

Supporting health and wellbeing policy

New policy number: **1005**
Old instruction number:
Issue date: **23 January 2023**
Reviewed as current:
Owner: **Assistant Director, People Services**
Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

Contents

1	Introduction	3
	Section 1 – Employee section	3
2	Employee support services	3
3	Supporting your health at work	6
4	Employee responsibilities during sickness absence	8
5	Work related absence	10
6	Supporting your finances	12
7	Outside Employment	12
8	Returning to work	12
9	Redeployment	13
10	Ill health retirement	13
11	Dying to work charter	14
12	Sickness absence triggers	14
	Section 2 – Managers section	15
13	Training and support	15
14	Employee Support Meetings	15
15	Agreeing a contact strategy	16

16 Working with Occupational Health Service 17

17 Reduced hours 18

18 Outside employment 18

19 Return to work 18

20 Redeployment 19

21 Ill health retirement 20

22 Risk assessments 20

23 Medical panels 20

24 Sickness absence triggers 21

25 Records 21

26 Help and support 21

Document history 22

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the arrangements for supporting staff health and wellbeing and applies to all employees.
- 1.2 The Brigade's Wellbeing Strategy focusses on the **prevention** and **treatment** of poor **psychological, physical** and **workplace** wellbeing, as well as the promotion of good psychological, physical and workplace wellbeing. The Supporting health and wellbeing policy is a tool for bringing the Wellbeing strategy to life when you need it most, during a period of ill-health.
- 1.3 This policy will equip employees and managers with the knowledge and tools to support themselves and each other in maintaining good levels of health and when recovering from a period of ill-health. Providing support at the right time can be instrumental in supporting employees to continue to succeed in the workplace and enables the Brigade to deliver excellence through having the best people and being the best place to work.
- 1.4 This in turn will support employees to bring their whole selves to work in providing the reassurance that in cases of ill-health or disability employees will receive appropriate support to succeed in their roles as long as they are able. The policy also provides detail on how support will continue throughout a period of absence both through locally agreed arrangements and employee support services.
- 1.5 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
 - Service – We put the public first.
 - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
 - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
 - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
 - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
 - Integrity – We act with honesty.

Section 1 – Employee section

2 Employee support services

Occupational Health

- 2.1 Occupational health exists to keep people well, productive, and safely 'in work', by providing independent specialist medical advice to employers and employees. This advice includes:
 - Promotion of health and wellbeing.
 - Advice and strategies for managing risks to health from work.
 - The effects of work on health, and health on work.
 - Interventions, adjustments, and support, to enable and sustain a return to work.
 - Clinical advice to manage health issues.
- 2.2 Our Occupational Health Service (OHS) provides a range of support including access to occupational health physicians (doctors), occupational health advisers (physiotherapists), nurses, Wellperson screenings, functional restoration programmes and post incident support. Further

details can be found here or by contacting the Wellbeing Team on extension 30490 or wellbeingteam@london-fire.gov.uk.

Counselling and Trauma Services

- 2.3 This service provides an opportunity to talk in confidence to a professionally trained counsellor. The subjects that can be covered may be personal (e.g., relationship problems, sexual orientation, gender identity), work related (e.g., bullying, trauma) or health-related issues (e.g., Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, depression).
- 2.4 Further detail can be found here or by contacting Counselling and Trauma Services by email using PSC&TS@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 2.5 If you need to speak to a counsellor urgently or need to request a Post Critical Incident Contact (PCIC) please call Control on 0208 555 1200 extension 50208 and ask for the duty counsellor to be paged.

Mental Health First Aiders

- 2.6 The Brigade has a number of Mental Health First Aiders across staff groups and Brigade locations. Mental Health First Aiders are not professional counsellors, therapists, or psychiatrists, they are colleagues who have been formally trained by Mental Health First Aid England to administer mental health first aid in the workplace and have attained a Mental Health First Aid Certificate. They are trained to:
 - Spot the early signs and symptoms of emotional distress and potential mental health issues.
 - Start a supportive conversation with a colleague who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.
 - Explain and maintain confidentiality.
 - Listen to a person non-judgementally with compassion and understanding.
 - Assess the risk and severity of the situation and signpost a person to professional support.
- 2.7 For more information about how to contact your local Brigade Mental Health First Aider please contact the Mental Health and Trauma Team Co-ordinator at wellbeingteam@london-fire.gov.uk.

Fitness Advice Team

- 2.8 The Fitness Advice Team can provide all staff with information, advice and guidance related to physical wellbeing matters. This includes:
 - Helping to prepare for the periodic fitness testing programme (operational staff only).
 - Understanding more about the types of activities you should be undertaking.
 - Learning about the food you should be eating to improve your overall fitness levels.
 - Getting advice about returning to work following sickness or maternity leave.
 - Specialist advice to women who may be experiencing episodes of poor physical health as a result of the menopause.
- 2.9 Please contact wellbeingteam@london-fire.gov.uk if you need support in any of these areas.

Equality Support Groups

- 2.10 Equality Support Groups (ESG's) provide independent and confidential support, signposting and guidance to their members. Our ESG's are listed below. Further information can be found here and in Policy number 965 - Equality support groups.
 - Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)

- Black & Ethnic Minority Members (BEMM) – FBU Group
- Disability Working Group (DWG)
- Dyslexia and Neuro Diverse Support Group
- Emerald Society – Irish Group
- Fairness – Black and Ethnic Minority Group
- LGBT+ – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity / Expression
- Menopause Action Group (MAG)
- Mental Health Support
- Military Veterans Support Group
- Parents and Carers
- Phoenix – Domestic Abuse Group
- Women in the Fire Service (WFS)
- Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) – FBU Group

Firefighters Charity

- 2.11 The Firefighters Charity offers specialist lifelong support for all staff groups, empowering individuals to achieve psychological, physical, and social wellbeing throughout their lives. For further information on how they can provide support please contact them on 0800 3898820 or go to their website www.firefighterscharity.org.uk.

Welfare Fund

- 2.12 The Welfare fund is a stand-alone membership organisation and can provide access to:

- Gyms/health centres etc (via the Blue Light Card).
- Hardship fund.
- Welfare care packages for members who are suffering from an illness or bereavement.

For further detail on this you can visit www.lfbwelfarefund.com, call 020 7407 3964 or email info@lfbwelfarefund.com

Chaplaincy

- 2.13 Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital Trust provide the London Fire Brigade with a multi-faith chaplaincy service. It comprises a chaplaincy team leader and a team of chaplains drawn from the major world faiths. The service is available during the normal working day with an on-call facility at other times and weekends.

The Chaplaincy Service provides:

- Pastoral support to members of staff on an individual and confidential basis.
- Advice and support for funerals.
- The conduct of funeral services.
- Advice about faith issues to individual members of staff and managers to assist service delivery and employment requirements.

- 2.14 The chaplaincy can be contacted via email to mia.holborn@gstt.nhs.net.

Trade Unions

- 2.15 The Brigade has recognised trade unions who can offer advice and support on all issues affecting you at work including your health and wellbeing. Union representatives are trained to provide support and representation in any formal processes. Union membership also entitles you to free legal advice if appropriate.

People Services

- 2.16 People Services is a large department full of knowledge and expertise across a wide range of areas including Wellbeing, Inclusion and Diversity, Neurodiversity, Learning Support and Resilience, and HR Services. People Services are here to support you and can answer any questions or concerns that you may have. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the HR Helpdesk on 0208 555 1200 extension 89100 and they can advise you of the best person to speak to provide the necessary support.

Long Covid Support

- 2.17 Staff who have had symptoms of Covid-19 for more than four weeks and need support either to get back to work or to remain at work can access the following support:
- Occupational Health
 - Royal Brompton Hospital
 - Functional Restoration Programme
 - Fitness Assessments (Operational staff only)
- 2.18 Further information regarding these services can be found here or by talking to your line manager.

3 Supporting your health at work

Employee Support Meeting

- 3.1 An Employee Support Meeting (ESM) can take place at your request or at the request of your line manager where there is a concern regarding your health and any support that you may require. The meetings will be held either with your line manager or an alternative agreed point of contact, and can take place whilst you are at work, or absent from work. They are used to discuss your health and wellbeing to understand what support you may need. You will be given at least 7 days' notice of this meeting unless otherwise mutually agreed and they will normally take place at either a Brigade location, via video call or via a telephone call.
- 3.2 You may be accompanied by either a work colleague or a Trade Union Representative. You may instruct a work colleague or Trade Union Representative to attend the meeting on your behalf and/or provide a written submission rather than attend the meeting in person.
- 3.3 The specific discussion at any ESM will be dependent on your needs at the time. During an ESM the following may be discussed, if appropriate:
- An update on your health and any support you may be receiving.
 - Signposting to additional services available.
 - Return to work plan such as a phased return to work, workplace adjustments, training or refamiliarisation.
 - Review of adjustments in place and their continued effectiveness.
- 3.4 Where your health condition is likely to result in you being unable to return to your contractual role, an ESM may also be arranged to discuss:
- Redeployment.
 - Ill-Health Retirement.
- 3.5 There is the potential for a lot of information to be discussed during an ESM and, particularly during a period of ill-health, it may be difficult to take it all in. A representative from People

Services will also attend ESMs where redeployment and ill health retirement are discussed to ensure that you have all the information relating to these processes that you may need.

- 3.6 After the meeting your manager or alternative agreed point of contact will also send you an accurate summary of the meeting, including contact details of any support services discussed. A copy of this will be placed on your e-prf.

Stress Risk Assessments

- 3.7 If you believe your role or other work-related factors may be having a detrimental impact on your psychological health, you can complete a workplace stress questionnaire. It is important that this is completed as soon as you realise that work may be the trigger for your stress. This is a useful tool to allow managers to understand the areas of concern and starts a conversation as to how a manager can support you. When used proactively, before illness, the Stress Risk Assessment can be used to reduce likelihood of future sickness through the implementation of proactive support. Further detail can be found in Policy number 690 – Managing stress within the LFB.

Reasonable adjustments

- 3.8 If you have a health condition or a disability, in accordance with the Disability Provisions of the Equality Act 2010, reasonable adjustments should be made to support your health and wellbeing whilst at work. You are considered to be disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal daily activities. Such adjustments will be referred to within the Brigade as workplace adjustments.

Workplace adjustments

- 3.9 Examples of workplace adjustments to support your health and wellbeing include provision of specialist equipment, a change in working pattern or a change in working location. These adjustments can be temporary, or permanent, dependent on your needs, but their effectiveness will be reviewed in an ESM at least every 6 months. You should discuss, with your line manager, the adjustments available to you. Discussion regarding adjustments, including what has been agreed and what cannot be facilitated at present will be recorded in your Workplace Adjustment passport. Please visit the Workplace Adjustment passport details on Hotwire here to record this.

Reduced hours

- 3.10 There may be times that your long term and substantial health condition impacts on your ability to undertake the full remit of your role and, although you have not had sickness absence, Occupational Health have advised that a period of reduced hours would support your wellbeing. Reduced hours will not normally exceed a period of 6 weeks.
- 3.11 If you feel that you need more than 6 weeks of reduced hours within a 12-month rolling period, you should discuss this with your line manager. It may be possible to facilitate this with the use of annual leave, unpaid special leave, or a temporary change in your contractual hours.

Disability Treatment Leave

- 3.12 It is recognised that if you have a disability, you may require time off from work for attending clinic appointments or other assessment, medical treatment and/or in-patient or out-patient recuperation/rehabilitation, for a reason relating to your disability. Where it lasts for one or more whole days (part day absences for disability treatment will be recorded as GTV (Gone to Visit)

Disability Treatment Leave (DTL) will be given. This will normally be limited to sixteen working days per year.

Surgical treatment for visual deficiencies

- 3.13 There are several surgical techniques available for the purpose of correcting vision to avoid or reduce the requirement for glasses or contact lenses. If you are considering refractive surgery, then you should seek an assessment with a reputable eye surgeon to discuss the risks and benefits of the various options. All staff are advised to consult with the OHS.
- 3.14 If you are operational, then it is likely that a minimum period of two months light duties will be recommended post operatively. After two months you will need to attend for a medical assessment with the OHS to present the post-surgery check-up report from the surgeon to confirm that the operation has been successful and not resulted in any complications. The OH will advise on your fitness to return to full duties. The OHS will undertake further investigations as necessary to determine your fitness for role and this may include a referral for further assessment/investigation to confirm that a satisfactory recovery from surgery has been made and there are no visual impairments that might compromise ability to safely discharge your role.

Tetanus vaccinations

- 3.15 Due to risk of exposure to the bacterium *clostridium tetani* involved in firefighting and other operational duties, you are encouraged to ensure you are adequately protected against tetanus by means of vaccination. Treatment of a tetanus prone wound (puncture wounds, burns or scratches) by qualified staff is possible, however many injuries that could cause tetanus could go unrecognised. Immunisation will reduce the risk of this occurring.
- 3.16 You are advised to check with your general practitioner (GP) records to determine your immune status and arrange vaccination through the National Health Service (NHS). Early recognition and treatment can be lifesaving.
- 3.17 Operational staff who are deployed outside of the UK are advised to contact the Wellbeing Medical Team in advance of travelling, so that advice can be sought as to whether any additional booster injections are recommended.
- 3.18 You are advised to keep a record with you at all times when on duty to confirm when and what combination type of anti-tetanus injections have been received. Appropriate cards can be provided on request from GPs at the time of immunisation or from previous medical history also available from the GP.

Union street gym

- 3.19 The Brigade provides a gym at union street for you to use to maintain your fitness and wellbeing. Details of its opening times and conditions of use, including the reporting of any defects to equipment, accidents or near misses are on Hotwire. You must undertake a gym induction before using the gym and details of how to do arrange this are also on the Hotwire page.

4 Employee responsibilities during sickness absence

Sickness reporting procedure

- 4.1 Should you feel too unwell to attend work, you should contact your manager by telephone at least one hour, or as soon as reasonably practicable, prior to the commencement of your work time. During this initial contact you should advise of the nature of your sickness absence and agree when future contact will take place i.e., will you call again before the following shift, or do

you know that you will be unable to work for a minimum period of time. It is acknowledged that in some circumstances you may not feel comfortable reporting your condition to your line manager. In this case you must let your manager know that you will not be able to attend work and agree who you would be most comfortable reporting your condition to.

- 4.2 If you feel that reporting your sickness to your line manager might be detrimental to your wellbeing, you should report your sickness to a more senior manager. For operational watch-based staff, where a more senior manager cannot be located prior to the commencement of the employee's shift, your sickness is to be reported to the Officer of the Day (OOD).

Certification

Up to 7 consecutive calendar days

- 4.3 Upon your return to work you will be required to complete a self-certification form. The form will be sent to your Brigade email address for you to complete.

8 consecutive calendar days or more

- 4.4 If your period of sickness lasts 8 consecutive calendar days or more, you will be required to submit a 'Statement of Fitness for Work Note' also known as a 'Medical Certificate' from your GP or a hospital to cover your sickness absence from day 8. These should be submitted to your line manager or agreed point of contact as soon as practicable after they are obtained. They can be submitted electronically via email and should be clear and easy to read. If your certificate is not clear enough your line manager may ask you to provide the original.
- 4.5 You must provide consecutive medical certificates for the full period of sickness absence. This is for the purposes of paying Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and occupational sick pay. Your GP is unable to backdate certificates, so it is advised that you schedule your appointments with the GP in good time to ensure you are able to obtain a medical certificate covering your dates of absence.
- 4.6 It is important to understand that failure to provide medical certificates may result in your entitlement to occupational sick pay and/or SSP ceasing.
- 4.7 Where the GP advises that you 'may be fit for work with recommendations' your manager will review the recommendations, seeking support from the OHS if necessary. The recommendations will be discussed with you, and you will be advised whether they can be accommodated. All agreed adjustments will be updated in your workplace adjustment passport.
- 4.8 If you become unwell whilst abroad and are unfit to travel back to the UK, you will need to follow normal sickness reporting procedures as detailed above. If your medical condition prevents you from returning to the UK by the 8th day of sickness, you will need to obtain an appropriate medical statement confirming that you are unfit to travel to the UK.

Contact

- 4.9 It is important that you and your line manager maintain regular contact during your sickness absence to:
- Monitor your progress in terms of your return to health.
 - Provide you with information relating to support services available.
 - Provide you with information so that you can make informed decisions (for example, in relation to sick pay entitlement).
 - Ensure that you remain informed about events in the workplace.
- 4.10 It is the joint responsibility of you and your line manager, or your agreed point of contact, to agree how often the contact should take place. This will be dependent on your individual

circumstances, but contact should be made at least every 28 days. Contact can take place over the phone, via video call, in person or in certain circumstances via email.

- 4.11 It is important that you make yourself available for any agreed contact. If you become unavailable for any agreed contact, you must contact your line manager as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- 4.12 Staying connected with your team or watch can help you to continue to feel a part of the workplace and reduce anxiety when returning to work. Your manager will speak to you about the type of contact you would like to receive from your colleagues and, if appropriate, ensure you remain engaged in non-work focussed team activities.

Referral to Occupational Health Service

- 4.13 There may be instances when your manager feels it is necessary to refer you to OHS. This may be because:
 - You or your manager are concerned about your wellbeing or fitness for work.
 - You have reached a sickness absence trigger point (as set out in section 12).
- 4.14 Before you are referred to the OHS, your line manager will speak to you about the reason for the referral, the referral process, and obtain your verbal agreement. If you do not agree to a referral to the OHS or withdraw your consent to release the outcome report to your line manager, your line manager will only be able to provide support based on the information that they hold about your medical condition. This may limit the support that your line manager is able to provide. More detail about what to expect from an OHS referral can be found [here](#).

Attendance at OHS appointments

- 4.15 It is important that you attend OHS appointments as this will help your manager to understand your health condition and what support they may be able to give you. Failure to attend OHS appointments or provide consent to release reports will mean that your manager will make a decision on your fitness to perform your role, and any support you may require, based on the information already available to them.

Physiotherapy

- 4.16 Training for and participating in sporting events may increase your risk of injury. Occupational Health Physios can support you with strengthening exercises and stretching routines to minimise this risk. All Occupational Health outcome reports will be sent to your line manager or alternative agreed contact with consent. It is therefore important that you advise your line manager of your request to ensure that they are able to provide any necessary additional support. If you are fit for work and feel you would benefit from physiotherapy then appointments for watch-based, flexi-duty and control staff will be made in off-duty time.

5 Work related absence

Due to Service

- 5.1 Within the Brigade, a Due to Service Injury is an injury which occurred whilst on duty having arisen out of or in connection with work as a result of an authorised duty.
- 5.2 Support on the 'Due to Service' process can also be obtained by contacting the Wellbeing Team on extension 30490. Further detail on the 'Due to Service' process and how to put in a request can be found [here](#).

- 5.3 Your sickness absence will automatically be recorded as 'Not Due to Service'. If you feel that your sickness should be considered as 'Due to Service' it is important that you have a conversation with your line manager as soon as possible. Applications for a due to service classification should be submitted to the line manager within three months of the event which caused the sickness absence, or three months of the commencement of the relevant period of sickness if later, unless the employee can demonstrate there are reasonable grounds for a longer period to apply. If you feel unable to approach your immediate line manager then you can contact either an alternative manager or, if you are a member, a Trade Union representative and ask for their support to initiate the process for you.
- 5.4 In order for Due to Service to be agreed three criteria must be met:
- The event occurred whilst on duty.
 - The event has arisen out of or in connection with work.
 - The event occurred as a result of an authorised duty.

Industrial injuries disablement benefit

- 5.5 You are entitled to Disablement Benefit if an injury arising out of and in the course of your employment results in incapacity lasting more than 15 weeks. For Disablement Benefit purposes, an accident means any unexpected happening or incident at work. Benefit is paid only if the accident results in personal injury, whether or not the effect of the injury is immediate (for example, breaking a leg in a fall) or delayed (for example if a minor cut later turns septic). Generally, an accident which happens at work is treated as having occurred as a result of the work and Disablement Benefit will be paid unless there is evidence to the contrary.
- 5.6 If you have an accident on duty which may cause continuing disability, you are advised to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of the accident as soon as possible even if you do not proceed on sick leave at the time of the accident to ensure there is no undue delay in the payment of any subsequent Disablement Benefit. Form BI 100A, which is available from local social security offices or via the DWP web site, should be used for this purpose.
- 5.7 In cases where a Form BI 100A (Industrial accident) or BI 100PD (Industrial diseases) is received from the DWP in respect of your sickness absence and your sick pay is being adjusted as though State benefit for sickness were receivable, deductions will be continued at sickness benefit rates, but you will be required, in writing (a) to agree, that, in the event of benefit for injury being ultimately received, any excess sick pay granted shall be recoverable by the Brigade, by deductions from future pay, or if you are not still in the Brigade's service, you shall repay the excess sick pay and (b) to undertake to inform People Services Department immediately notification is received from the DWP that State benefit for injury is payable.
- 5.8 For the purpose of the Social Security Acts and Regulations any accident at work must be entered promptly in the Accident Book. In compliance with these requirements, the provisions of Policy number 463 – Accident books must be followed.
- 5.9 The reporting and investigation of accidents resulting in personal injury are required under both Social Security and Health and Safety legislation. Instructions for dealing with investigations are contained in the Brigade's Policy number 368 - Health, safety and environmental event investigation policy (personal injuries near misses and traffic accidents). All injury events details are to be recorded within the Safety Event Reporting Database (SERD) in accordance with the policy.

6 Supporting your finances

Sick pay

- 6.1 Details of the sick pay you will receive during a period of sickness absence can be found in
- Policy number 558 – Operational staff pay rates and sick pay policy.
 - The Staff Code for FRS and Control Staff.
- 6.2 You will be notified in advance should your contractual sick pay be affected whilst you are off sick. A letter will be sent to you advising you of the change in pay and the date at which it will take effect. You will be provided with approximately 28 days' notice. In exceptional circumstances your sick pay may be extended, the letter you receive will detail how you can apply for an extension.

Welfare Fund

- 6.3 The London Fire Brigade Welfare Fund is a standalone membership organisation.
- 6.4 Some of the benefits of being a member, serving or retired include:
- The death benefit scheme.
 - Access to gyms/health centres etc (via the Blue Light Card).
 - Hardship Fund.
 - The Welfare Fund provides a welfare care package for members, who they know are suffering from an illness or bereavement, in the form of a card, flowers or voucher.
- 6.5 For further information on the fund, visit www.lfbwelfarefund.com, call 020 7407 3964 or email info@lfbwelfarefund.com.

Annual leave

- 6.6 Sickness absence and an associated reduction in pay may have an impact on your wellbeing because of financial instability. If you are on half or nil pay it is possible for you take some of your accrued annual leave whilst on sickness absence resulting in you being paid full pay for the period of your annual leave.
- 6.7 If you wish to do this, please contact your line manager or agreed contact who will support you to progress your request.

7 Outside Employment

- 7.1 You will not be able to undertake outside employment while you are off sick. However, if your outside employment is considered to be beneficial to your recovery and will not aggravate or restrict your ability to recover and return to your substantive role, then you can contact your line manager to discuss this further.
- 7.2 Further detail regarding outside employment and sickness can be found in Policy number 551 - Outside employment.

8 Returning to work

- 8.1 Recovering from illness is not always a quick or straightforward process and there may be occasions where you are fit to return to work, however you are not well enough to undertake all the aspects of your role straight away. If you are well enough to undertake only some of the duties of your contractual role your manager will consider, in consultation with the OHS, whether

it is possible for you to return to work and what support they can provide to gradually rebuild your resilience to return to your full role. In such circumstances, during an ESM prior to your return to work, your manager may discuss with you:

- **Restricted Duties** - This may be either a temporary change to your duties or only fulfilling certain aspects of your role until your condition improves further to allow you to undertake your full substantive role.
- **Phased Return to work** - This can help build your confidence and a gradual return to your full role. This would be a temporary arrangement to support a full return to your role. The first 6 weeks of a phased return to work will be paid at full pay, following this you will be paid for the hours worked. Leave may be used to further extend this period. If however you find that a change in working hours supports your condition on a longer term basis you can consider putting in a request to change your hours on a permanent basis via Policy number 448 - Working with choice – flexible working options.

Return to work meeting

- 8.2 Upon your return to work your line manager will arrange a return to work meeting. This will give them the opportunity to welcome you back, provide you with any updates or changes that may have occurred, confirm any temporary changes to your working arrangements and confirm any necessary support that you may require to support your return to work.

9 Redeployment

- 9.1 Whilst it is hoped that you can return to your role, there are occasions where this might not be possible, because of your health condition and the specific demands of your role. OHS may advise that you are unlikely to be able to return to your current role but may be able to carry out alternative roles within the organisation.
- 9.2 If you have been advised by the OHS that you are not likely to be fit for the foreseeable future to carry out your role, or they are unable to give a timescale for a full return to your role, your manager will arrange an ESM to meet with you to discuss how they can support you. In the first instance every effort will be made to find you a role within the same staffing group. If this is not possible then your line manager will work with you, within your agreed redeployment period, to identify a suitable role within a different staffing group, subject to vacancies.
- 9.3 Upon identifying a role of interest, you may be required to participate in the recruitment process to ensure that you have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience for the role. To secure redeployment you will be required to meet the minimum criteria for the role. Additionally, where available, short term development opportunities may be provided to support you to gain a better understanding of the role.
- 9.4 Should you be successful in securing the new role and your current salary is higher than that of your new role, you will be given three years pay protection if you are operational, and one year pay protection if you are FRS or Control.

10 Ill health retirement

- 10.1 Occasionally when an employee is too unwell to undertake any work, ill health retirement (IHR) can be explored. This will only be considered when all reasonable avenues of support have been exhausted and the OHS have advised that they are not likely to become well enough to fulfil their role, they are unable to determine whether a recovery will be made, or they are unable to provide a prognosis.

- 10.2 This can only be explored for members of the Firefighters Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme once reasonable adjustments and/or redeployment have been fully considered (see sections 3.8, 3.9 and all of 9).
- 10.3 Learning that you may be unable to work in the future can be very upsetting and difficult to take in. Support can be provided by:
- Your line manager or point of contact.
 - Your colleagues.
 - Counselling and Trauma Services.
 - Firefighters Charity.
 - Trade Union Representative.
 - Pre-retirement workshops.
- 10.4 Your manager will arrange an ESM with you to discuss the advice received from Occupational Health and the process for ill health retirement will only start with your consent.
- 10.5 The Brigade will obtain a medical opinion from an Independent Qualified Medical Practitioner (IQMP) for those individuals in the Firefighters Pension Scheme, or from an Independent Registered Medical Practitioner (IRMP) for those in the Local Government Pension Scheme on the individual's medical capability to undertake their role.
- 10.6 The medical opinion will be considered by the Brigade and a decision will be made as to whether you are to be ill health retired. Your line manager will contact you to discuss the outcome and you will also receive written confirmation of the decision, including the medical rationale for the IQMP/IRMP's opinion. If you are dissatisfied with the medical opinion provided, the letter will outline your rights of appeal.
- 10.7 Should the decision be that you are to be ill health retired you will be provided with notice on full pay in accordance with your contract of employment. You will not be required to provide a medical certificate for the period of your contractual notice.

11 Dying to work charter

- 11.1 In the unfortunate event that you become terminally ill, the Brigade has committed to providing support following a diagnosis by:
- (a) Allowing you to continue undertaking safe and reasonable work should you wish to do so.
 - (b) Providing you with security of work, peace of mind and allowing you to choose the best course of action for yourself and your family, to help you through the challenging period with dignity and without undue financial loss.
- 11.2 Should you receive such a diagnosis, at a time that you feel able, you should share this with your line manager or point of contact so that they can support you.

12 Sickness absence triggers

- 12.1 Even though your manager may have taken steps to support your medical condition it is understood that this support may not avoid sickness absence.
- 12.2 The following sickness absence triggers have been set to provide you and your manager with a guideline as to the level of sickness absence(s) which may require additional support.

6 month rolling period

- 3 separate instances, or

- a total absence of 6 working days or over in any six-month period.

12 month rolling period

- 5 separate instances, or
- a total absence of 8 working days or over in any twelve-month period.

These sickness absence triggers do not include any maternity related illness, short term due to service sickness absences or the first 10 days of a period of Covid-19 sickness prior to 1 June 2024.

- 12.3 An ESM may be arranged by your manager when these sickness absence triggers are reached, and a conversation will take place to determine whether any further or additional support may be required and set targets for a sustained return to work.
- 12.4 If your sickness absence(s) is/are considered to be as a direct result of a disability (see section 4.3) then your manager will consider this and, as a workplace adjustment, your sickness absence trigger thresholds will be doubled.
- 12.5 Sickness absence triggers are monitored over a 12 month rolling period, should you reach an absence trigger within an active monitoring period, your manager may invite you to a further meeting as provided for in Policy number 873 – sickness capability policy.

Section 2 – Managers section

13 Training and support

- 13.1 As a manager you are responsible for supporting the health and wellbeing of your team and at times you are likely to have a team member with a medical condition who requires support to enable them to come to work.
- 13.2 To assist you in providing support the following resources are available:
- Education sessions with the OHS on how to support employees.
 - Education sessions with People Services on supporting health in the workplace.
 - Support from People Services.
 - Computer based training every 2 years on supporting individuals within the workplace.
 - Case conferences with the OHS.
 - Medical Panels.
- 13.3 It is appreciated that as a manager dealing with complex cases can sometimes have an impact on your wellbeing also. Support is also available to you from:
- Counselling and Trauma Services.
 - People Services.
 - Your line manager.
- 13.4 A full list of support services can be found in section 3.

14 Employee Support Meetings

Creating a safe space to talk

- 14.1 An important part of having an ESM is to make sure that it takes place in an environment where the individual feels safe to be able share their thoughts and feelings.

- 14.2 You should allocate plenty of time for the meeting in a private, quiet, and neutral location, which in some cases may not be Brigade premises, where you will not be interrupted. This can be at a Brigade location, via a video call or through a telephone call.
- 14.3 Remind the individual of the confidentiality that will be maintained and encourage the person to talk, using simple open questions whilst actively listening to what is being said, alongside not being judgemental and/or making any assumptions about what is discussed.
- 14.4 Respond calmly and clearly to any questions asked and be understanding and reassuring in relation to the matters raised. If you are unsure about the answers to any questions advise that you will have to seek further information/support and will get back to them within a given timeframe.
- 14.5 The ESM is in place to encourage the employee to be open about how they are feeling from both a psychological and physical perspective, so a safe space to be able to share this information is an important part of making the ESM successful.

Thinking of the bigger picture

- 14.6 A health condition can often be exacerbated by psychological ill health. This can be related to isolation from colleagues and friends.
- 14.7 The individual may suffer from:
- The absence of structure to their day.
 - Worry about the financial implications of being off sick.
 - Concerns that they may not be well enough to fulfil their role again and uncertainty in their future.
- 14.8 When holding an ESM being mindful of these potential concerns will allow you to offer the appropriate support suited to their needs.

Notification of ESM

- 14.9 As a manager you are responsible for providing the individual with 7 days' notice of an ESM in writing and advising that they have a right to be accompanied by either a work colleague or a trade union representative. This can be either via letter or via email.

Recording discussions

- 14.10 Once you have held the ESM it is important to provide a written summary of the meeting. This allows for the individual to have a copy of the information that has been shared with them in the meeting. A copy of the outcome letter or email must also be placed on the e-prf.

15 Agreeing a contact strategy

- 15.1 It is important to agree how you will keep in touch with the employee whilst they are off sick. This allows you as a manager to continue to understand how you can support the employee in a return to work. There is no set timetable as to when contact should be made as this will be dependent on the individual and their particular circumstances.
- 15.2 It is important to have a conversation with the individual to mutually agree how often contact should take place. This will give you an opportunity to get updates on the individual's condition and will assist your understanding as to whether the level of support you are providing needs to change. This also allows you to provide the individual with any updates or changes in the

workplace such as any changes in the team or watch, changes to policies or changes to OHS appointments etc.

- 15.3 You should be mindful of the individual's ability to process information. If you are updating them on policy changes, consider the format of this information if necessary. It may be appropriate in some cases to delay sharing information.
- 15.4 When considering how frequent contact should be, consideration can be given to:
- When the individual's medical certificate is due to expire.
 - When the individual's next GP/specialist appointment is.
 - When the next OHS appointment is.
 - Will it be by telephone or video call.
 - Would the individual prefer to attend a Brigade location (this also offers the opportunity for them to remain engaged with their colleagues).
- 15.5 Contact should be at least once every 28 days if the sickness absence is long term and should be recorded on the Individual Contact Record on StARS. This should also include the details of any agreed Brigade alternative point of contact for the employee.

16 Working with Occupational Health Service

- 16.1 Managers should give consideration to referring an individual to the OHS when:
- They have been on sickness absence for 28 days or more.
 - There are concerns about their health or fitness to undertake their role.
 - They have exceeded a sickness absence trigger as set out in section 12.
- 16.2 Prior to referring an employee to the OHS, you must speak with them to discuss the referral, the purpose, and the process. During this conversation you should ask the employee to confirm that they agree to the referral being made; this agreement can be verbal. Employees can withhold consent and can change the consent given at any time in the process. If consent is withheld, your decisions regarding the support that can be offered to them can only be made based on the information available. If consent is withdrawn, you should speak with the employee to understand their concerns and see what can be done to address these.
- 16.3 The purpose of a management referral to the OHS service is to try to establish:
- How you can continue to support an individual's health at work where there are concerns.
 - The likely duration of absence or unavailability to undertake all aspects of their substantive role.
 - What support can be provided to assist an individual's recovery and full return to their substantive role.
 - Whether there are likely to be any limitations upon the individual's ability to return to their existing role and if these are temporary/permanent.
 - Whether the absence is caused by a condition that is likely to last beyond 12 months that has a 'substantial' and '**long-term**' negative effect on the employee's ability to do normal daily activities.
- 16.4 In cases of sickness absence, People Services will contact the manager to determine when a referral is required to the OHS. Managers should consider the following:
- How long the individual has been absent from work.
 - Information from the individual regarding their condition and any planned treatment.

- 16.5 Further guidance on how to complete a management brief and get the best use out of it can be found here.

17 Reduced hours

- 17.1 When an employee has a health condition it is sometimes possible for it to affect their ability to undertake the full remit of their role.
- 17.2 If advice from the OHS is received that the employee would benefit from a reduction in hours to support their condition, consideration should be given as to whether this recommendation can be supported.
- 17.3 Reduced hours would not normally exceed 6 weeks. Whilst working reduced hours, employees can be supported on full pay. If an employee feels that they require more than 6 weeks, then the request can be considered by using annual leave or a change to contractual hours.
- 17.4 If the condition is long term and the employee requests a further period of reduced hours in accordance with 18.3, there is no requirement to seek OHS advice unless a new/additional medical condition is disclosed.
- 17.5 Any changes to hours to support a medical condition should be recorded in the workplace adjustment passports.

18 Outside employment

- 18.1 If an individual contacts you to request that they continue to undertake outside employment whilst off sick, you must review the request. Consideration should be given to whether the outside employment is likely to aggravate their condition or restrict their ability to recover and return to their substantive role with the Brigade. Advice on the impact the outside employment may have on the individual's health can be sought from the OHS to assist you in your decision making.
- 18.2 Further detail regarding outside employment and sickness can be found in Policy number 551 – Outside employment.

19 Return to work

- 19.1 When an individual is well enough to return to work, they may initially not be able to undertake their full substantive role. In such circumstances you should arrange an ESM with them to consider the following:
- **Restricted Duties**
Consider the medical advice from the OHS as to what they are well enough to undertake and determine whether there is alternative work, fitting these criteria, available for them to undertake.
 - **Phased Return to work**
Consideration of a phased return to work can be given where you feel that this would support a return to full hours. OHS advice may be sought if needed, however decisions regarding specific working hours are made by you, as you are better placed to understand what can be facilitated. Such arrangements will usually only last for one or two weeks, but this can be extended up to six weeks depending on the circumstances.
- 19.2 In exceptional circumstances where a phased return to work exceeds a six week period, these cases will need to be agreed by a Head of Service or DAC and the Assistant Director of People Services. This decision must be confirmed in writing and placed on the e-prf. A longer phased

return to work may also be facilitated using outstanding annual leave with the employee's agreement.

- 19.3 Where, following the agreed phased return to work period, the employee is unable to return to their full contractual hours (either on a restricted duties or substantive role basis), but you are able to continue to accommodate their working pattern, the employee will be paid in accordance with the hours worked for the duration of the arrangement (which should last no longer than 6 months). Any requests for a permanent change to working hours/pattern must be progressed in accordance with Policy number 448 - Working with choice - flexible working options.

Return to work meetings

- 19.4 When an employee returns to work following an episode of sickness absence you should conduct a return to work meeting and record the outcome on StARS. Ideally the return to work meeting should take place as soon as possible on the day they return to work.
- 19.5 The purpose of a return to work meeting is to:
- Welcome the employee back.
 - Provide updates on any changes in the employee's absence.
 - If necessary, discuss a return to work plan including training and introduction to new team members or workstreams.
 - Discuss support required and any adjustments that may be made to support the employee's ability to remain at work.
- 19.6 If the employee indicates at this point that their absence was a result of them undertaking their role, consideration should be given as to whether the sickness absence should be classed as Due to Service. Further detail as to how and when to record a due to service sickness absence can be found here.

20 Redeployment

- 20.1 Redeployment is to be explored when one of the following applies:
- An individual has not been able to fulfil their substantive role due to either long term sickness or long term light/amended duties or a mixture of both and there is no clear indication as to when they are likely to be able to fulfil their substantive role; or,
 - occupational Health has provided an opinion that an individual is not likely to be fit for their substantive role or they are unable to give a timescale for a full return to their role.
- 20.2 Discussions regarding redeployment can be very difficult for the employee as it can signify an end to their chosen career. You should arrange an employee support meeting with the individual to:
- Understand their feelings around redeployment.
 - Understand whether they feel they can apply for and succeed in any available roles.
 - Understand what development they may need to support them into an alternative role.
 - Discuss what contractual changes redeployment entails.
- 20.3 Advice must be sought from People Services before an ESM is arranged to discuss redeployment and a representative from People Services will attend the ESM with you to provide support.
- 20.4 For further detail regarding what support can be provided please refer to section 10.

21 Ill health retirement

- 21.1 In most cases the support mechanisms outlined within this policy will assist in supporting an employee's health and assist their ability to attend work on a regular basis. There may however be a small number of cases where these support mechanisms are not effective in assisting employees to attend work on a regular basis or be able to undertake their substantive role owing to the severity of their condition. In these cases, Ill health retirement can be explored for members of the Firefighters Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme only.
- 21.2 Should you have an individual who you believe meets the criteria to be progressed to an Independent Qualified Medical Practitioner (IQMP) or an Independent Registered Medical Practitioner (IRMP) you must contact People Services to discuss this further.
- 21.3 People Services will support you by arranging a meeting with you and the employee to discuss the process for ill-health retirement. They will obtain information regarding the individual's pension scheme, complete the necessary forms for OHS and ensure an appointment is arranged with an IQMP or IRMP to review the case.
- 21.4 If a decision is reached that an employee is to be ill health retired, you will be contacted by a colleague in People Services to inform you of this decision. As the point of contact for the individual you will be asked to inform them of the decision and let them know that they will receive confirmation in writing. The outcome letter will confirm the decision made and any rights of appeal. It is important to keep regular contact with the individual once they have been notified of the decision as they will require support in coming to terms with it. You may wish to discuss at an appropriate time how they wish for the decision to be communicated to their colleagues and whether they are well enough to attend an event to celebrate their service.
- 21.5 It would be useful to remind them of the support that we will continue to provide until their last day of service and support that is available after they have left the organisation.

22 Risk assessments

- 22.1 A health condition may result in a change of support that an individual requires.
- 22.2 When an employee notifies you of a health condition you will need to consider whether a risk assessment is required to understand whether there are any elements in the workplace that are likely to result in an increased risk to their wellbeing or safety. This can be done when the employee has declared a health condition and is continuing to work or, prior to them returning from sickness absence. This will allow you to understand what measures you can put in place to avoid or minimise that risk.
- 22.3 Policy number 690 - Managing stress within LFB and Policy number 673 - Risk assessment procedure, provide further information as to how to undertake a risk assessment.

23 Medical panels

- 23.1 In some complex medical cases it may be necessary for you to seek advice from the Medical Panel.
- 23.2 If a case is to be put forward you should speak to the individual and, where possible, the Trade Union representative and update them on this process.
- 23.3 If the individual wishes they may provide a written submission to be considered by the panel.
- 23.4 The Medical Panel meet approximately every 6 weeks and is formed of representatives from OHS, General Counsel, People Services, Health and Safety and Central Operations. These panel

meetings can be used to discuss specific, complex medical cases where a view is required from all parties to determine whether an individual can remain safely at work.

- 23.5 The Medical Panel may also be used to provide support and advice when making adjustments and deciding whether recommended adjustments are reasonable. If you require further guidance on and how to escalate a case to the Medical Panel, please contact People Services.

24 Sickness absence triggers

- 24.1 When a sickness absence trigger is reached, as set out in section 12, you should consider whether it is appropriate to arrange an ESM.
- 24.2 If the sickness absence(s) is/are considered to be as a direct result of a disability (see section 4.3) then, as a workplace adjustment, the sickness absence trigger threshold will be doubled.
- 24.3 If you are unsure whether the sickness absence is as a result of a disability, then advice can be sought from Occupational Health or People Services.
- 24.4 The sickness absence triggers set out in 12.2 excludes any maternity related illness, short term Due to Service sickness absences or the first 10 days of a period of Covid-19 sickness absence prior to 1 June 2024.
- 24.5 An ESM can assist in determining whether the individual requires additional support as set out in section 14.

25 Records

- 25.1 Please send records by email to RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk. Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record file (ePRF) policy. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

26 Help and support

- 26.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on ext. 89100 option 3 or by email to IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk for help, support or further information.
- 26.2 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss your needs and options.
- 26.3 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn so if you have a suggestion that can improve this policy then please submit your idea via the Staff Suggestion Scheme on Hotwire as set out in Policy number 887 – Staff suggestion scheme. Any changes do need to go through the agreed engagement, consultation, negotiation or governance requirements.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	09/05/24	SDIA	H - 30/10/21	HSWIA	11/01/23	RA	N/A
-----	----------	------	--------------	-------	----------	----	-----

Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 2 para 1 & 2 Page 3 para 3.1 – 3.3 Page 8 para 4.13 Page 22	Introduction consolidated into one. References to Wellworks removed. Surgical treatment for visual deficiencies added. Appendix information added within policy and appendix removed.	07/09/2023
Page 5 para 2.10 Page 8 para 3.15 – 3.18	Equality Support Groups updated. Tetanus vaccinations added.	10/10/2023
Page 4 para 2.10 Page 8 para 3.19 Page 10 para 5.5	Equality Support Groups list updated. Union Street gym details added. Industrial injuries disablement benefit details added.	14/11/2023
Page 5, para 2.23	Bullet point relating to fortnightly huddles that were in place during the 'lockdown' period has been removed.	15/01/2024
Page 5 para 2.10 Page 7 para 3.9 Page 7 para 3.12 Page 12 para 6.1	Military Veterans Support Group added. Workplace Adjustment passport Hotwire link added. Disability treatment leave increased to 16 days. Policy number. 396 replaced by Policy number 558.	18/03/2024
Page 3, para 1.5	Values included.	25/03/2024
Page 20, para 21.2	HR Adviser replaced with People Services.	24/04/2024
Throughout Page 21, para 25.1 Page 21, para 26.2 and 26.3	Covid 10 days sickness adjustments removed wef 01/06/24. Records Services and Data protection details added. Access to alternative policy format details and Staff Suggestion scheme details added.	31/05/2024
Throughout Page 4, para 2.8	References to other sections of the document were modified due to incorrect references being retained after previous re-drafting. Removal of references to now defunct role of 'Local Wellbeing Partners'.	10/06/2024
Throughout	Updated exclusions for sickness absence triggers to include the first 10 days of a period of Covid-19 sickness prior to 1 June 2024.	08/07/2024

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

--	--

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification