

Managing Short Term Absence and Informal Absence Review Discussions

Guide for employees

This guide outlines the approach to take when managing short term absence and how these should be dealt with under the attendance policy including holding informal review discussions.

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Getting help

Contact your manager if you have any queries about this guide.

Managers can obtain advice by:

Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0345 6060603 / 5456 7100

Managers working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0345 604 787 / 5456 4747

For web access please go to: <https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com>



Managing Short Term Absence and Informal Absence Review Discussions

Guide for employees

Overview

This guide sets out how to manage and support employees who are absent from work in Royal Mail Group for short periods of time.

This should be read in conjunction with the *Attendance Policy*, as well as the related guidance documents listed in the 'related forms and documents' section later in the guide.

Purpose

Royal Mail Group recognises that during employment, there may be times when an employee will be absent from work, and it is important that the appropriate policies are in place to support them during these periods.

Regular attendance by all employees is important to ensure that the business maintains our high levels of customer service. If employees are frequently absent, this will both place a burden on colleagues and will have a commercial impact on the business.

Through identifying and discussing with an employee the underlying causes of their absence, attendance issues can often be resolved before they become a problem.

The level of support required by the employee should be identified during discussions. These absences should also be discussed if the employee's absences increase to a level that requires formal action through the *Attendance Policy*.

Notifying absence and providing medical certificates

Initial contact

Employees who are going to be absent from work are expected to notify any absence to their manager. For further details on notifying absence, please refer to the *Absence Notification and Maintaining Contact Guide*.

Maintaining contact

The manager and the absent employee should agree how often and by what method they will contact each other until the employee returns to work. For further information on maintaining contact, please refer to the *Absence Notification and Maintaining Contact Guide*.

Medical certificates

Where an employee's absence lasts for up to seven days, the manager should ask them to complete an *Absence Declaration Form* at the Welcome Back Meeting.

Where an employee's absence lasts for more than seven days, they will need to provide a Medical Certificate, which can also be known as a 'Fit Note', to cover the continuing absence until they return to work.

For further information on medical certificates, please refer to the *Absence Notification and Maintaining Contact Guide*.

Part-day absences

A part-day absence is where an employee has worked for part of their duty and due to illness is unable to continue working.

These absences will still be reviewed but will not usually count towards the formal attendance process.

Where the number of part-day absences has become excessive or a pattern starts to

emerge the manager should discuss it with the employee and advise them in writing that should this continue, future part-day absences may be counted towards the formal process.

Pregnancy related absence

Pregnancy related absences should be discounted from the formal attendance process but such absences should still be reviewed.

Where an absence is unrelated to pregnancy, for example if the employee has a cold, it could be considered as part of the formal attendance process.

Absence due to accidents at work

Under the Attendance Policy, any absence considered to be due to an accident at work will normally be discounted from the formal attendance process.

If the employee incurs an absence as a result of an accident at work, the absence should be discussed with the employee when they return.

While absences due to accidents at work will normally be discounted, they should always be discussed during an attendance review meeting.

There may be circumstances when an absence due to an accident at work may be counted towards the formal attendance process and therefore considered during an attendance review meeting, for example where the accident has been caused by the employee's own negligence or if the number of accidents have reached an unacceptable level. Managers should seek advice from the HR Advice Centre when deciding whether it is appropriate to count the absence.

Disability related absence

For further information on disability related absences please refer to the *Managing Absence and Disability Guide*.

Managing an employee's return to work

When the employee returns to work managers should follow the guidance provided in the *Welcome Back Meetings Guide*.

A welcome back meeting must be held after any period of absence, including part-day, to discuss the employee's absence. It is very important that this discussion takes place and that both the manager and the employee discuss the absence and the employee's overall well being.

As part of that meeting, the manager should be sympathetic and supportive, making sure they give the employee every opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have, understand the employee's ability to work and offer any support available.

Employees may find it difficult to discuss their health concerns particularly for conditions that are of a personal nature, such as irritable bowel syndrome, the menopause or gender related health issues. Managers should allow time and listen to the employee when having these conversations.

Informal review discussion

Where an employee's attendance is becoming a cause of concern, an informal review discussion should normally take place to identify and address any issues.

What is the purpose of an informal review discussion?

The purpose of an informal review discussion is to:

- Provide an opportunity for the manager to discuss the employee's absence
- Ensure that the employee understands that their attendance is valued by Royal Mail Group and how their absence impacts upon the business
- Identify any steps that can be taken by either the employee or Royal Mail Group to assist and support the employee to meet the standards
- Make the employee aware of the reason for concern
- Ensure that the employee is aware of the attendance standards and that they

- are reminded of the consequences of failing to meet the standards
- Provide the opportunity for the employee to ask to meet with their manager to discuss any concerns about their attendance

Preparing for an informal review discussion

The manager should advise the employee that they will need to attend an informal review discussion, explaining the purpose of it and giving them enough notice of the date and time of the meeting to allow them to prepare for it, including consulting their union representative where required. A copy of the employee's attendance record should be provided at the meeting.

The employee can also ask their manager for an informal review discussion if there is anything that they want to raise on their attendance.

What to include at an informal review discussion

An informal review discussion may include the following:

- A reminder of the support that Royal Mail Group can offer, including the First Class Support helpline, details below
- Any underlying health issue, such as recent return from long term absence
- Other problems either in or outside of work
- The causes, frequency, duration and pattern of absences which could include; which part of the week, if the absence precedes or follows holiday, or if the employee has already been on an Attendance Review 1 in the last two years
- Nature of work, shift system, recent changes to the demands of the job
- Actions required by the employee to improve their attendance
- A reminder of the attendance standards and potential consequences of not meeting them

The approach should be both sympathetic and supportive. It should be clearly focused on achieving improvement and maintaining standards. The manager and the employee will jointly identify any support measures that may need to be considered.

What if the attendance does not improve?

Where the employee's attendance does not improve following an informal review discussion, consideration should be given to arranging a formal attendance review meeting. For further information, please refer to the *Attendance Review Meetings Guide*.

Other Support

Support and further information on managing health conditions can be found on the Royal Mail First Class Support helpline.

First Class Support, the confidential and independent helpline – provided free for employees and available 24 hours a day.

First Class Support can be accessed by:

- Calling 0800 6888 777
- Visiting www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk

Keeping records

Records should be kept of all contact made with an employee who is absent and should be recorded in the employee's attendance record. It is particularly important to keep records of attendance review meetings.

Records should:

- Be accurate
- Be up to date
- Contain details of all absences and any discussions between the manager and the employee
- Be held securely and locally in accordance with the Data Protection Act

More information on how to keep good records can be found in the *Keeping Records Guide*.

Where to go for further information

The “Getting help” box on the front of this guide tells you where to find more information. Guidance is also available on the *Policy and Information Site* on *PSP*.

Further information about common absence causes and helping people return to work can be found in the Health Guidance Notes available through the Health & Safety intranet Site.

In the case of any inconsistency between this supporting guide and the Attendance Agreement the terms of the Agreement takes precedence.

Related forms and other documents

You may find it useful to read the following documents, located on the Policy and Information site on PSP, in conjunction with this guide:

- National Attendance Agreement between RMG & CWU
- National Attendance Agreement between RMG & Unite-CMA
- Attendance Policy
- Absence Notification and Maintaining Contact Guide
- Absence Declaration Form
- Managing Long Term Absence Guide
- Welcome Back Meetings Guide
- Attendance Review Meetings Guide
- Keeping Records Guide