

# LONG-TERM ABSENCE FROM WORK

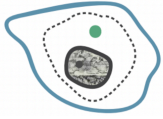
We may have to take formal steps if you are off work sick long-term, or we are concerned about the number of days you take off for sickness or injury.

What we do depends on why you are off work and the pattern of your absences. We may want to talk informally with you about why you are, or have been, absent and we may get medical evidence so that we can better understand your situation. We may also want formal meetings to review your absence in more detail and to explore whether we need to make reasonable adjustments to help you either return to work or to work longer periods.

If we want medical evidence, we will usually ask you to be examined by a doctor, an occupational health therapist, or another specialist of our choice. We will pay for this, and all reports will be kept confidential. We will ask for your consent for us to have full access to medical reports and to discuss the contents with the relevant medical practitioner. You do not have to consent, but if you do not, we will make decisions based on existing medical and other information. We will consider making reasonable adjustments to your role and/or workspace if you are found to have a disability.

We understand that this process is difficult and upsetting if you suffer from a serious health condition, and you might feel as if you are being pressured into returning to work before you are ready. We do not want to make you feel that way, but no business can continue employing staff indefinitely if they are not able to work. We feel it is better that you are fully aware of our thought process and intentions than the alternative, which is us not communicating with you and eventually deciding to dismiss without having told you in advance what the consequences of continued absence would be.

We will write to you before we hold a formal meeting and explain when, where, and why it is taking place. You must let us know as soon as possible if you can't attend and we will try to find a mutually acceptable alternative date.



We may want to discuss why you are off work, how long you expect to remain off work, and whether you are likely to be off work for the same reason in the future. We will also review medical evidence and explore whether further reports are needed and if there is anything CHARTS can do to help improve your health and/or make it easier for you to attend work. If you have been off work long-term, we may suggest you take part in a return-to-work programme; if you are persistently absent, we may set you targets to improve your attendance against a deadline. You should also expect to be warned that you may face dismissal if your attendance does not improve.

## **Fit for Work service (FFW)**

Fit for Work is an occupational assessment service set up and funded by the government to help people return to work. This sometimes involves drawing up a return-to-work plan.

You may be referred to FFW by CHARTS or by your GP after you have been off work for four weeks. Sometimes your GP may begin the process earlier if they think it will be of help to you.

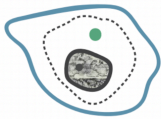
Please let the Executive Director know if your doctor does refer you to FFW. If your FFW case manager wants to speak to us, please ask them to contact the Head of Finance & Operations.

## **Returning to work**

We may ask you to come to a return-to-work interview after you have been off work due to sickness or injury. At the interview, we will discuss why you were off work and ensure you are fit to return.

### **If you are unable to return to work or to improve attendance**

Should you be unable to return to work, or you fail to meet the deadline set for improved attendance, you will be asked to attend another meeting. Our aim at this meeting will be to find out if the situation is expected to change, and we may have to give you notice of



dismissal if it becomes clear that you are either unlikely to return to work or your attendance will not improve in the short term. Before issuing notice of dismissal, we will also explore whether redeploying you elsewhere within CHARTS is practicable and would address your attendance issues, and we will consider any other issues you want to discuss.

You may face action under CHARTS' disciplinary procedure (see Staff Handbook) if we conclude that you are not off work for a medical condition and you are unable to offer any other satisfactory explanation. This may lead to your dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct.

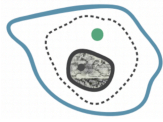
You have the right to appeal if we dismiss you on the grounds of your long-term absence. To do this, you need to respond within a week of being told you have been dismissed by writing directly to the person named in the letter you received. In your response to that letter, you must explain exactly why you are appealing.

Wherever possible, the appeal hearing meeting will not be led by the person who took the decision to dismiss you. CHARTS' final decision will be sent to you in writing and we try to do this within two weeks of the appeal hearing. You do not have a further right to appeal against your dismissal.

## **Being accompanied at formal meetings**

You have the right to take a colleague or a trade union representative with you to any formal meeting called under this procedure, including the appeal meeting. You should tell us as soon as possible who will accompany you and it is your responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If you choose a work colleague, we will not prevent them from attending, but we may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work at that time would cause operational problems.

Your colleague or union representative can, if this is your preference, explain the key points of your case to the meeting and can respond on your behalf. You can also confer



with them during the meeting. They must not, however, answer questions put directly to you or try to prevent CHARTS asking questions or outlining its arguments.

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## **Document Version Control**

Any questions, contact [info@chartsargyllandisles.org](mailto:info@chartsargyllandisles.org)

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