

JOHN TAYLOR MULTI ACADEMY TRUST



Manager Guidance for completing the Absence Assessment

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1. Introduction

The Absence Assessment is a toolkit that helps direct a manager/Headteacher to consider key areas if they have a concern with employee sickness levels. The Sickness Absence Policy outlines a series of thresholds where sickness absence is becoming a concern. The template considers absence levels holistically on a wide range of factors, rather than make a decision purely driven by numbers, e.g., number of episodes or number of days.

Reasons for absence will be personal to the individual and the impact of absence can differ based on what and where the role is. For all these reasons any decisions about formal action because of sickness absence should be on an individualised and person-centred basis. A manager who uses this toolkit will share a copy of the completed assessment with their employee.

2. When to use it?

It can be used either for:

- **short-term /intermittent absence** levels which have not been resolved through early discussions, or
- **long-term absence** which is continuing and despite a reasonable period for recovery and support or adjustments, there is no return date, or it is clear from the outset that the employee will not be able to return to work in a reasonable period
- return to work from **long-term absence** that cannot be sustained
- **in-work health related performance** issues, where a reasonable level of performance is impaired by prolonged health issue.

3. What is it for?

This assessment helps to build a holistic picture of the current position of absence/absence levels, and health related concerns.

It provides:

- a framework for a manager to consider what support has been provided to date
- an assessment of how the employee is managing their health issues
- an objective overview, personal to the unique circumstances and individual, which demonstrates the rationale for any decisions made about formal action
- clarity in written form of any decisions and reasons.

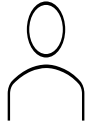
4. How does a manager use it?

The template is made up of different sections, which serves as prompts to consider the individual employee, the challenges they face as well as the impact of absence level or health related concerns on the school/setting.

Depending on the nature of the absence, long term, short term, intermittent or health performance related, will mean some sections have a greater need for detail than others and not all sections will be populated if they are not relevant.

Taken as a whole, the information will allow a manager to make the right decisions at the right time and to be able to openly discuss these decisions. Managers should use their own judgement based on the factors below to determine what is appropriate in the circumstances.

From a style perspective, some managers may complete the form using bullet points and other may prefer using a more detailed approach, depending on their personal preference. Key documents, such as OH reports, risk assessments and meeting notes, may be attached for reference as Appendices.



Reflection Moment

This document is for objective information only, hence a manager will not be submitting personal opinions, assumptions, it will be based on information that is known or has been shared with them. It will not be based on hearsay or non-factual information.

5. What is each section for?

5.1 Employee



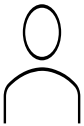
As you would expect, this section includes details about the employee and their role in the organisation – what they do, length of service, working hours and pattern and normal place of work. Where it is known it will also include information such as if they have a disability or are pregnant as there are key legal obligations that need to be considered in managing such cases.

5.2 Absence

This section details the information about absence/s. This will include dates of absence/s, the reasons for being absent and if the reasons have changed during an extended absence period. It might highlight if there is a pattern over a period. Often history of absence can be an indicator of future absence levels. Details of historical absence, over the last 12 months, will be obtained from the recording system/s that collate absence information.

Where previous absence-related warnings have been issued this detail is included within the assessment. If there are any patterns of absence, either reasons or particular days, these should be outlined.

Where any absences have already been considered and excluded for formal consideration in the past these will be taken into account. This may have been because of reasonable adjustments associated with a disability (see Disability and Reasonable Adjustments guidance) or where the absences were pregnancy related.



Reflection Moment

The information contained in the Absence Assessment is classed as Special Category data under the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR) and will be processed in line with the Trust's Privacy Notice.

5.3 Context

This section should detail consideration around two elements:

- a) A manager should outline key features of the school/business/service that are impacted by absence or health performance issues. This may vary from team to team, depending on how big the team is, location, resources it has and its ability to cover absence, any statutory requirements....etc.
- b) A manager should detail how the absence(s) are being managed consistently across the unit. All absence will be treated fairly and consistently and with the individual's specific circumstances considered. A manager should ensure consistency across the team by ensuring the timeliness of return to works, support or reasonable

adjustments, early intervention, 121's, supervision or check-ins. The Trust uses an Occupational Health provider and wellbeing services. Information about these can be found on the VAULT in the Wellbeing Hub. They should also ensure that where reasonable adjustments have been identified, there has been reasonable time to allow for those to take effect and improvements in attendance to be made.



5.4 Chronology Of Communication

As communication is key to resolving issues early, as well as maintaining positive working relationships, this section outlines the key contact that has taken place between manager and employee to resolve any absence concerns and/or facilitate return to work. It can help show how regular and effective contact has been.

This is even more crucial for long term sickness and can identify where actions or contact may not have taken place as they should, either because of a lack of engagement and if there are actions identified to improve this.



5.5 OHU (Occupational Health Unit)/Medical

As you would expect, this section will detail any information relating to referrals, appointments and reports from an Occupational Health (OH) provider. It can also include detail of GP/health professional fit notes and/or information from other medical professionals, where consent has been given to obtain this. It could include any follow up actions from medical advice including recommendations about disability and adjustments, prognosis and recovery times.

Some adjustments may not be possible and if that is the case it's helpful to understand the reasons and whether there are any other options. There may be times where there is conflicting advice from a Doctor and OH provider and it is important that these are highlighted, and rationale provided for any decisions relating to this. Generally, a manager will be guided by their OH provider.

This section might also include detail of referrals to any other support services used or other NHS services. It's helpful that employees talk to their manager about other services and support so that the manager fully understand what is in place to support to maintain or improve attendance and where there may be additional support that could be put in place. Care should be taken however that questions about personal medical information isn't intrusive.

There is an expectation that employees take personal responsibility for doing what they can to manage their own health and wellbeing. Employees should continue to be encouraged to adopt personal management strategies throughout all stages of absence management to maximise their health and attendance. For example, engaging with any actions and recommendations from medical experts and accessing services such as counselling.

Reflection Moment



If a manager completing this section thinks there may be a gap in the information held, perhaps due to a significant change in a medical condition, new condition or they want more recent information they may ask for more up to date OH provider advice before moving forward with any action.



5.6 Support / Reasonable Adjustments

This section captures what support and adjustments have been discussed, whether they have been put in place and how they are working out. These may be support measures which have been identified by a OH provider, a manager or employee or reasonable adjustments linked to a disability.

A manager should attach a copy of the most up to date individual risk assessment where one is in place. It is important for discussions about support being a normal part of the day-to-day conversations, such as in 121's or check-ins, rather than wait until conversations about a formal approach are required.

Reflection Moment



If completing this section an employee identifies any appropriate support that could be offered or sought, a manager may pause a formal process as part of their assessment and explore whether support is feasible and reasonable, and how to get it in place as quickly as possible.



5.7 School/setting

This section focuses on the impact that absence is having on the setting or school provision. For example, resource or statutory staffing levels which are directly linked to the absence, missed deadlines or targets, delays to important projects, or an inability to provide a service at all.

In different settings, this may impact directly on vulnerable service users, not being able to open part of a setting or to operate part of the setting's provision. If any of these impacts are safeguarding related, careful consideration will be needed.

This section is not intended to "blame" or demotivate. We recognise that it is not an individual's "fault" that they are unwell and absent from work. However, this is an important consideration for a manager in how they can maintain safety, service provision and balance those with ensuring the employee is supported during periods of absence.

5.8 Team

Individual absence can affect colleagues, and this section records this impact. This is not about how colleagues feel about absence, but about objectively considering the impact of absence, such as high workloads, colleagues being diverted from other work, leave being cancelled, increases in demand for additional working hours or perhaps a team stress risk assessment highlighting an issue.

A balance needs to be struck between recording the impact of absence on others and including specific details about other people. We would not expect to see details of colleague names in this document.

5.9 Financial

This section outlines any financial impact associated with absence, such as the cost of agency/supply cover, casual hours, overtime claims, financial penalties.

Although financial considerations may be one of the easiest impacts to identify, large organisations in particular are not expected to base any formal action solely on financial costs incurred.

The purpose of the absence assessment is to consider a range of key areas and the financial impact is only one part of that assessment.



5.10 Other Considerations

This section is a sense check so that a manager has considered any other relevant background information.

Some key questions a manager may consider here may be:

- Are there personal circumstances that are contributing?

For example,

are you using sick leave to cover caring responsibilities?

or

to seek support for a difficult domestic situation?

Have these already been explored, and other options considered?

- Do you have relationship issues at work? Could there be a need to improve them or use a Mediation service, which may then reduce absence?
- Is there a fundamental difference of opinion in the facts of the cases? For example, what the absences are caused by, or when discussions have taken place. A manager will be transparent and honest where they feel that may be an issue, so that these can carefully explored.
- Are there other policies in play or being used in conjunction with the Sickness Absence Policy?

On completion of the Absence Assessment, it will provide a comprehensive picture of the factors relating to the overall absence levels or health related performance. Decisions will be made on the basis of the information available at the time.

Once a manager has all information available, they can then consider whether it is appropriate to move to a formal process under the Sickness Absence Policy or whether there are other actions that need to take place.

Depending on the absence situation, a manager may attach copies of any relevant information, for example, for intermittent absence copies of self-certificate and return-to-work forms, and fit notes. In long term absence cases, copies of OH provider reports and referrals, risk assessments and other relevant information.

By using this assessment and discussing its content with an employee it will a full understanding of all the factors involved and why a decision has been made to move to the formal stages of the policy.