# Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service HR Guidance

## Directed Medical Absence

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| **Version Control** | **Changes Made** | **Author** |
| Version 1May 2024 | Rebrand | HR |

Introduction

There may be times when an employee wishes to attend/return to work but due to their role it may be deemed a hazard, either to the individual concerned or to others. This allows an employee to be absent on full pay and their sick pay entitlement will not be affected. Directed medical absences do not count towards any absence management meetings. Managers should only apply directed medical absence in urgent circumstances, and for short periods only. It is not intended that this should be used for long term sickness absence.

Recording

Managers in core council should follow the guidance below to accurately record Directed Medical Absence on iTrent.

To record a directed medical absence on iTrent you need to use option for ‘other absence’ (not sickness absence). You should then select the option ‘Suspension – medical reasons’.

If an absence starts out as sickness absence, you will need to end the sickness absence in iTrent first, then start a new absence under ‘Suspension - medical reasons’.

Alternatives to Directed Medical Absence

When employees are reporting as fit to work, directed medical absence should be treated as a last resort. In the first instance, managers should consider whether alternative arrangements allowing the employee to work from home or carry out temporary alternative duties could mitigate any health and safety risks. Directed

Medical Absence should only be used where such arrangements are either not appropriate or not practicable.

When would this apply?

Two common examples where routine use of Directed Medical Absence is likely to be appropriate are as follows:

Routine Testing for COVID-19: In services that conduct routine testing for COVID-19, an employee may be asymptomatic but still test positive for COVID-19. To protect employees and service users, it may be appropriate to instruct the employee to remain off work for the period while they may be infectious. Any such absence should be recorded as a directed medical absence from the outset.

48 hours clear following D&V: In some roles such as those working in a care setting or handling food, infection control and prevention guidance requires that staff are symptom free for 48 hours before returning to work following an episode of diarrhoea & vomiting. In such cases the initial absence should be recorded as a sickness absence. However, once the employee reports that they are symptom free, the sickness absence should be ended and the final 48 hours should be recorded as directed medical absence.

This is not an exhaustive list; if you have a different case and are unsure whether Directed Medical Absence is applicable, please contact the HR Team for support.

Where non-symptomatic employees are prevented from attending work because of contact with infectious disease, the absence will be covered by directed medical absence, which is not reckoned against sickness absence entitlements.

If an employee is unwell because of contact with an infectious disease and there is evidence that it may have been contracted in the workplace, please refer to guidance on industrial injury and infectious diseases and contact HR Team for support.