adhere to absence reporting procedures, have a poor attendance record, or misuse the sick leave provisions may be subject to NHSG's Employee Conduct Policy or Employee Capability Policy or, in the case of medical and dental staff, "Framework for Action".
- 3.4 Instances where there are proven alcohol or drug related problems which affect the capability or conduct of the employee in relation to their work will be subject to NHSG's Alcohol and Drug Policy. This will not, however, preclude the use of NHSG's conduct and capability policies, or Framework for Action for medical and dental staff, in line with the provisions of the Alcohol and Drug Policy.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Employee's responsibilities

- Employees have a responsibility to attend work on a regular basis and for ensuring that they adhere to the absence reporting procedures shown at **APPENDIX 1**, at all times. This responsibility includes keeping their line/clinical manager advised of their progress and ensuring that they submit the appropriate medical certificates on time.
- Employees should be aware that it is in their own best interest to attend OHS if referred by their manager and also that they have the right to self-refer to OHS, by contacting them direct, if they require support, advice, guidance, or counselling relating to health issues. (Self referral also includes referral to the Physiotherapy Referral Service and the Counselling Service.)
- All employees are required to complete the appropriate absence record form on their return from sick leave and may be required to meet with their line/clinical manager to discuss their absence. For absences of 7 consecutive days, or less, employees are required to complete and submit a Self-Certificate of Incapacity for Work on the first day of their return to work – see **APPENDIX 2**. For absences in excess of 7 consecutive days, employees are also required to submit medical certificates signed by their doctor.

4.2 Managers' responsibilities

For the purposes of this policy, the term “manager” means line manager, clinical manager, supervisor, team leader etc., or any other person with a responsibility for managing sickness absence.

- Managers should understand the importance of NHSG's commitment to delivering a quality service and be aware that unacceptable absence levels can hinder this. All managers, consequently, have a responsibility for the management of sickness absence within their own area. Definitions of the three categories of sickness absence – Unauthorised, Short Term and Long Term – and a flow chart showing the process for dealing with each, are contained in **APPENDIX 3, 4 and 5**.
- Managers must ensure that all employees who report to them have been issued with and understand, the instructions on how to report absence - see **APPENDIX 1** – and must also ensure that the absence reporting procedure is fully explained to new employees during departmental induction.

- Managers should keep in regular contact with employees on sick leave, particularly during long-term absence, to ensure that they are kept fully aware of the employee's progress and the likely duration of their absence. However, while it is important to demonstrate real and appropriate concern for employees on sick leave, managers must remain sensitive to the employee's circumstances and the frequency and character of such contact should not be at a level that is either inappropriate to the circumstances, or intrusive.
- Where it is considered appropriate for an employee to be referred to OHS, the manager concerned must make the appropriate arrangements and should not ask the employee to self refer.
- Managers are required to record accurate information on individual absences, which will include details of the duration of the absence and, where the employee agrees, the reason for absence. While employees are not required to give full clinical reasons for their absence to their manager, they must be prepared to discuss these, in complete confidence, with OHS. Managers are also required to keep a note of all discussions relating to the absences which take place with employees who report to them.
- Managers are responsible for making sure that sickness absence levels are reviewed on a regular basis so that they can address problem areas and strive to maintain acceptable sickness absence levels within their own department/area. Levels for NHSG are defined as 4 episodes, or 6 days in a rolling 12 month period – see **APPENDIX 5**. It must be stressed, however, this is not an entitlement, but a guide to managers on when to commence appropriate measures to address attendance problems.
- All managers must make contact with employees when they return to work, both to ensure that they complete an absence record form and, where appropriate, to discuss their absence – see **APPENDIX 8**. It may be appropriate, on occasions and for practical reasons, to use delegated responsibility e.g. if the service for which they are responsible is dispersed.
- Where an employee's frequent absences, continuous absence or inability to perform duties due to ill health are causing problems in the workplace, the manager must discuss this with them, either at a return to work meeting or at another arranged meeting, before any further action takes place.
- Managers should be aware that professional advice is available from the Occupational Health Service (OHS) and it is recommended that this is sought before determining any course of action. Managers should always discuss and agree the referral to OHS with the employee before the referral takes place – see Management Referral Form at **APPENDIX 7**. Agreement to such a referral should not be unreasonably withheld by an employee.

- Managers are encouraged to refer employees to OHS by day 21 of absence although it may be appropriate for managers to consider referral to OHS earlier in an absence – even as early as day one - if it is considered that support might be helpful and the employee agrees.
- Managers must ensure that, in all cases, any action which is taken in respect of an employee's absence record is fair and reasonable given the individual circumstances of the case i.e. taking account of the employee's occupational sick pay entitlement, the frequency, length and pattern of absences and any medical advice received.
- Managers should make the employee aware of any medical advice received and ensure that the employee has the opportunity to discuss their health and point of view at all stages of the process.

4.3 HR responsibilities

While the management of sickness absence is a responsibility of line/clinical managers, the HR department will provide assistance, advice and support to both managers and employees involved in the process.

This will include, for example:

- ensuring fairness and consistency during the application of all aspects of this policy
- balancing the needs of the employee and the service requirements in order to achieve a reasonable outcome
- providing technical expertise and advice in relation to terms and conditions of service connected to absence from work

Where appropriate, the HR department will also collect, analyse and publish departmental and organisational absence statistics.

4.4 OHS responsibilities

OHS will:

- liaise and communicate with managers, Human Resources, employees and external agencies
- initiate appropriate staff support e.g. referral to the relevant OHS specialist and provide feedback relating to progress
- collect all relevant medical information to ascertain whether or not the employee's underlying medical condition(s) impacts upon their effectiveness in the workplace

- provide advice to managers and employees on any modification to work practices/patterns, which may be appropriate and in accordance with relevant legislation e.g. the Disability Discrimination Act
- facilitate joint discussions between members of staff, managers, OHS, Human Resources and staff side representative where appropriate
- discuss the employee's rights in relation to Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, e.g. access to GP records.

See also **APPENDIX 6 – The Role of NHS Grampian's Occupational Health Service (OHS)**.

5 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

To promote attendance positively, NHSG will raise awareness of this policy and its standards as part of departmental and organisational induction for new staff.

6 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Regular monitoring of reviewing sickness absence rates, staff turnover, levels of redeployment and the number of terminated contracts and ill-health referrals will be undertaken as part of the performance management programme and will also be taken into account in any evaluation or audit of this policy.

ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR EMPLOYEES

- 1 All employees are responsible for making every effort to keep in contact with their manager while they are on sick leave.
- 2 If an employee is unable to attend work, or falls ill during a period of leave, they must tell their manager at the earliest opportunity in accordance with departmental arrangements.
- 3 It is each employee's responsibility to make personal contact with their manager, although it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances which prevent an employee contacting their manager personally. In such cases, a relative or friend may contact the manager on the employee's behalf, but with the responsibility for the contact remaining with the employee. Where the manager is not available, it is essential that contact is made with the manager's deputy, or another senior staff member, who will be responsible for taking the information and passing it to the manager.
- 4 Failure to make contact in time may lead to the absence being treated as "unauthorised" and dealt with under the process outlined in **APPENDIX 3(a)** and **3(b)**.
- 5 It is important that employees communicate all relevant details when making contact, including:
 - the reason for their absence – [but if they consider reason for their absence is too personal to discuss with their manager, they can advise their manager that they are "unfit to attend work" and confirm that they will discuss the reason(s) with OHS]
 - an indication of when they expect to be fit to return to work and
 - if appropriate, the dates of any appointments or follow up appointments with their GP/medical specialist

This information will be kept confidentially in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

- 6 At this stage, the employee and their manager will discuss and agree when the employee should get in touch again and when, if appropriate, a sickness certificate must be submitted.

- 7** It is the employee's responsibility to keep their manager regularly informed of their progress, particularly where there are any delays to their anticipated date of return to work. Where an employee is absent immediately before leave days or days off, they must tell their manager when they anticipate that they will be fit to return to work.
- 8** If an employee's absence is for 7 consecutive days or less, they are required to complete and submit a Self-Certificate of Incapacity for Work on the first day of their return to work – see **APPENDIX 2**. Failure to submit a Self-Certificate may result in pay being withheld.
- 9** If an employee's absence lasts for more than seven calendar days, they must also get a medical certificate from their doctor and send it to their manager immediately. Any subsequent certificates should be submitted as quickly as possible and must cover all days in the absence period. Failure to submit a medical certificate may result in pay being withheld.
- 10** If an employee falls ill at work, or has to go home due to sickness, they must advise their manager before leaving work. It is recognised, however, that there may be circumstances where the employee is unable to advise their manager before leaving e.g. where they require urgent treatment, in which case they should tell their manager at the earliest opportunity in order that the hours of absence can be recorded as sick leave.

IN CONFIDENCE

SELF-CERTIFICATE OF INCAPACITY FOR WORK

NOTE: This certificate must be used for periods of incapacity of up to 7 calendar days. (This must include weekends and public holidays even if you would not normally work on these days).

NAME: _____

POST HELD: _____

DEPARTMENT: _____

FIRST DAY OF INCAPACITY: _____

LAST DAY OF INCAPACITY: _____

Number of scheduled work days absent (including part days/shifts) _____

Please indicate:

(a) When your department was informed of your absence _____

(b) Method of notification _____

My incapacity during the above period was due to the following symptoms/illness*:

* **NOTE:** If you feel your illness is of such a personal nature that you are unable to give details to your manager please insert "personal" in the space above. You may subsequently be required to provide, on a confidential basis, details of your reason for absence directly to the Occupational Health Service.

I have consulted my doctor

I have not consulted my doctor

(Please tick as appropriate)

Employee's signature _____ Date _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

I confirm that I have discussed the absence indicated above with the employee in accordance NHS Grampian's Attendance Management Policy.

Manager/supervisor's signature _____ Date _____

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Definition

Unauthorised absence occurs when an employee fails to notify their manager that they will be absent from work.

The precise time required for notification may vary from department to department but this should be done as soon as possible after the start of their working day.

In all cases of unauthorised absence the manager must interview the employee on the first day of return to work to ascertain the facts.

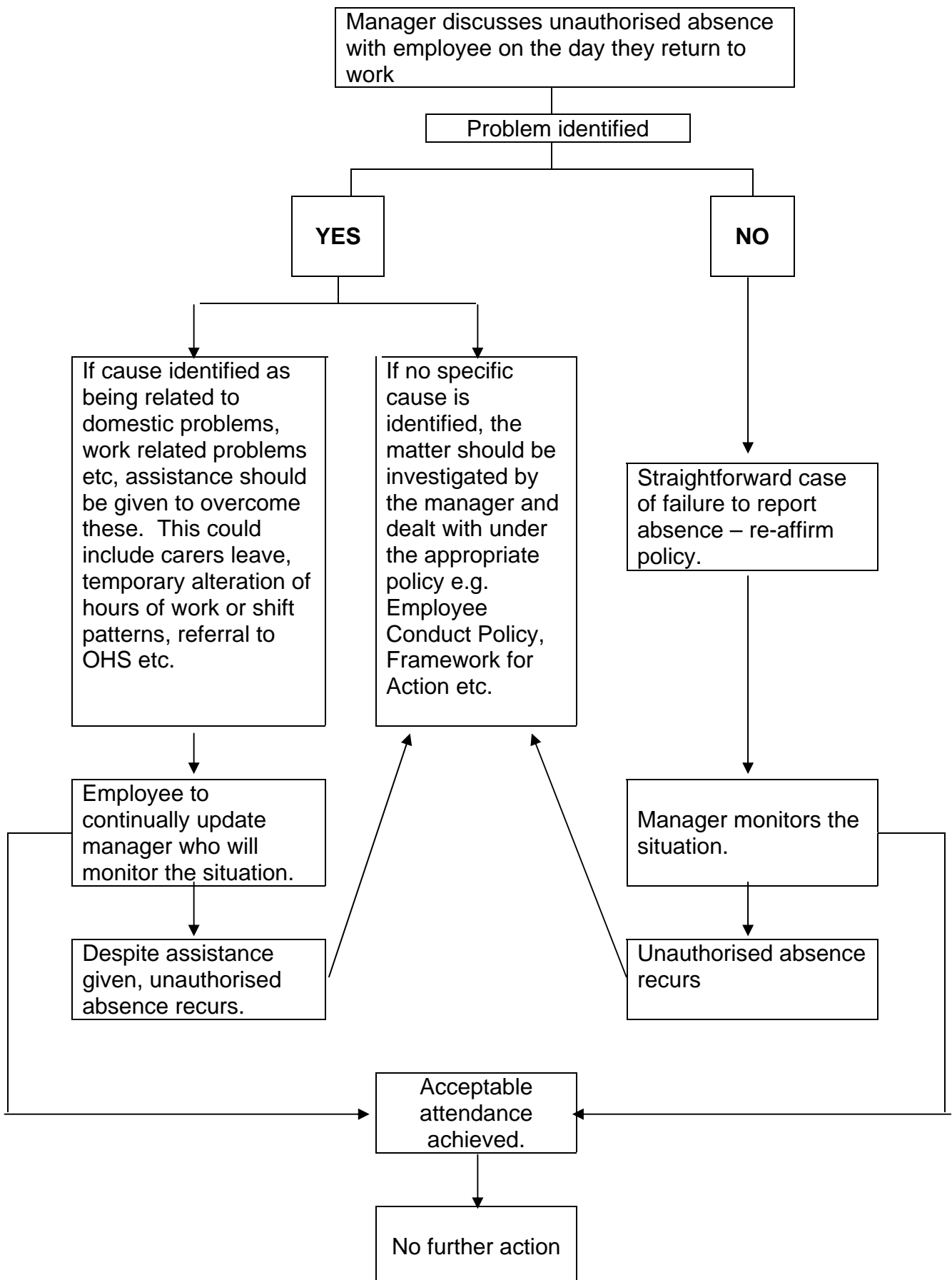
If during the interview a work related or personal problem becomes apparent, reasonable assistance should be given to the employee to overcome the problem e.g. temporarily alter shift pattern, grant special leave/carers leave etc. The employee is required to continually update the manager who in turn will monitor and re-assess support mechanisms, if necessary.

Where an employee incurs a period of unauthorised absence it will normally be treated as unpaid and may be dealt with, depending on the circumstances, under another relevant policy e.g. Special and Carer Leave, Employee Conduct etc.

(All NHSG staff management policies can be found under Policies and Procedures on the HR pages of the intranet. Alternatively, copies can be obtained from your manager, any member of the HR Team or from a Staff Side representative.)

Where there is any doubt about how to deal with unauthorised absence advice should be sought from a member of the HR Team.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE



SHORT TERM ABSENCE

Definition

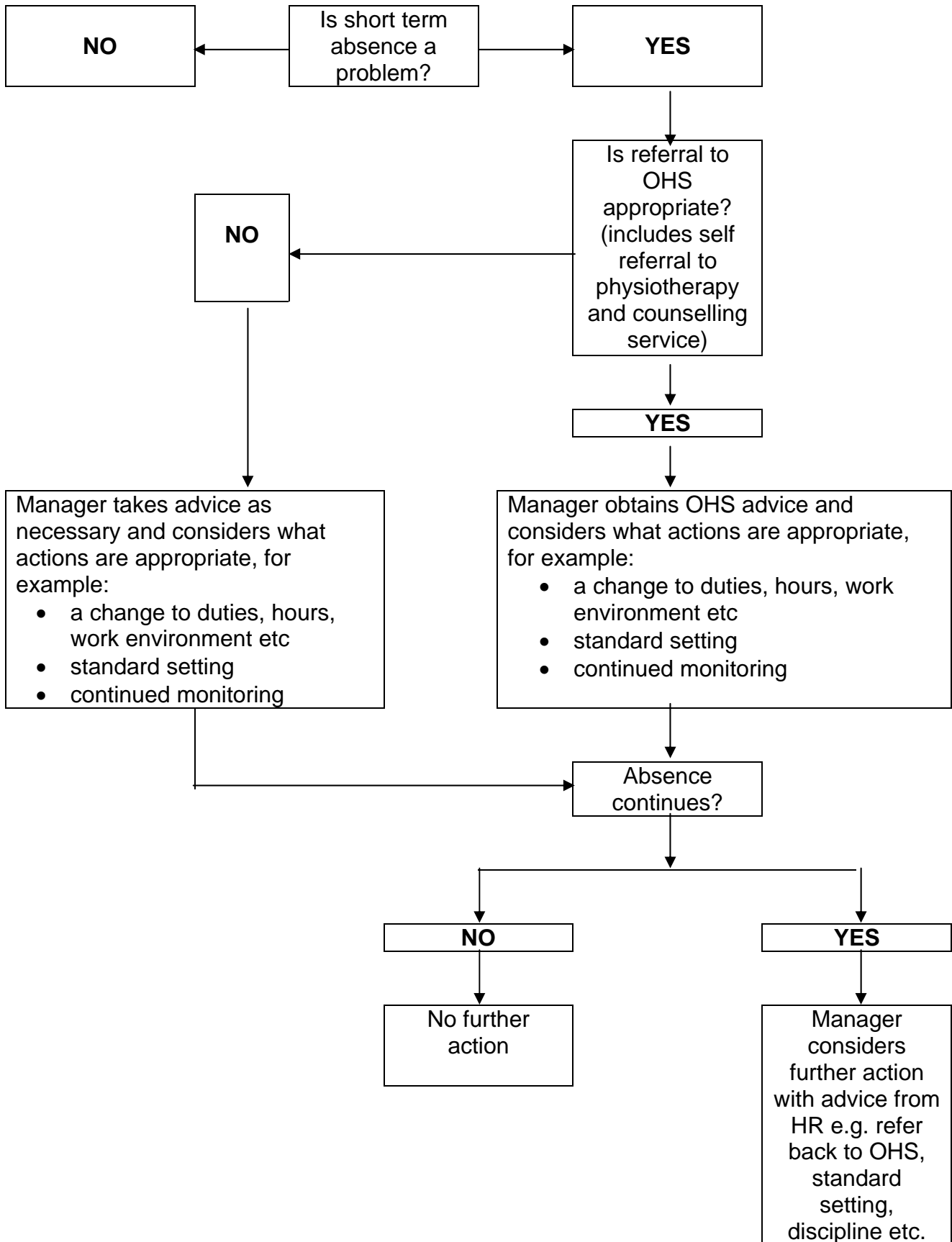
As a general guide an employees absence record would **not** be regarded as reasonable if, during a rolling 12 month period, they incur 4 episodes of absence due to mainly minor illnesses and/or total accumulative absences exceed 6 days.

Managers do not, however, need to wait until absences have reached these levels before action can be taken. Depending on the circumstances it may be prudent to make an appropriate early intervention in the best interests of both the employee and the department e.g. referral to OHS with the agreement of the employee.

Managers are encouraged to contact their designated HR Team for advice should they be unclear about what action, if any, should be taken.

Specific advice with regard to absences due to infectious illnesses, such as sickness and diarrhoea, can be obtained from OHS.

SHORT TERM ABSENCE



LONG TERM ABSENCE

Definition

Long term absence is defined as a period of absence from work which has a duration of 21 calendar days, or more.

It is important that contact between the manager and an employee on long term sick leave is maintained as this will allow the manager to better monitor the current situation.

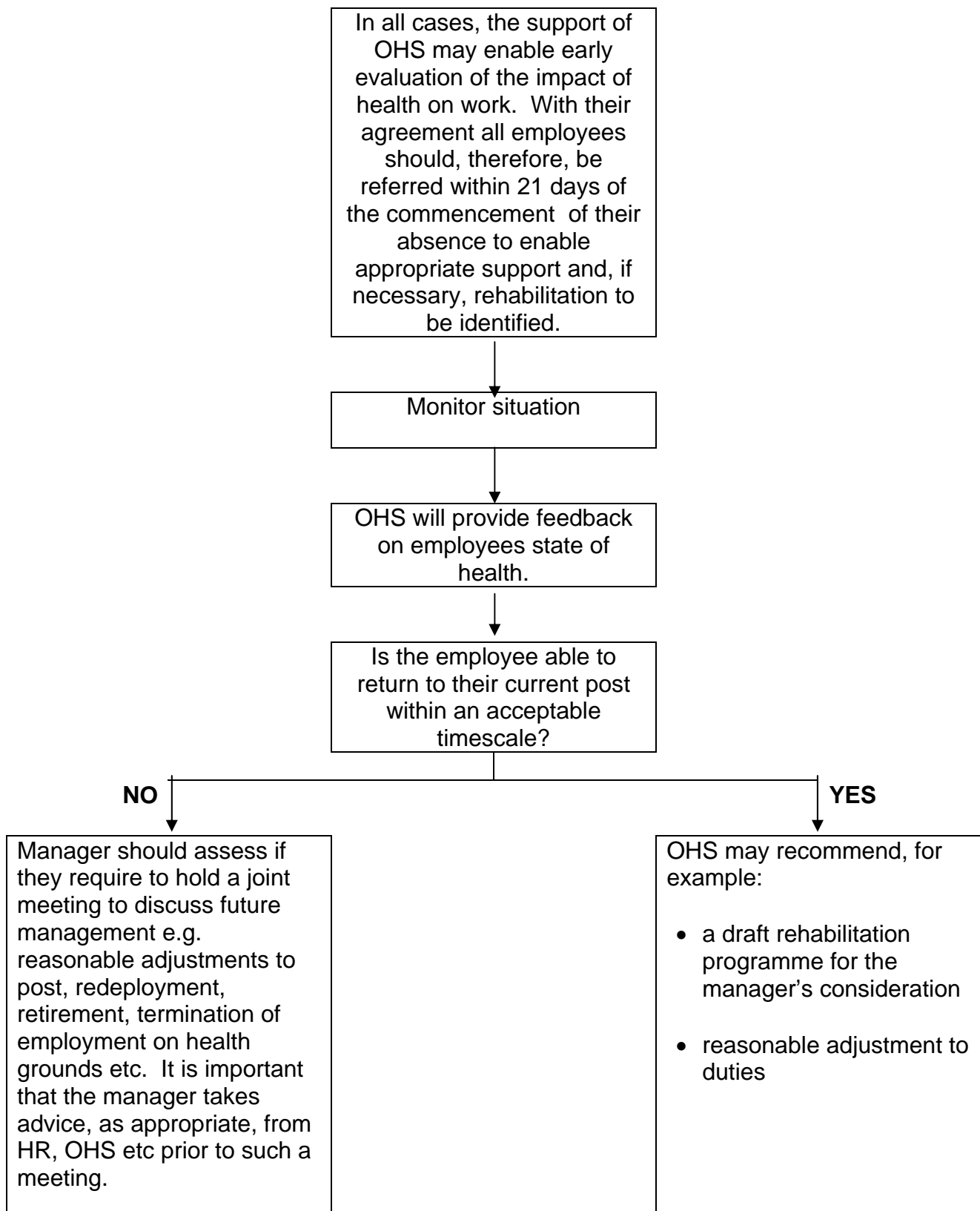
When dealing with long term absences, managers should also be conscious of their obligation to act reasonably and use the informal and personal approach where appropriate.

When holding a discussion with a member of staff on long-term absence the manager should:

- demonstrate interest and concern for the employee
- discuss the likely duration of absence with the employee
- provide any required information to the employee regarding their sick pay position
- discuss the next steps to be taken in the management of the absence e.g. *OHS Management Referral.

***NOTE:** While all employees should, with their agreement, be referred to OHS by day 21 of their absence, it may be appropriate for managers to consider referral to OHS earlier in an absence – even as early as day one - if it is considered that support might be helpful.

LONG TERM ABSENCE



ROLE OF NHS GRAMPIAN'S OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (OHS)

NHS Grampian's Occupational Health Service comprises a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and counsellors. It also has access to alcohol and substance misuse support services for occupational purposes.

While the management of absence from work as a result of sickness is a management responsibility, OHS has an important role to play in providing the medical advice necessary to enable managers to discharge their responsibility fairly and consistently to both NHS Grampian and the absent employee.

In this context, the role of OHS is to give impartial medical advice to both the employee and their manager on

- the extent to which the current absence is caused by ill health rather than a "one off" instance
- a prognosis in respect of the employee's return to work and
- advice on any adaptations in the workplace that will facilitate an earlier return.

Early referral to OHS

Early referral by managers allows effective prioritisation and signposting to appropriate support services in order that individual employees can be given the best opportunity to either avoid an absence from work, or to facilitate their early return to work. Customer satisfaction surveys have, in fact, shown that early referral has proved to be beneficial to both the manager and the employee attending/receiving support.

While it could, therefore, be appropriate to refer an employee to OHS on day one of their absence in order that appropriate support for rehabilitation can be instituted, it is generally recommended that all employees are referred by day 21 of their absence in order to ensure that any opportunities for rehabilitation and support are not delayed.

OHS is, however, keen to assure everyone involved in the process that there are no judgemental criteria regarding the timing of an employee's referral to OHS other than the trigger points identified in this policy.

OHS is also keen to stress that managers should not attempt to make any judgement about the authenticity of an employee's illness, or whether there are more complex factors which have contributed to the cause of absence.

**NHS Grampian
MANAGEMENT REFFERAL FORM**

SECTOR: _____

NOTE: While this form may be submitted by email, it can only be sent from an nhs.net address as other email systems do not provide the level of security required for transmitting confidential information.

Name				
Date of Birth				
Home Address				
Home Tel No				
Job Title & Job Grade				
Department/Ward and work base				
Hours of Work i.e. full or part time. If part time, please state number of hours)				
Normal working pattern e.g. predominantly night duty)				
Date commenced in post				
Summary of duties (or attach a job description)				
Sickness absence history over previous 12 months	Start date	End date	No. of hours lost	Reason
Current absence				

APPENDIX 7 continued

Sick pay status i.e. full pay, half pay, or off pay.	
Reason for referral	(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)
Management information required from OHS (if not covered in previous section)	(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)
Please confirm that this referral has been discussed and agreed with the employee	
HR contact (name, designation and "nhs.net" only email address)	

*Manager's name: _____ Ext: _____
 (Please print)

Designation: _____

Address for correspondence (including "nhs.net" email address): _____

*Signature: _____ Date: _____

If the manager is unavailable, their nominated deputy should complete this form in their absence in order to ensure that there is no delay in issuing an appointment. The point of reference should also be made clear in order that OHS can contact the manager/nominated deputy by telephone.

Deputy's name, tel. extension and "nhs.net" email address: _____

This form can be sent by e-mail, **using nhs.net only**, to: **grampianohs@nhs.net** or by post to the Lead Administrator, Occupational Health Services, Foresterhill Lea, Foresterhill, Aberdeen. AB25 2YZ. Tel: 01224 553663 Fax: 01224 559749

NOTE TO THE EMPLOYEE: If you are unable to attend the appointment offered to you, please notify your manager within three days, in order that they can arrange another appointment for you.

A COPY OF THIS FORM SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE EMPLOYEE

RETURN TO WORK DISCUSSION CHECKLIST

Interviewer:	Employee:	Date:
Reason for absence:		

Prompts if necessary	Tick if used	Comments if necessary
Phoning in procedure/marked absent/(un)paid		
Submission of self/medical certificate		
State of health now if absence due to illness		
Show absence record card		
Level of absence & frequency/pattern		
NHSG absence policy		
Any underlying contributors		
Availability of OHS		
Impact on colleagues and department		
Possible outcomes (standard setting, further action, etc)		
Monitoring		

Outcome of meeting and details of any agreed actions:

SIGNED

Employee: _____

Manager: _____

DISCUSSION CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS

1 Before the discussion

- Check all relevant information: Absence Record, Attendance Management Policy, previous correspondence sent to employee (if applicable).
- Identify if there are any patterns or trends in the absence: on, before or after days off/annual leave, same day each week, etc
- Check that you are being fair and consistent.

2 During the discussion

Points to consider, where appropriate:

- Introduce the topic in a non-threatening way.
- Be specific about what you say.
- Get responses to what you ask.
- Clarify the position.
- Ask for realistic suggestions to bring about improvement.
- Summarise what is to be actioned.

3 After the discussion

- Note any agreed actions on the Return to Work Checklist form a copy of which should be given to the employee once both they and the manager have signed it.
- Monitor and review regularly - act immediately when further absences occur.