

Long COVID

HR Support Process

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Introduction

Our 6 Step Process will guide managers and employee on the overall process of supporting Long COVID absence going forward.

Supporting Long COVID Absences

Step 1: Initial Support – *within the first 10 to 29 days of absence*

An employee unfit to return to work after the 10 day isolation period due to COVID symptoms will be recorded as Long COVID and their ongoing absence highlighted to the HRSAU.

- ✚ The HRSAU will make contact with the employees' line manager to advise that a fit note is required to support the ongoing absence and obtain additional information including the specific reason for absence and fit note expiry date.

If the absence is likely to continue beyond 29 days, the HRSAU will advise that a HR Representative will be assigned to support with the absence and a meeting should be arranged once the absence reaches this point.

During this period, the employees' line manager should continue to have regular supportive discussions with the employee to ensure that they are receiving help from their GP, are sign posted to the appropriate resources and to discuss any adjustments that could be made to allow the employee to return to the workplace.

Step 2: Attendance Meeting - *between 6 – 8 weeks (42 – 56 days absence)*

If the employee remains unfit for work due to long COVID, the HRSAU will contact the manager to advise that an Attendance Meeting should be arranged in accordance with [NHS Scotland Workforce Attendance Policy](#). The employee will receive a letter from their manager inviting them to an attendance meeting with at least 14 days' notice provided. The manager will then arrange and chair the meeting with the employee at which a member of the HR Team will be available to virtually attend. The employee will also have the opportunity to attend the meeting accompanied.

Please ensure you use the COVID Attendance Management letter templates. Both letters can be located on our HR COVID Support Page.

As part of the Attendance Meeting the following will be discussed:

- How the employees recovery is progressing and any treatment or developments that may impact on the timescales for their return to work;
- Any medical advice or information that the employee wishes to share e.g. from an Occupational Health Service (OHS) self-referral
- The benefits of a management referral to OHS in supporting your return to work
- Any workplace adjustments which would support their return to work
- Medical certification requirements for pay purposes
- Annual leave entitlement
- Update the employee on any workplace developments
- Any other relevant points

Consideration should be given to submitting a [management referral](#) to OHS. Please note that not every employee who is absent will require a referral to OHS and this should be considered on a case by case basis. Where a referral would be required, this should be discussed with the employee prior to a management referral being submitted.

Following the Attendance Meeting the manager should maintain regular contact with the employee. If the employee continues to be unfit for work then a further formal attendance meeting would be arranged.

Step 3: Referral to OHS

As part of the Attendance Meeting discussions regarding the absence of any improvement, an indicated return date of the employee and/or where further advice is required, consideration should be given to submitting a [management referral](#) to OHS. Please note that not every employee who is absent will require a referral to OHS and this should be considered on a case by case basis. Where a referral would be required, this should be discussed with the employee prior to a management referral being submitted.

Management referrals should include all relevant information with regards to the employee's COVID related absence and details of the following:

- Confirmation of COVID infection and possible long COVID symptoms (even if provisional diagnosis) by GP/Hospital/specialist.
- As much factual background information as known regarding history, symptoms reported and advice/treatment received to date (if known).
- Any other relevant health matters which be impacting on recovery/return to work.
- Details of any adjustments or support measures which have been considered prior to referral.

OHS referral should be forwarded on to the HR Representative who will check and approve the referral information before forwarding this onto Helen Downie, Lead Nurse at OHS.

OHS will consider an appointment with the Physio and Mental health team for further assessment. OHS will provide an updated report to the manager and HR Representative regarding the outcome of the assessment, the employees fitness to work, any reasonable adjustments to be considered and a timescale for review (if applicable).

Step 4: OHS Appointment

On receipt of the referral, OHS will triage the employee and where appropriate, will arrange to contact the employee to discuss the referral and their ongoing COVID absence. Following the appointment, OHS will advise on the employee's fitness to work status and where applicable, recommend any reasonable adjustments for consideration. OHS will also sign post the employee to any appropriate resources.

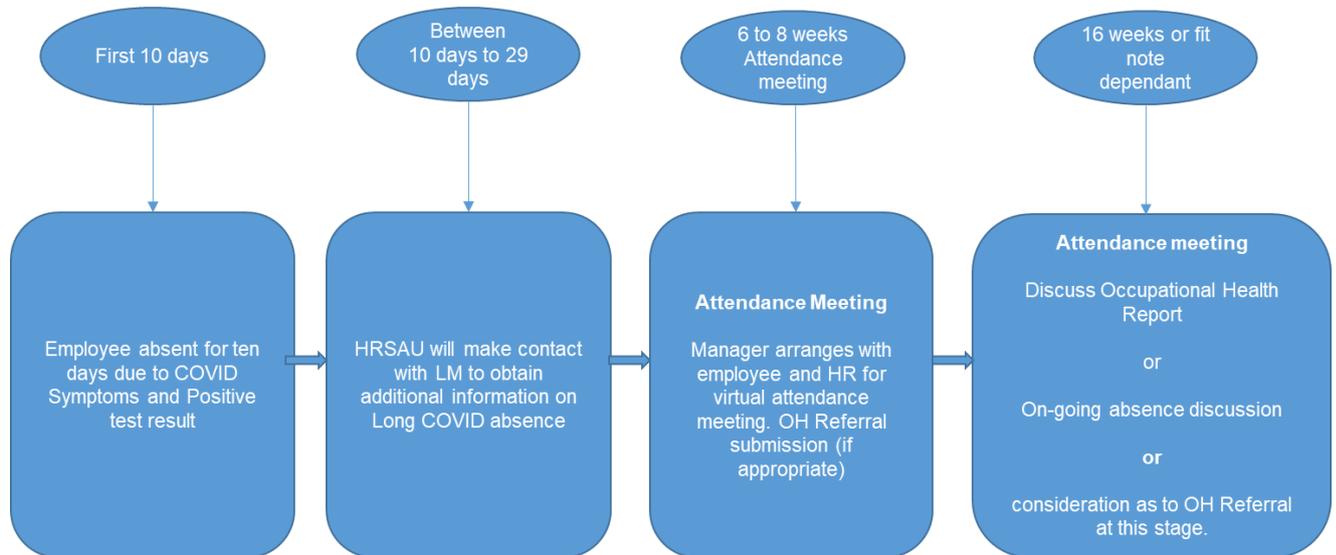
Step 5: Attendance Meeting – *discussing OHS Report*

At the Attendance Meeting, discussions will take place regarding the OHS Report and the advice provided. If the employee is able to return to work with adjustments, these will be discussed in detail and agreed between the employee and the line manager. If the employee is unable to return to work, any future OHS appointments and the timescale for review will be noted. Furthermore, a plan for keeping in touch with the employee will be agreed, i.e regular check-in phone call every 1-2 weeks.

Step 6: Ongoing Attendance Meetings – every 4-6 weeks or fit note dependant.

If the employee continues to be unfit for work then further Attendance Meetings should be arranged.

Long COVID Timeline



Long COVID FAQ's

Question:	Answer:
<p>When should an employee be recorded on SSTS as Long COVID?</p>	<p>Long COVID should be recorded as of the 11th day of isolation from the onset of symptoms/positive test result. To ensure we have accurate records, please end the Special Leave – COVID Positive and create a new absence under Special Leave – Long COVID.</p> <p>There are exceptional circumstances where an employee may require to be recorded as COVID Positive for a period of more than 10 days E.g. An asymptomatic employee tests positive and later develops symptoms and re-starts the isolation period. However, it is recommended you clarify the correct code with HR COVID Support team if you have any queries.</p>
<p>Are fit notes required to be submitted for an employee absent due to Long COVID?</p>	<p>Yes, the employee should be submitting fit notes as per the usual attendance process.</p> <p>In order for the employee to remain on Special Leave – Long COVID, their fit note must state Long COVID as the reason for absence.</p>
<p>If the employee is unfit to return to work due to Long COVID should this progress through the formal stages of OFS Attendance process?</p>	<p>Employees absent due to Long COVID will be invited to an Attendance Meeting for support. This is similar to any employees who are unfit for work on long term absence and recorded under sick leave. At present, the case will not progress through the Formal Stages (1-3) of the NHS Scotland Attendance Policy and Process</p> <p>Managers are advised to keep regular contact with the employee and ensure they are supported in their recovery as much as possible. It is beneficial to understand the symptoms of Long COVID in order to best support our employees.</p>
<p>Should the absence review meeting be held virtually or face to face?</p>	<p>Absence meetings will be held via Microsoft Teams or via a conference call. A guide is available for managers and employees.</p>
<p>What leave is used to support a phased return for an employee returning from a Long COVID absence?</p>	<p>Employees who are absent due to Long COVID are entitled to a 'phased return' to support their return to work. Although the employee has not been recorded under sick leave they should still be afforded the same phased return arrangements of utilising special leave for up to 4 weeks of the phased return and then utilising annual leave. However, consideration should be given to STAC(TCS09)2020 which details that staff who are off sick due to COVID should receive a phased return and that in some cases, advise may be for a longer than normal phased return. In such cases, an extension to the usual 4 weeks normal contractual pay [special leave] may be required.</p> <p>Managers should discuss with the employee regarding the duration and adjustments needed to support a return to work and phased return arrangements.</p>
<p>What annual leave can be carried over if an employee has been absent due to Long COVID?</p>	<p>Employees are encouraged to take their annual leave where possible throughout the year. However, if this has not been possible due to the employee being off with Long COVID, they are entitled to receive any annual leave which they haven't already taken. Normal public holiday provisions would apply.</p> <p>There is no provision for 2020/2021 unused annual leave to be paid, this can only be carried over.</p>