**Absence Management – Line Manager Guide**

**Short Term Absence**

If employees are not able to attend work due to illness, they should notify their Line Manager in line with their sickness reporting procedure (see Employee Handbook).

Line Managers should expect a call from the employee themselves advising them of the reasons they are not able to attend work. Text messages and emails are usually not acceptable forms of notification.

The employee should also advise if they are likely to return to work the next day or that they will follow the same process if they are not fit for work the following day either.

**Recording Absence Details**

Line Managers should update the internal absence management system or HRIS with details of the employee’s absence (dates of absence, reason for absence) or follow the Company’s internal process for recording absence and advise HR of the absence, so that payroll can be notified if needed (SSP or Company Sick Pay may be applicable dependent on Company policy).

**No Contact From Employee**

If an employee needs to follow the correct procedure of notification and no contact is received from them, Line Managers should try to make contact with them by phone or email.

If no contact is received from the employee and they are not contactable, the disciplinary procedure may need to be followed depending on the particular circumstances.

If the employee is likely to be off for more than 7 calendar days a fit note will be required from the employee’s GP.

If the employee is likely to be off on long-term sickness absence, the appropriate procedure should be followed. Line Managers should reach out to Breathing Space HR/their Company HR lead at this point.

**Return to Work Discussion**

Once the employee has returned to work following their sickness absence, Line Managers should hold a return to work meeting and complete a return to work form. During this meeting the reasons for absence should be discussed, the fit note or self-certification obtained and the Bradford Factor score discussed (if this is monitored by the Company).

Any adjustments that may be necessary to support the employee’s return to work should also be discussed during this meeting.

If Bradford Factor scores are recorded, the threshold points and the appropriate actions. Please refer to this for the most up to date process to follow. The internal absence management system should be updated with the return to work information and any discussion that took place on the back of that. HR should be notified promptly of the employee’s return to work.

**Long Term Absence**

Employees may be off from work for longer periods (several weeks) of time due to sickness. In cases like this, Line Managers need to be conscious of a few things.

* Ask for the cause of the absence to be able to anticipate how long the employee will be off for.
* For absences lasting longer than 7 days, employees will need to obtain a fit note from their GP.
* Establish when the current sick note expires. The employee may not return at the end of the sick note as they may be signed off for a further period of time by their GP.
* Consider redistribution of the employee’s work if they are anticipated to be off for a longer period of time.
* Keep in contact with the employee to check how they are doing and if there is any change in their circumstances. Check that they are ok with the contact level and agree with the employee's contact intervals. Be supportive where possible.
* Advise HR of the absence, so that payroll can be notified, and the pay adjusted if needed (SSP or Company Sick Pay may be applicable dependent on Company policy).
* If an employee has been off continuously for 4 weeks or more, the employer may want to look at options such as referring the employee to the Fit for Work Scheme or obtain an Occupational Health Report from an Occupational Health Specialist. In both cases the employee’s agreement is required.
* Try to find adjustments if possible through which the employee may be able to return to work or work from home. Reduced hours or altered responsibilities may also be considered depending on the circumstances.
* If an employee has been off with long-term illness, they cannot be allowed to return to work without the GP signing them off as fit to return to work or adjustments were put in place where these were an option.
* If the employee is not likely to return to work, refer to Breathing Space HR and the Company’s internal policies about further guidance on how to proceed.

**Return to Work Discussion**

* Once the employee has returned to work following their sickness absence, Line Managers should hold a return to work meeting and complete a return to work form. During this meeting the reasons for absence should be discussed, the fit note or self-certification obtained and the Bradford Factor score discussed (if this is monitored by the Company).
* Any adjustments that may be necessary to support the employee’s return to work should also be discussed during this meeting.
* If Bradford Factor scores are recorded, the threshold points and the appropriate actions will be detailed in the appropriate policy. Please refer to this for the most up to date process to follow.

The internal absence management system or HRIS should be updated with the return to work information and any discussion that took place.