

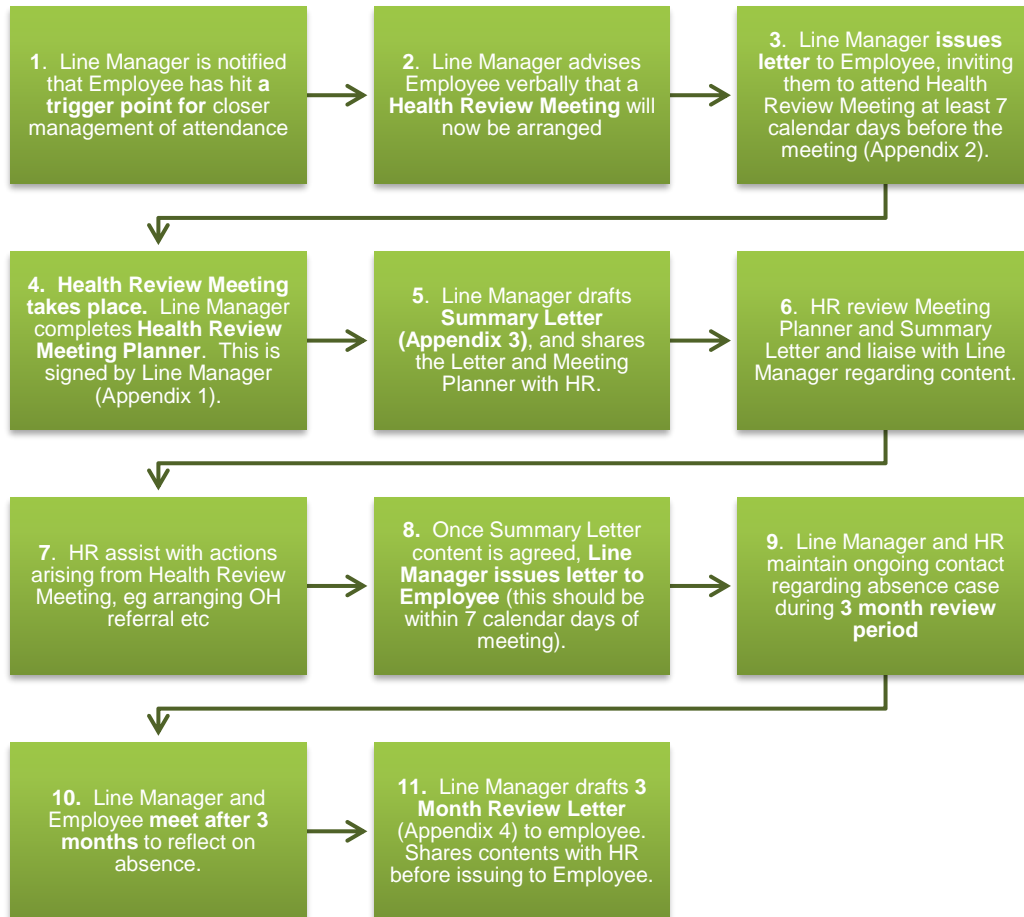
NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy:

A Guide to Health Review Meetings (Short Term Absences)

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Health Review Meetings – Process for Line Managers



Health Review Meetings: Aims and Outcomes

1. Introduction

The Management of Sickness Absence Policy has been designed to provide a framework and set of procedures for the reporting and management of sickness absence. NES divides cases of sickness absence into three categories:

- **Short Term Absence:** short periods of absence (lasting less than 28 calendar days) which can either occur intermittently or form a clear pattern.
- **Long Term Absence:** absences lasting 28 calendar days or more.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** any period of sickness absence which is not reported appropriately, or a period of time when sick pay is claimed inappropriately.

This Guide has been developed to help line managers who are dealing with cases of **short term absence**.

2. When should short term absence be managed formally?

The Policy confirms that the attendance of employees should be formally managed when they hit a “trigger for closer management” and have been absent:

- On 5 separate occasions during the last 12 months
- For 10 days during the last 12 months
- Any period of unauthorised absence

The Health Review Meeting (HRM) is the first step in formally managing attendance and, in the majority of cases, should be arranged when an employee reaches one of the above trigger points.

3. What should happen before the Health Review Meeting?

Progressing to the Health Review Meeting should not come as a surprise to the employee. Discussions during the Return to Work Meetings which are held after each period of absence will have made the employee aware that their attendance would be managed actively when trigger points are reached.

The Return to Work Meeting also provides a useful opportunity for the line manager to discuss whether it may be helpful to refer the employee for assessment by the Occupational Health Service.

4. Occupational Health Service (OHS)

The Occupational Health Service is central to absence management within NES. The service OHS provides supports both individual employees and NES as an organisation and the importance of making appropriate and timely referrals to OHS cannot be underestimated.

In some cases, it may be obvious that a referral to OHS is required for an employee due to a recurring illness or condition. In other cases the need for a referral could be less obvious – especially when employees display an absence history with no discernible pattern of illness. In all cases it is good practice to arrange for employees whose absence is being formally managed to be referred for assessment by the Occupational Health Service to determine their fitness for work and to gain an understanding of whether the employee is suffering from an underlying health condition which has not been disclosed.

It is generally recommended that a referral to OHS should be arranged prior to the Health Review Meeting. This is so that any report received can be discussed during the meeting and can be used to inform the plan to improve attendance which will be developed during the Health Review Meeting.

Referrals to OHS are facilitated by HR and the HR Business Support Team can assist with providing forms and liaising with the Occupational Health Service.

5. What is the aim of the Health Review Meeting?

The HRM is intended as a positive early intervention. It is designed to provide the employee with an opportunity to discuss their attendance at work, and any related issues such as health and welfare, family, difficulties with their role, workplace issues etc, in an open and honest way with their line manager.

The aim of the HRM is for the line manager to gain a deeper understanding of why the employee is encountering issues with coming to work, and for both the employee and line manager to work together to resolve it in the short to medium term.

In many cases, employee attendance improves significantly after the HRM and no further formal absence management is required.

6. What can happen as a result of the Health Review Meeting?

A variety of mechanisms and services can be activated as a result of the HRM. The most common are:

- Requesting a referral to Occupational Health (although this may have been done already, see Section 4 above)
- Requesting a Work Station Assessment from Occupational Health
- Providing advice about the Employee Assistance Scheme (ICAS) and the services it offers, which includes face-to-face counselling sessions
- Considering additional training or development for the employee
- Reviewing the Flexible Working options available to the employee

7. What happens next?

A Follow-Up Meeting should be scheduled to take place three months after the HRM. This will provide the employee and line manager with the opportunity to review attendance and discuss any issues which have arisen since the HRM.

If the employee's attendance does not improve during the three month monitoring period it may be necessary for the Follow-Up Meeting to take place earlier than scheduled.

8. What's the best way to arrange a Health Review Meeting?

It is likely that the subject of Health Review Meetings will already have been raised during your Return to Work Meetings with the employee so the news that the HRM must now be arranged should not be a surprise to the employee.

It may be helpful to take the employee aside to remind them of the HRM and to advise them that you will be sending them a formal letter, inviting them to the meeting. As this is formal meeting, the employee should be given 7 calendar days notice of the meeting and must also be given the right to bring with them a Trade Union Representative, or a work colleague.

When attending the HRM, you should remember to take with you a copy of the employee's absence history (available from HR), a copy of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy for reference, and the Health Review Meeting Planner for completion and signature.

9. What topics must be covered during the Health Review Meeting?

- Explain why the meeting is taking place and advise that it is part of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy.
- Review the employee's absence history with them, looking out for patterns of absence or recurring reasons for absence.
- Discuss the employee's current health and wellbeing with them. Ask how they are feeling about coming to work.
- Discuss the employee's role, consider whether there are any work-related issues which might be impacting on their attendance.
- Remind the employee that there are a range of services available to support them in attending work. Consider which services would be helpful to the employee at this time.
- Discuss arranging a referral to Occupational Health (if this has not already been addressed).
- Take time together to develop a plan which will help the employee to improve their attendance at work.
- Agree a 3 month Follow-Up Date.

10. The 3 Month Review Meeting

The 3 Month Review Meeting provides an excellent opportunity to meet with the employee again and reflect on whether their attendance has improved since the Health Review Meeting took place. You may wish to contact your HR Business Partner/Associate Business Partner to discuss the absence case before the Review Meeting takes place. There are three likely outcomes to the Review Meeting:

- (a) Attendance has improved and the employee is no longer hitting a trigger for closer management. In this case the absence issue is now resolved.
- (b) Attendance has improved somewhat, but it is still not at the standard required by the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy. In this case it may be helpful to extend the monitoring period for a further period, and to meet with the employee again for further discussion. You may wish to discuss this with your HR Business Partner/Associate Business Partner.
- (c) Attendance has not improved. In this case it is possible that we will progress to Formal Stage 1 of the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy. Your HR Business Partner/Associate Business Partner will be able to provide additional advice and guidance if this is the case.

N.B. Although it is generally the case that the Review Meeting takes place after three months, this date can be altered provided the employee is consulted and provided with at least 7 calendar days notice of any change to the meeting date.

11. What is overall objective of this process?

Ultimately, the aim of the HRM is to resolve absence management issues before they become too serious or embedded. In many cases this is the only part of the absence management process that employees will be exposed to. However, if it is the case that the employee's attendance does not improve after the HRM, they will progress to Formal Stage 1 of the Management of Sickness Absence Policy. Employees should be made aware of this during the HRM.

12. *What administration is required?*

- **Invitation to Health Review Meeting letter (Appendix 2)** should be issued to the employee at least 7 calendar days prior to the meeting. Included with the Invitation Letter should be hard copies of the employee's absence history and the NES Management of Sickness Absence Policy.
- **Health Review Meeting Planner (Appendix 1)** should be completed during the meeting, and signed by the line manager and employee.
- **Summary Letter (Appendix 3)** should be drafted after the meeting. The Summary Letter and Meeting Planner document should be shared with HR before being issued to the employee. Please remember that the Summary Letter should be issued to the employee no more than 7 calendar days after the Health Review Meeting.
- **3 Month Review letter (Appendix 4)** should be issued to the employee no more than 7 calendar days after the 3 Month Review Meeting. This letter should also be shared with HR before issue to the employee.

Please remember to send copies of all documents to HR for inclusion in the employee's personal file.

Health Review Meeting Planner

Name of Employee _____

Name of Line Manager _____

Date of Health Review Meeting _____

Health Review Meeting Topics for Discussion	Tick to confirm item discussed ✓	Meeting Notes
<p>Purpose of meeting</p> <p>Thank you for attending this formal Health Review Meeting which is being held in accordance with the terms of the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy.</p> <p>This meeting has been arranged because you have reached a trigger point for closer management of your attendance, as per the terms of the Policy.</p> <p>Notes will be taken during the meeting to inform a letter summarising our meeting today. The letter will be issued within 7 calendar days of our meeting.</p>		
<p>Right to be Accompanied</p> <p>Acknowledge whether employee is accompanied or not. Note the name and designation of Trade Union Rep or colleague for the summary letter.</p> <p>If employee is attending the meeting alone ensure they are aware that they have the right to be accompanied and confirm that they are happy to proceed without anyone else present. (Note this in the summary letter).</p>		
<p>Background and context</p> <p>Ask employee if they have had a chance to read the copy of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy which was provided to them.</p> <p>The Health Review Meeting is designed as a positive opportunity to have an open discussion about the employee's attendance at work.</p> <p>Give some wider context if appropriate – as well as needing to ensure the welfare of employees and checking that they have the correct support to enable them to maintain ongoing attendance at work; we must also acknowledge that sickness absence is a cost to NES and so we are obliged to manage it appropriately and actively.</p>		

<p>Analysis of attendance at work</p> <p>Spend some time discussing the employee's attendance at work and review the copy of their absence history which was issued to them recently.</p> <p>Note any patterns of absence or illness which are immediately apparent.</p>		
<p>Employee's current health and wellbeing</p> <p>Spend some time discussing the employee's current health and wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How is the employee feeling at the moment? ○ Does the employee feel that there is anything NES can do to support their ongoing attendance at work? ○ Are there any factors which are affecting their ability to attend work that they would like to make us aware of at this time? ○ Are there any work-related issues that it might be helpful to discuss? ○ Are there any other underlying causes relating to their absences from work? 		
<p>Help and support</p> <p>NES provides a range of services to support employees, spend some time considering these and discuss whether any would be beneficial to the employee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Occupational Health Service (support from specialist OH doctors/nurses, work station assessments, guidance on reasonable adjustments, advice for managers etc) ○ ICAS Employee Assistance Scheme (information and advice on a range of different topics from health and wellbeing to the law, finance etc. Available to employees and close family members.) ○ ICAS Counselling Service (5 sessions of counselling delivered face-to-face from a local practitioner) ○ Flexible Working Policy (NES's policy to support flexible working for staff, describes a range of different flexible working options) ○ Internal Mediation Service (provides a confidential, fast and efficient method of dispute resolution at times when conflict in the workplace has become a problem) <p>Are any of the above helpful to the employee at this time?</p> <p>A range of reasonable adjustments to the employee's post could also be implemented. Would any of the following would be beneficial at this time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change of working hours ○ Change of duties ○ Additional training or retraining ○ Acquiring or modifying equipment/software ○ Increasing supervision/contact with line manager <p>Is there any other service or mechanism which would support the employee in improving their attendance at work?</p>		

<p>Planning for the future</p> <p>As an employer, NES understands that members of staff can become unwell at any time. If the employee experiences a period of ill health during the next few months, careful consideration will be given as to how to manage this in line with requirements of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy.</p> <p>It is hoped that this Health Review Meeting will help the employee to resolve any issues which are affecting their ability to attend work, and that their absence record will improve during the next few months.</p> <p>Employees should be aware that if they are unable to achieve sustained attendance at work, it may be necessary to progress to Formal Stage 1 of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy.</p> <p>Spend some time discussing how you can support the employee to improve their attendance at work. Make a plan and confirm that this will be included in the summary letter which is issued to the employee.</p>		
<p>Follow-Up Meeting</p> <p>In accordance with the terms of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy, a follow-up meeting should be scheduled for 3 months in the future. This will provide an opportunity to reflect on any changes which have been made as a result of the Health Review Meeting, discuss progress and agree when and how the absence issue can be resolved, or, if necessary, progressed.</p> <p>The Follow-Up Meeting should be brought forward if attendance continues to be an issue.</p>		

I confirm that I attended the Health Review Meeting on _____ (date) and that the above topics were discussed.

Signature of Line Manager _____

(When signed, the Health Review Meeting Planner should be returned to your HR Business Partner/Associate Business Partner.)

Letter Template:

Invitation to Health Review Meeting

Westport 102
 West Port
 Edinburgh
 EH3 9DN

Telephone 0131 656 3200
 Fax 0131 656 3201
www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Date
 Reference
 Enquiries to
 Direct Line
 Email

Dear [Recipient]

Formal Health Review Meeting to discuss absence

Further to our recent conversation, I am writing with reference to your attendance at work over the past twelve months. As you are aware, you have reached a trigger point for closer management of attendance under the terms of the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy with **X periods/days** of sickness absence during the last twelve months.

As a result of this, I would like to meet with you formally to consider how NES can best support you to maximise your attendance at work. I enclose a copy of NHS Education for Scotland Managing Sickness Absence Policy and a copy of your absence record for your information.

I would be grateful if we could meet on **date** at **time** in **location** to discuss this matter. If you wish, you may bring with you a colleague or a representative of a trade union or professional organisation, not acting in a legal capacity. **I will be accompanied by XX, HR Representative (if appropriate).**

The main purpose of this meeting will be to review your attendance record and to consider the reasons for absence, with a view to discussing what measures can be taken to support you in sustaining your attendance at work; **this may include a referral to Occupational Health (if appropriate).** The meeting will be documented, and a summary of the discussions will be provided to you in writing. Normally a further meeting will be arranged after an agreed period to review absence.

It would be helpful if you could confirm your attendance and advise me whether you will be accompanied at the meeting by **date/time**.

I look forward to our meeting. If you have any queries in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Name
 Designation

Encs: Absence History, Copy of NES Management of Sickness Absence Policy

Letter Template:

Summary of Health Review Meeting

Westport 102
 West Port
 Edinburgh
 EH3 9DN

Telephone 0131 656 3200
 Fax 0131 656 3201
www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Date
 Reference
 Enquiries to
 Direct Line
 Email

Dear **NAME**

Summary of Formal Health Review Meeting – **Date of Meeting**

Thank you for attending the Formal Health Review Meeting which took place **today** and was held in accordance with the Managing Sickness Absence Policy. As you are aware, you have reached a trigger point for closer management under the Policy with **X days absence / X periods of absence** within the last 12 months.

You were accompanied at the meeting by **NAME** from **TRADE UNION / NAME OF COLLEAGUE**.

or

It was your right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at the meeting and you chose to attend the meeting on your own.

NAME, HR Representative was also present at the meeting.

As we discussed, the Health Review Meeting is intended to provide an opportunity for us to discuss your health and wellbeing and to consider what steps we can implement to support you and enable you to improve your attendance at work.

❖ Your current health and wellbeing

During the meeting we discussed your current health and wellbeing. I was **very pleased to hear that you are feeling well at the moment/concerned to hear that you are unwell at present XXXXXXXX**.

❖ Your role

We then discussed your role and I asked you if there were any issues or problems that you wished to bring up. You advised **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

❖ Non-work related issues affecting your attendance

We discussed whether there were any non-work related issues which are affecting your attendance at work. You advised that **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**.

❖ Occupational Health Service

We spent some time reviewing the report received from the Occupational Health Service. **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

or

We then considered whether you would find it valuable to visit the Occupational Health Service at this time. You confirmed that you feel this would be beneficial and I will now liaise with HR to arrange this for you as quickly as possible.

or

You advised that you do not feel that a referral to Occupational Health is necessary at the moment. I explained that you can request a confidential self-referral at any time, or if you would like me to arrange for a referral for you I can also do this very quickly. You advised that you would bear this in mind for the future.

❖ *Reasonable Adjustments*

We considered a range of reasonable adjustments which could be implemented to help support your attendance at work. We agreed that you would find it helpful to implement **XXXXX** and we will work together to enable this as soon as possible.

Or

We agreed that none of the suggested adjustments would be helpful at this time. We will review this situation at our next meeting.

❖ *Help and Support*

As we discussed, NES Offers a range of health, wellbeing and lifestyle related policies and services which are widely accessible and may be of assistance to you, these include the Independent Counselling & Advisor Service (ICAS), ICAS Lifestyle Management, and the Occupational Health Service. Further information about these is available on the intranet and through the HR Department. I would also be happy to discuss these in more detail at any time if that would be helpful.

❖ *Plan for the future*

We spent some time looking ahead and thinking about how we can work together to improve your attendance record. We agreed that your absence has been intermittent and that there are no discernable common causes for your absence.

or

We spent some time looking ahead and thinking about how we can work together to improve your attendance record. We agreed that your absences follow a pattern **XXXXXXXX** and it is hoped that by implementing **XXXXXXXX** your attendance will now improve.

❖ *Review Meeting*

We agreed that we would continue to monitor your absence over the coming three months and meet again to discuss progress. You confirmed that you were happy with this and agreed that you would advise me if there are any problems in the meantime.

I have provisionally scheduled our review meeting for **TIME** on **DATE**. The location will be **LOCATION** and, once again, you will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at the meeting.

I trust that the above is an accurate record of our discussions today. Please do not hesitate to let me know if there are issues.

I look forward to our next meeting in **MONTH**.

Yours sincerely

NAME
DESIGNATION

CC HR Business Partner/Associate Business Partner

Letter Template:

3 Month Review Meeting

Westport 102
West Port
Edinburgh
EH3 9DN

Telephone 0131 656 3200
Fax 0131 656 3201
www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Date
Reference
Enquiries to
Direct Line
Email

Dear NAME,

NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy: 3 Month Update Meeting

Thank you for attending the Health Review 3 Month Update Meeting which took place on DATE at TIME and was held in LOCATION.

You were accompanied at the meeting by NAME from TRADE UNION / NAME OF COLLEAGUE.

or

It was your right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at the meeting and you chose to attend the meeting on your own.

Option 1 – Absence Issue Now Resolved

As discussed at the meeting, your attendance at work has improved significantly since our last meeting in MONTH, YEAR and this is an excellent achievement on your part. As this is the case, I am pleased to confirm that no further attendance monitoring meetings will be required.

Should your attendance slip below the standard required by the Managing Attendance Policy at some time in the future, formal attendance management arrangements will be put in place once again.

Option 2 – Extend Monitoring Period

As discussed at the meeting, although your attendance at work has improved since our meeting on MONTH, YEAR, it does not yet meet the standard required by the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy. As this is the case the monitoring period will be extended for a further 8 weeks and we will meet again for further discussion at the end of this period.

I have provisionally scheduled our second review meeting for TIME on DATE. The location will be LOCATION and, once again, you will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at the meeting.

Option 3 – Progress to Formal Stage 1 Absence Management

As discussed at the meeting, your attendance at work has not improved to the standard required by the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy. You have had a further XX days/periods of sickness absence since the Health Review Meeting in MONTH, YEAR.

As this is the case, and as you are unable to provide any assurance that your attendance is likely to improve significantly in the short-term, I must now advise that it will be necessary to progress to Formal Stage 1 of the NES Managing Sickness Absence Policy. The Policy document contains detailed information about the formal stages of the absence management process and I recommend that you review this at your earliest convenience. A printed copy of the policy has already been issued to you, and it is also available on the NES intranet.

If you have any queries with reference to the contents of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Designation

CC HR Business Partner/Associate Business Partner