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*ReFocus Ltd*

*Absence Management Policy 2021/2022*

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The following policy has been approved by the Executive Head Teacher and agreed by the management team.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis unless circumstances arise requiring the policy to be reviewed earlier.

Date: September 2021

Review date: January 2022

Signed: *PTucker*

Review Record:

Name (Print): Name (signature): Date:	Name (Print): Name (Signature): Date:
Name (Print): Name (Signature): Date:	Name (Print): Name (Signature): Date:

- This policy covers the absence management procedures for ReFocus Ltd.
- This policy is not stand alone and should be used with other ReFocus Ltd policies including, but not limited to: Safer Recruitment, Malpractice, Safeguarding, E safety, GDPR, The Staff handbook and Code of Conduct.
- When referring to staff members this includes all full-time staff members, volunteers, support staff and supply staff.



**ReFocus Ltd**

## **ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### ***Statement of Policy***

ReFocus Ltd recognises the contribution of its employees and is committed to providing good working conditions and health and safety standards.

It is the responsibility of ReFocus Ltd to make the most effective use of its employees and the Absence Management Policy contributes to that objective.

### **Key Principles**

This procedure enables managers to address absence issues, both short- and long-term, in a fair, consistent and equitable manner. It is recognised however that all cases must be dealt with on an individual basis because of differing circumstances therefore this procedure gives an outline of the principles to be observed.

This procedure will be invoked where management has cause for concern regarding an employee's short-term persistent or long-term absence.

ReFocus Ltd recognises that everybody is sick or subject to emergencies from time to time, however, regular attendance at work is a contractual requirement.

Short-term absenteeism refers to a series of illnesses that are often unconnected which result in frequent, short periods of absence.

It is acknowledged that occasions do arise when people are away from work on a long-term basis because of chronic or acute ill health. Although each case will be dealt with on an individual basis this policy outlines certain principles that will always be observed. Long-term absence would normally be classed as at least six weeks continuous absence.

This procedure applies to ALL staff within ReFocus Ltd except for employees currently in their probationary period.

Advice should be taken from the Human Resources Department / Head Office at all formal stages of this procedure to ensure the consistent application of this procedure throughout ReFocus Ltd.

To ensure equality for all, this policy will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage / civil



partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation trade union membership, or any other personal characteristics.

The policy and procedure will be reviewed periodically giving due consideration to any legislative changes.

## **General Points**

ReFocus Ltd procedure for managing absence MUST be followed. It is the responsibility of every employee to report any absence and only in exceptional cases should this procedure be carried out by someone else on their behalf.

If an employee knowingly gives any false information or makes false statements about their sickness it may be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken. In proven cases of gross misconduct, it could lead to dismissal (e.g., absent on sick leave and working elsewhere).

Employees will not be entitled to an additional day off if they are sick on a statutory holiday.

ReFocus Ltd reserves the right to request a doctor's Certificate for periods of absence of less than seven days in cases of short-term persistent absence. Where a cost is incurred, this will be reimbursed by ReFocus Ltd.

Any employee who unreasonably fails to comply with ReFocus Ltd's Absence Management policy and procedure may have their Occupational Sick Pay withheld.

ReFocus Ltd has the right to dismiss employees whilst they are receiving sick pay entitlement. Any decision to dismiss will be supported by medical advice. Employees who are dismissed are entitled to receive the full amount that would be equivalent to their occupational sick pay entitlement, plus the relevant notice and leave entitlement.

## ***Employee Responsibilities***

### **Reporting Absence**

All employees must contact their line manager as early as possible on the first day of absence. The employee must make this call. The only exception is where it is clearly not possible for employees to ring personally – such as admission to Hospital.

Employees must talk directly to their line manager and not leave messages with anybody else. If the line manager is unavailable a message must be left with their immediate manager giving the reason for the absence.



If an employee does not have a telephone at home alternative arrangements for reporting sickness must be made.

When reporting absence employees must give the following information:

- the reason for the absence (if known)
- the expected length of absence (if known)

In cases of continued absence, employees must contact their line manager again on the fourth day of absence to provide them with up-to-date information.

### **Sickness Certification**

If an absence lasts for seven calendar days or less, on the first day back at work, employees will be required to complete an absence form, giving the reasons for absence. The form will be countersigned by a line manager and subsequently will be kept in the individual's personnel file.

If an absence exceeds seven calendar days a doctor's statement of fitness to work certificate must be submitted to the line manager, no later than the tenth day of absence, covering the absence from the eighth day. The completed form will be forwarded to the HR Department.

If an absence continues beyond the period covered by an initial medical certificate, further fitness to work certificates must be submitted to give continuous cover for the period of absence. On eventual return to work employees must complete ReFocus Ltd Ltd.'s Sickness Self-Certificate in respect of the first seven days or less not covered by a doctor's medical certificate.

If the doctor's medical certificate does not specify the period of absence covered, it will be classed as covering a period of seven calendar days only.

### ***Return to Work Interview***

On returning to work, employees will be required to attend a return-to-work interview with their line manager to discuss their absence.

The discussion should allow for an exchange of information and be as frank and as open as possible as this will prevent any misunderstandings concerning the nature of the absence.

This will also enable the line manager to discuss any assistance or reasonable adjustments that may be possible to enable an employee to return to work or prevent further absence occurring.

A record of the interview should be kept by the line manager.



## ***Short-Term Persistent Absence***

### **Monitoring and Consultation**

ReFocus Ltd operates an accurate method of recording and monitoring levels of absence. If the amount of time being taken off for illness is giving cause for concern, the line manager will discuss this with the employee at the return-to-work interview.

### **Continued Absence**

If absence levels continue to cause concern, then employees should be referred to a Company specified doctor / Occupational Health Service for an independent medical examination. Alternatively, a medical report may be requested from the individual's GP with the permission of the member of staff concerned.

If the absence is the consequence of an underlying medical condition, then medical advice would be sought to identify any reasonable adjustments or assistance that ReFocus Ltd. can provide.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Continued non-attendance may result in disciplinary action being taken if no underlying medical condition can be identified. This may be in the form of either a verbal, first written or final written warning, and could ultimately lead to dismissal. As part of this process employees will be given the opportunity to improve their attendance.

## ***Long-Term Absence***

### **Consultation and Discussion**

In cases of long-term absence, the line manager must arrange to conduct regular 'care and concern' interviews to discuss possible courses of action should the absence continue (these interviews should be recorded, and notes sent to the employee concerned). Employees may choose to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative. The line manager may also choose to be accompanied, normally by a Human Resources Adviser or another manager

If employees are too ill to travel the line manager may choose to conduct a home visit at a mutually convenient time.

### **Medical Advice**

In cases of long-term absence, regular medical assessments must be sought.

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Where there is doubt regarding an employee's ability to return to work on a permanent basis advice must be sought from ReFocus Ltd. specified doctor / Occupational Health Service Provider. Alternatively, a medical report may be requested from the individual's GP with the permission of the member of staff concerned.

Employees must make themselves available to attend medical referrals.

### **Returning to Work**

Wherever possible ReFocus Ltd will make its best endeavours to aid a return to work on a permanent basis. To establish the most effective way of doing this ReFocus Ltd. may seek further medical advice.

This may include making reasonable adjustments to the employee's job, allowing a phased return to work, or by allowing the employee to return to work on a reduced or alternative hours basis.

Where a phased return to work is recommended through the medical assessment, the employee will be able to return to work on a part-time basis and receive their full pay. This will be for a maximum period of four weeks, after that the employee must substitute their annual leave for days not worked or receive payment only for the hours worked.

Where an employee requests a phased return to work themselves, annual leave should be taken for days not worked or they may opt to receive payment only for the hours worked.

### **Redeployment**

If medical opinion is that an employee is unfit to return to their former employment, the possibility of alternative employment will be considered. However, depending on the availability of alternative posts, this may not be possible.

### **Ill-Health Retirement**

Should the medical opinion indicate that an employee is permanently unfit, employees may have the option for applying for early retirement on the grounds of ill health, in line with the provisions of their pension scheme. This option should be discussed with individuals in full at the appropriate time.

### **Resignation**

At any time during this process an employee may choose to resign from their employment. They are required to give their contractual notice and any outstanding accrued holiday entitlement will be paid in lieu.



Payment in lieu of notice may be agreed by the line manager.

### ***Dismissal on the Grounds of Capability***

Should the dismissal of an employee be identified during the final care and concern meeting as the only appropriate option (i.e., all other options as outlined above have been investigated and found to be inappropriate) a formal capability review meeting must be held with the employee in question and their line manager to fully consider the situation again.

At this meeting, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative.

Following the meeting if the employee is dismissed, they will be given a letter confirming the reason for dismissal, the date of dismissal, their right to appeal, any payment in lieu of contractual notice and any other outstanding payments to which they are entitled e.g., annual leave.

### **Sick Pay Regulations**

The sick pay regulations are financial provisions and indicate an entitlement to sick pay and in no way indicate the amount of sickness absence to which an employee is entitled.

### ***Data Protection***

All information relating to an individual's absence will be handled in line with Data Protection principles and will be used purely to carry out the management of their employment.



## Annex A

### ***Trigger Points - Irregular Attendance***

Trigger points are agreed levels of sickness absence which, when reached, will trigger management action.

Where someone is approaching a trigger point, it may be an early indication of a problem and line managers should informally discuss an employee's attendance record with him/her, including reminding him/her of the standards expected and of the support available to help his/her attendance improve, including early interventions.

Trigger points are used to remind managers that the amount of sick leave being taken may be a problem and that it should be addressed.

Before considering action, line managers should consider each case on its merits and take account of:

- Isolated illnesses/accidents which should not lead to formal action in an otherwise good attendance record

- Staff who are disabled, where special consideration may have to be given to a higher level of absence.

- Whether the absence has resulted from an industrial injury or illness, in these circumstances further action may not be appropriate.

- Whether the absence is related to pregnancy or an assault in connection with their duties, in which case no further action should be taken

### **Trigger Points**

Line managers should consider taking formal action when:

- Self-certificated absences in any 12-month period exceed 14 days.

- Absences exceed 7 days in a 6-month period or less, although one isolated absence of 7 days would not necessarily require action

- Absences fall regularly on specific days, e.g., a Friday and/or Monday

- Eight or more spells of sickness absence are taken in a 12-month period, or four or more spells are taken in a six-month period or less, irrespective of the length of the absences

- Absences for frequent and unrelated non-specific illnesses, e.g., headache, stomach ache, back trouble, especially where these are self-certificated.