

Absence Management Policy		
Security Classification	OFFICIAL	
Disclosable under Freedom of Information Act 2000	Yes	

POLICY TITLE	Absence Management
POLICY REFERENCE NUMBER	WMP037
Version	1.2

POLICY OWNERSHIP	
DIRECTORATE	BUSINESS SERVICES
BUSINESS AREA	PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION DATE	March 2020
LATEST REVIEW DATE	March 2024
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	March 2027
RISK RATING	LOW
EQUALITY ANALYSIS	LOW

West Mercia Police welcome comments and suggestions from the public and staff about the contents and implementation of this policy.
Please e-mail SPIPolicyandProcedure@westmercia.police.uk

Document view should be changed to suit individual needs – click Design, Page Colour, Choose page background colour.

1.0 POLICY OUTLINE

Reliable attendance is critical to the achievement of West Mercia Police's operational objectives. Each officer and member of police staff has a responsibility to maximise their attendance at work in order to support their colleagues and provide the highest possible standards of service to the public.

West Mercia Police have a responsibility to protect the health and well-being of officers, police staff and volunteers and to provide appropriate levels of support for individuals who are absent due to genuine ill-health and assist them in returning to work as soon as is practicable.

2.0 PURPOSE OF POLICY

This Policy explains the rights and obligations of individuals when absent due to sickness and the responsibilities of managers to monitor and manage sickness absence in a robust but supportive and consistent manner.

2.1 Reporting Sickness Absence

An officer or member of staff who is unable to attend work because of illness must notify their line manager of the reason for their absence as soon as reasonably possible on the first day of absence and at the latest by their normal start time.

This notification should be made in person, by telephone, unless the nature of the illness prevents this, or alternative arrangements have been agreed with the line manager.

If necessary, the line manager may contact the individual to obtain further information concerning the nature and expected duration of the absence and/or to ensure any urgent tasks can be reallocated. The line manager may also request that the individual provide regular updates on their condition and possible return to work.

If the absence continues beyond 7 calendar days, the individual must obtain a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' ('Fit Note') from their doctor and send it to their line manager as soon as possible.

Officers and staff who fail to comply with the absence reporting procedure will be regarded as being on unauthorised absence from work which may result in loss of pay and/or disciplinary action.

2.2 Contacts during Sickness Absence

Where an individual is absent for a prolonged period, they will be expected to contact the line manager on a regular basis to provide an update on their condition. Depending on the nature of the illness, consideration will be given as to whether it would be appropriate for the line manager (or some other person) to make periodic visits to the individual at their home (or other convenient location).

The line manager will meet regularly with the designated HR Officer, and, if appropriate, an Occupational Health Adviser, to review the individual's absence and consider options to assist their return to work.

Individuals who are absent from work due to sickness will continue to accrue annual leave.

If an individual is unable to take annual leave due to prolonged sickness absence, they are entitled to carry over a maximum of 20 days untaken leave to the next leave year, in line with the Working Time Directive.

2.3 Referral to Occupational Health

The line manager should seek advice or guidance from the Occupational Health team

- in cases of psychological illness, Stress/Depression, serious physical illness, back problems, serious injury on duty.
- where an individual is absent from work for 28 calendar days or more, and the absence is not due to post-operative recovery or being on a waiting list for treatment.
- if they have any concerns about the individual's health or absence from work.

The Occupational Health team will seek the individual's consent before obtaining medical reports from their doctor. The individual may be required to attend an examination by the Force Medical Adviser or other specialist as determined by the Occupational Health Adviser.

2.4 Return to Work

When an individual returns to work following a period of sick leave, the line manager must meet with them within 2 working days to discuss their absence record and any health, personal or work-related issues which may be affecting their attendance.

Where the period of absence is related to a declared disability, the line manager should also discuss whether any reasonable adjustments can be made to enable the individual to maximise their attendance.

Where the individual has been absent for a prolonged period, consideration may be given to a return to work on recuperative duties where this may assist an earlier return to work and help the individual resume full duties more quickly.

2.5 Managing individuals with disabilities

West Mercia Police will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to assist individuals with a disability to maximise their attendance at work.

An individual with a declared disability may take paid leave during working hours to attend appointments for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment. Disability related leave is not recorded as sick leave.

Absence from work due to sickness which is related to a declared disability will be classified as sickness for recording and reporting purposes. However, such absence will be identified separately from non-disability related sickness absence for management purposes.

2.6 Pregnancy related absence

Pregnancy related sickness absence will be classified as sickness for recording and reporting purposes. However, such absence will be identified separately from non-pregnancy related sickness absence for management purposes.

2.7 Monitoring and Managing Attendance

2.7.1 Informal Process

Where an individual has had 4 spells of absence or 10 days absence in a 12-month rolling period (pro rata equivalent for part time workers), or the line manager has concerns about their attendance, an Attendance Review meeting will be held with the First Line manager.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the individual's absence record and reasons for absence, their general performance and other influences on their attendance and agree an Action Plan to improve their attendance.

Directorate-level absence information and individual cases of long-term absence will be monitored regularly by senior managers to ensure sickness absence is managed in a robust and consistent manner and appropriate action is taken to support individuals and assist them to return to work.

2.7.2 Formal Process

If informal processes have failed to achieve the improvement required, formal routes will be considered. These will follow the Unsatisfactory Performance & Attendance Procedure for Police Officers, and the Capability procedure for Police Staff.

See [Appendix A](#) – Attendance Management process.

2.8 Stage 3 Capability Meeting

A Stage 3 meeting under the Unsatisfactory Performance and Attendance (Police Officers)/ Capability (Police Staff) procedures will be held where:

- an individual is absent from work for a prolonged period and the Force Medical Adviser has advised that there is no prospect of a return to work within a reasonable period of time, but the individual does not meet the criteria for Early Ill-health Retirement.

or

- a medical condition continues to significantly affect an individual's ability to attend work regularly and/or fulfill the main responsibilities of their role, and all alternative options have been explored.

This may result in the termination of the individual's service/ employment on the grounds of medical incapability.

Termination for this reason can take place before an individual's sick pay period has expired.

2.9 Disciplinary procedures

Misconduct or Unsatisfactory performance procedures may be instigated where

- an individual fails to follow the agreed absence reporting procedures.
- an individual has advised their manager that they are unfit to attend work and there is factual evidence to the contrary.
- there is evidence that someone is protracting their absence or exaggerating ill health in order to take or extend sick leave

Failure to comply with or engage with the requirements of this policy may impact on pay.

2.10 Sick Pay Provisions

Entitlements to sick pay for Police Officers and Police Staff are set out in Police Regulations and the Police Staff Council conditions of service which are available on the Force intranet.

2.11 Related policies and procedures

This policy has links to the following procedures:

- Unsatisfactory Performance and Attendance (Police Officers)
- Capability (Police Staff)
- Early Ill-Health Retirement (Police Officers and Staff)
- Limited Duties Guidance (Police Officers)
- Misconduct (Police Officers and Staff)
- Medical Redeployment (Police Officers and Staff)
- Workplace Adjustment Guidance
- Suspension Procedure
- Probationary Period (Police Staff) Guidance
- **Unsatisfactory Performance** (Student Officers) Procedure

2.12 Legal Framework

- Working Time Directive 1998
- Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended)
- Access to Health Records Act 1990
- Access to Medical Reports Act 1988
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Employment Practices Data Protection Code
- Equality Act 2010

3.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY

Training

Line Managers, officers and staff will be briefed on the policy and procedure once it is adopted.

4.0 CONSULTATION

<i>Business Lead/ Chief Officer Consulted</i>	<i>Date Consulted</i>
Bal Jacob/ Rachel Hartland-Lane	Nov 2022
Toni Williams-Long / Rachel Hartland-Lane	July 2023

This policy has been endorsed by the West Mercia Police Policy and Procedure Committee following consultation with representatives from

- UNISON (July 2023)
- West Mercia Police Federation (July 2023)
- Superintendents Association
- Occupational Health
- Health and Safety
- HR Business Partners
- Internal Disability support groups

5.0 DOCUMENT HISTORY

The history and rationale for change to policy will be recorded using the below chart:

Date	Author / Reviewer	Amendment(s) & Rationale	Approval / Adoption
		Previously approved at JNCC meeting	JNCC 27/11/2013
Mar 2020	G Christie	Reviewed – No changes revert to West Mercia policy v1.0	March 2020
Nov 2022	L Coghlan	Minor amendment to guidance, Change to 13.5 to reflect all pre booked leave v1.1	Nov 2022

OFFICIAL

July 2023	K Palmer	Policy reviewed – Attendance Recognition Scheme (2.10) removed. Change of Policy Title, new title “Absence Management Policy”. v1.2	Feb 2024 Policy and Procedure Exec Meeting
-----------	----------	---	--

6.0 PROCEDURE

The procedure for managing Sickness Absence is set out in [Appendix A](#)

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENTS / HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

See Health & Safety, Risk and Equalities Assessment

8.0 EQUALITY ANALYSIS

The Equality Analysis (EA), Health & Safety Assessment (HAS) and Risk Assessment (RA) associated with this document are available on request.

APPENDIX A: SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

