

POLICY

Critical Illness Policy

Contact Officer

Director of Personnel

Purpose

The University believes it has a clear responsibility to provide help and support to any of its member of staff who are affected in some way by the diagnosis of a critical illness.

This policy outlines the key principles under which the University discharges this responsibility. It also covers the University's approach to member of staff who have a family member (parent, spouse, partner, child or sibling) and/or who become carers for someone diagnosed with a critical illness.

Overview

'Critical Illness' is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

'Any illness which is life threatening, life changing (for example leading to permanent and/or progressive disability), or requires significant and prolonged treatment (whether as an in-patient or out-patient)'

The University will support any member of staff if they are diagnosed with a critical illness.

Scope

This policy applies to all members of staff (full-time and part-time) of the University. The University believes it has a responsibility to support member of staff affected by a critical illness and will be as flexible as possible in its approach, bearing in mind each individual's personal circumstances and the needs of the organisation.

The policy may also apply if a member of staff is a partner or family member of someone who has a critical illness, or a carer for any other person.

The Policy

1. The University is committed to the following principles, which will provide a framework for all concerned:

Respect for dignity and privacy

2. The University will respect the privacy of any member of staff affected directly or indirectly, via close family or friends, by a critical illness. No sensitive information of any kind should therefore be shared with anyone without the member of staff giving prior consent.

Maintaining member of staff involvement and engagement

3. The University will make every effort to communicate with the member of staff during any absence from work, and reassure the member of staff that they have continuous employment in the same, or a comparable, position.

Continuing to provide employment benefits

4. The University will work with the member of staff to ease the stress of any issues in relation to benefits offered by the University.

Adopting a flexible approach

5. Managers should work to structure the member of staff's work schedule and workload in such a way that gives the member of staff maximum flexibility to manage their medical treatment and related needs, while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency at work.

Continuing to provide access to development opportunities

6. The member of staff should continue to have access to appropriate professional development opportunities, subject to their availability to attend.

Providing the member of staff with information and support

7. The University will make every effort to link the member of staff with available resources that will enable access to a critical illness information and support about, among other things, treatment, and absence from work, as well as successful reintegration into work. They should direct member of staff to sources of financial and, if needed, legal advice. The organisation should also make these resources and information available to family members and friends as well as work colleagues, where appropriate.

Supporting the team affected by the member of staff's situation

8. Managers should remain sensitive to the impact on co-workers and provide practical support where necessary.

If you are diagnosed with a Critical Illness

On diagnosis

Telling your line manager and Personnel

9. Once you're clear about the nature of your critical illness and any impact it will have on your work, you should advise your line manager. If you feel unable to discuss this with your line manager, you can speak to a Personnel Advisor instead. Although this may not be easy for you, it's difficult for your manager, and therefore the University, to support you if we are unaware of your circumstances. Practically, it's also difficult to attend treatment, take time off to meet your own health needs or ensure that your work is covered, without your manager knowing the reason why, and what is involved.
10. If you wish to have a work colleague or member of staff representative with you at any time during discussions with your line manager or Personnel, you may do so.
11. Once you tell your manager, they will need your permission to share that information with Personnel and any other managers who may be affected. Equally, you may prefer to tell them yourself. If so, you should do this as soon as you can so that the University can quickly take the appropriate steps to help you.
12. We are aware that in some circumstances an individual may not know how ill they are until they have begun treatment, or had some form of surgical investigation, and there may be a need to take time off at very short notice.
13. As soon as it's possible and appropriate to do so, Personnel or your line manager will discuss with you:
 - your need to take time off to come to terms with the immediate diagnosis;
 - the likely impact of treatment on your work and whether you would like colleagues and clients to be told about this;
 - if you are willing to give permission for the University to obtain written advice from your doctor about your illness and recommendations for returning to work and time off.
14. You will be offered information on:
 - the University's sick leave and sick pay policies;
 - the University's Critical Illness policy (this document);
 - relevant University benefits;
 - counselling and other support services;
 - flexible working and work adjustment policies;
 - other sources of information and support.

Telling your work colleagues

15. The University respects its member of staff' wish for privacy and confidentiality concerning their personal circumstances. At the same time, the University will need to make arrangements to cover sickness absence effectively.
16. Personnel and your line manager will agree with you from the outset what (if anything) to tell your

colleagues at work (both orally and in writing), and if you want your colleagues to know about your illness but cannot tell them yourself. This will also apply to clients and other third parties.

Payment of salary during sickness absence

17. At the University's discretion, salary payments may be continued during a lengthy period of absence. If you have any concerns about this or your financial position as a result of your critical illness, you should discuss this immediately with a Personnel adviser.
18. Remember to ask your GP for a medical certificate to cover any periods of absence, and to send them to your line manager or Personnel department as soon as possible.

Counselling and support

19. All members of staff have access to a service for counselling. In addition to this, there's also a support network in the University to provide advice and guidance to member of staff affected by a critical illness. Please contact the Personnel department for further information.

Working during treatment

20. Depending on your illness, you may wish to carry on working during your treatment, either full-time or part-time. Before treatment, it's often difficult to know exactly how the treatment may affect you, and it's helpful to let your manager know this so that they're aware you may need to change your work plans at short notice.
21. If you decide you want to remain at home for the majority of the time and work from there, either on a full-time or part-time basis, you should discuss this with your line manager and Personnel, so they can consider the feasibility of this and arrange for technological support to be provided.
22. In summary, we can help you by:
 - planning a reduced or more flexible schedule, for example changing your hours so that you can travel to and from work at less busy times (outside the rush hour);
 - arranging for you to undertake 'light duties' for a period;
 - asking colleagues to be supportive and to help with some of your work;
 - allowing you to take a short break every now and again to rest;
 - allowing you to work from home, if possible.
23. Equally, you may decide that you cannot continue to work but that you just want to keep in touch with what's happening. Again, we can make arrangements for this.

Time off for treatment

24. If you decide to return to work either during or after treatment you may need to take time off for medical appointments and follow-up procedures. When it's necessary to do this during working hours, you should, as far as possible, let your line manager know in advance so that any cover arrangements can be made.

Extended period of absence

25. If you need to take an extended period of absence, this time off will be treated as sickness absence. You might find you need to take a few days or weeks off. This may be as one period of sick time, or could be a few days every month for a period of time.

Keeping in touch

26. In the case of an extended period of absence, the Personnel department or line manager will ask you if you would like your colleagues to keep in contact with you to keep you up to date on work matters, and, if so, how frequent you would like that contact to be. We'll also provide the option of having regular discussions by phone or in person to review how your absence is being managed.

After treatment

27. After your treatment has finished, and if you have not been working during this period, you'll need to decide whether you want to return to work and, if so, whether this will be on a full-time or part-time basis. Clearly this will depend on your prognosis as well as your personal circumstances and wishes. Very often a diagnosis of a critical illness will lead individuals to rethink their lifestyle and their priorities. Some choose not to return to work, others want to resume their everyday lives, including their working lives.
28. We are aware that returning to work after a long period away can be physically and emotionally stressful. We'll provide whatever support we can to assist individuals at this stage in their recovery.

Meeting your line manager and Personnel to discuss options

29. Coming back to work after a break of a few weeks or months can be difficult to adjust to, and you should take the time to think about what's right for you. If you're still coping with some of the effects of treatment, you should discuss any changes that can be made to your work to help you.
30. Before coming back to work a 'return to work' interview will be arranged where you, your manager and Personnel can discuss the options for making the transition back to work. Prior to this the University may make a referral to Occupational Health for advice.
31. Options you might want or need to consider, which the University will do all it reasonably can to accommodate, are:
- making a 'phased return' to work within a fixed timescale, where you increase your hours gradually over a period of time;
 - working from home (at least to begin with) for one day a week or more;
 - working flexible or reduced hours;
 - changing your role or some of your responsibilities for a temporary period;
 - telephone conferences to reduce the need to travel;
 - help with transport to and from work;
 - making alterations to your physical location or workstation.
32. You are advised not to be over-optimistic about what you can manage at the outset.

Disability caused by critical illness

33. If your illness causes disability that affects your return to work, the University will make reasonable

adjustments to enable you to continue to work.

34. In certain circumstances you may be eligible to receive a discretionary ill-health early retirement pension (see below).

Giving up work

35. Some people choose to give up work completely when they're diagnosed with a critical illness. This allows them to focus on their illness and its treatment and to reassess their lives. If work has been a major focus of your life, it can be difficult to adjust to not working. You may want to seek counselling about this, please speak to Personnel who will be able to arrange this.
36. If a prognosis is given that means that the critical illness is likely to be terminal, you may decide that you're unable to continue to attend work. However, it might not be wise for you to formally retire, as death and pension payments attached to your employment may be important to the welfare of your family or dependents. Remember that you cannot choose to retire early (on an enhanced pension) if you're medically fit to work.
37. If, having considered your options, you decide that you want to take early retirement on health grounds, or for personal reasons, it's essential that you take appropriate advice.
38. Consider your own circumstances carefully, taking your health into consideration, as well as your finances, before deciding what to do.

Unfair treatment

39. If you feel that you've been treated unfairly as a result of your illness, you should raise this with your line manager and/or Personnel, who will try to resolve the problem informally.
40. If you're unable to resolve the issue, it will be considered under the University's Grievance procedure.

If a family member or someone you care for is affected by a Critical Illness

41. The University believes it has a responsibility to support member of staff affected in this way and will be as flexible as possible in its approach, bearing in mind each individual's personal circumstances and the needs of the business.

On diagnosis

Telling your line manager and Personnel

42. Once you're clear about the nature of the illness and its potential impact on your work and family life, you should tell your line manager about your circumstances. Although this may not be easy for you to discuss, it's difficult for your manager, and therefore the University, to support you if we're unaware of your circumstances. Practically, it's also difficult for you to take time off to support your partner or family member without your manager knowing the reason why, and what's involved.
43. Once you disclose your situation to your manager, they will need your permission to share that information with Personnel and any other managers who may be affected by your absence. Equally, you may prefer to tell them yourself. If so, you should do this as soon as you can so that the University

can quickly take the appropriate steps to help you.

44. The kind of help we can give you is:

- planning a reduced or more flexible working schedule;
- allowing emergency leave;
- asking colleagues to be supportive and to help with some of your work;
- allowing you to work from home, if possible.

Telling your work colleagues

45. The University respects members of staff's wish for privacy and confidentiality concerning their personal circumstances. At the same time, the University will need to make arrangements for any absence arising from the situation.

46. Personnel and your line manager will agree with you from the outset what, if anything (both orally and in writing), to tell your colleagues at work. This will also apply to clients and other third parties.

47. In addition, there's also a support network in the University to provide advice and guidance to member of staff affected by a critical illness. Please contact the Personnel department for further information.

Family and parental leave

48. You're entitled to reasonable time off to make necessary arrangements to deal with an unexpected or sudden problem concerning a dependant.

49. Dependants are defined as your parents, spouse, partner, children or someone who lives as part of the family.

50. Where a dependant is critically ill, family leave may be taken in the following circumstances:

- to make emergency or longer-term care arrangements;
- to deal with the death of a dependant;
- to deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown in care arrangements with a dependant.

51. If you're the parent of a child who is critically ill, you will be entitled to up to 18 weeks' parental leave to look after your child; the University may allow you a longer period of leave depending on your individual circumstances. This leave may be paid at the University's discretion.

52. There is a Statutory right to request Parental Leave. The right to parental leave entitles all parents who have one year's service with their employer to take a period of:

- up to 13 weeks unpaid leave (in total, not per year) to care for each of their children, up to the child's fifth birthday, or up to five years after the placement date of an adopted child; or
- up to 18 weeks for each disabled child, (in total, not per year) up to the child's 18th birthday.

53. The right applies to mothers and fathers and to a person who has obtained formal parental responsibility for a child under the Children Act. Parents are able to start taking parental leave as soon as the child is born or placed for adoption, or as soon as they have completed the required one

year's qualifying service with their employer, whichever is later.

54. The right to unpaid time off for Family Emergency applies to all members of staff. In many cases a member of staff now has the right to take time off work to deal with an emergency involving someone who depends on them. A husband, wife or partner, child or parent, or someone living with them as part of their family can all be considered as depending on them. Others who rely solely on them for help in an emergency may also qualify. A member of staff can also take time off if a dependant dies and they need to make funeral arrangements or attend the funeral.
55. The amount of time a member of staff can take off is as long as it takes to deal with the immediate emergency. For example, if their child falls ill they can take enough time off to deal with its' initial needs, such as taking them to the doctor and arranging for their care. But a member of staff will need to make other arrangements if they want to stay off work longer to care for them themselves. In most cases, time off work will amount to one or two days but of course may be longer depending on the specific situation.
56. In addition to the above the University will consider the use of other entitlements (such as annual leave or flexileave) if this is appropriate and feasible in the circumstances.

Date Approved	January 2015
Approval Authority	Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee
Date of Commencement	March 2015
Amendment Dates	February 2015
Date for Next Review	July 2018
Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Sickness Management Procedure Sickness Absence Policy
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	Critical Illness Policy 2008