

Chapter 11 - Managing Sick Absence

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to manage sickness absence in a supportive, consistent and effective way.

1. Policy statement

From time to time sickness absence will be unavoidable and medically necessary to promote recovery and to protect other employees. The NAO is committed to the sensitive and supportive management of such absence and to the wellbeing of employees. However, it is also important to recognise that unplanned absences can affect the delivery of work, add to the workload of colleagues and increase costs. Effective management of sickness absence is, therefore, essential to the running of the NAO.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is to manage sickness absence in a supportive, consistent and effective way. This is in the best interests of both our employees and the business. The policy has the following objectives:

- To encourage all employees to share responsibility for the positive management of sickness absence, whether their own or that of their colleagues;
- To recognise and encourage good attendance;
- To seek an improvement in attendance where an individual has taken short-term sickness absence;
- To help secure a return to work, with the aid of workplace adaptations where appropriate, and achieve an acceptable standard of attendance in cases of long-term sickness absence;
- To treat individuals with a disability fairly and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate; and
- To seek a resolution where an individual is not capable of achieving a satisfactory standard of attendance due to genuine ill-health. The NAO is fully committed to helping and supporting employees who are sick to achieve a satisfactory level of attendance, and would

expect this to be achieved in the vast majority of cases given appropriate support.

Relationship with other policies

The managing Sick Absence policy applies to the management of genuine sickness absence. Performance coaches should follow the separate Managing Misconduct procedure (Chapter 19) where an individual has taken sickness absence for no genuine reason. Disability Leave (Chapter 12b) is a discretionary form of Special Leave that provides disabled staff with reasonable time off work for reasons related to their disability where that time off is not covered by other leave arrangements.

Failure to comply

Failure to comply with this policy may affect an individual's entitlement to sick pay. In some circumstances failure to follow sick absence procedures may also be treated as misconduct and addressed through the NAO's Managing Misconduct procedure.

2. Process for monitoring sickness absence

Notification

You must inform your Performance coach of the reasons for your absence, and when you expect to return to work, by 10:00am on the first working day of sickness absence. If your Performance coach is not available, you should inform a more senior manager or Director. In exceptional circumstances, you may contact your HR Business Partner, rather than your Performance coach, about your absence.

Fitness for Work Discussion

If your absence is likely to continue for more than 7 calendar days, your Performance coach should have a fitness for work discussion, normally by phone, to clarify the following:

- Identify what it is specifically that prevents you being able to work and which elements of their duties they are unable to undertake.
- Whether any temporary workplace adaptations could be implemented to enable you to return to work.

- Provide information about the NAO's Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health Service.

The discussion should also cover any recommendations or work place adaptations advised by the doctor on the fitness for work statement.

Statement of Fitness for Work

Self Certification of sickness absence is permitted if your absence lasts for 7 calendar days or less, inclusive of the first day of absence.

Once you have been absent for more than seven calendar days, or as soon as you know you will be away from work for this period, you will need to provide a statement of fitness to work. The statement will be provided by your GP and gives advice on the limitations of your condition, as well as recommendations about possible workplace adaptations, to help facilitate a quicker return to work.

A medical statement will also be required if an absence or its cause needs to be verified by the Office; the statement can be obtained from your GP or medical practitioner.

Once you have submitted your sickness absence request in you will be sent an automatic notification with a link to the absence request asking you to upload your medical statement. You should upload your medical statement as soon as possible after you receive it, and no later than two working days after the eighth calendar day of absence. Your Performance coach will also receive a notification, enabling them to monitor your absence, offer support and discuss suitable workplace adaptations in order to facilitate a return to work.

If you are too unwell to access [this link](#), you will need to send your medical statement to your Performance coach.

Failure to produce a medical statement when required to do so without a valid reason may lead to disciplinary action.

Temporary Workplace Adaptations

Your doctor may suggest some temporary workplace adaptations in the statement of fitness for work to help facilitate a speedy return to work.

These recommendations are not binding and the NAO has the discretion to choose whether and how to act on the doctor's advice. Your Performance coach will consider the recommendations, taking into account the practicalities of them, whether they are cost effective and whether they meet business requirements. Where a workplace adaptation will help facilitate a quicker return all efforts should be made to accommodate these. Adaptations will only be made on the advice of the doctor and with the Performance coach's approval.

Examples of possible temporary adaptations are:

- Altering your working pattern - e.g. shorter hours, later start, earlier finish
- Allowing short breaks during the day
- A phased return to work where the number of days and or hours are gradually increased, although this is often more appropriate after a long illness.
- Amending your work package or providing suitable alternative work
- Homeworking
- Modifying the working environment

Adaptations are only appropriate on a short term (e.g. days not months) and temporary basis and will cease when you are fully fit. Where a problem is persistent or longer term, a referral to OH or medical advice will be needed in order to make reasonable adjustments on a longer term basis.

Where temporary work place adaptations are made on return to work, these should be included as part of the return to work discussion and recorded in _____ by Performance coaches, when recording the return to work discussion.

Where an adaptation includes working reduced hours, contracted hours that are not worked should be booked in the absence module of _____ to Occupational Health Phased Return. Bookings should be made to the nearest hour. You should also record these hours on your timecard.

Keeping in Touch

It is important that you maintain contact with your Performance coach during periods of absence and keep him/her informed of your likely

return date. The nature and frequency of contact should be agreed between you and your Performance coach.

It may be necessary for a manager, colleague or HR Business Partner to contact you at home to clarify messages which have been passed on by a third party or for other legitimate business purposes. This is aimed at the efficient operation of the NAO and will be kept to a minimum.

Recording of Sickness Absence

Where possible, you should record your sick absence in [Sick Leave](#) when you notify your Performance coach of your illness, and update your timecard accordingly. If you are not well enough to access the system whilst on sick leave, you should update your records in [Sick Leave](#) on the first day of your return to the NAO following sickness absence. If you consider that your period of sickness might arise out of a disability, you should notify your Performance coach of this fact and record your absence as disability related sick absence using the notes box on the absence request. Once you have requested the sick leave, you will receive an email notification asking you to confirm if the absence is self certified or medically certified. If the latter, you will need to upload your medical certificate to [Sick Leave](#). Your Performance coach also receives an email notification when you request sick leave in [Sick Leave](#). This reminds the Performance coach to arrange a return to work discussion with you and contains a link to enable your Performance coach to approve the sickness absence in [Sick Leave](#). Once the Performance coach has held a return to work discussion with you, they will need to approve your sick leave in [Sick Leave](#).

Illness at work

If you feel unwell at work you should speak directly to your Performance coach in the first instance. If you are considered to be unfit for work, arrangements will be made for you to go home and, where appropriate, you will be asked to seek medical advice from your GP. Alternatively, first aid facilities are available for use on site. If you are admitted to hospital as a result of an emergency, the first aider will inform your manager and any family member at your request.

Return to Work Discussion

Performance coaches are required to conduct a 'return to work discussion' as a matter of course each time an employee has a period of absence. Your Performance coach will receive an automatic email alert from to have this discussion, once you have input a request for sick leave. During this discussion Performance coaches should:

- Welcome you back to work;
- Ask how you are and make sure you are fit to be at work;
- Discuss, where appropriate, any workplace adjustments required to facilitate a return to work. Ensure you are both clear about adaptations that have been made and how long these will be in place for.
- Ensure that is up-to-date;
- Discuss the reasons for absence and, if appropriate, review doctor's statements;
- Notify the Group HR Business Partner of any absence that is caused by stress or depression so that a referral to the NAO's Occupational Health Advisers can be considered;
- Where appropriate, discuss your absence record and the impact on the NAO;
- Identify, whether any further support or action would be required to help reintegrate you to the workplace or to improve attendance (further action/suitable support can be found in the section below);
- Where appropriate, update you on developments which have occurred within the NAO during the period of absence; and
- Where appropriate, reiterate your responsibility to attend work and to improve attendance.

Once your Performance coach has held this discussion with you, they will need to approve the sick leave in , which confirms that the return to work discussion has been held. Where appropriate, Performance coaches should need to make a note of the return to work discussion in

3. Procedures for managing sickness absence

Managing persistent/frequent short term sickness absence

It is essential that Performance coaches monitor absence levels so that early intervention and action can be taken. It is in the interest of both the NAO and the individual that sickness absence is minimised. Due to the individual

and unique patterns of absence it is not possible to define a specific point at which further action is required, as this will vary from case to case. However the triggers below provide general guidance for Performance coaches when dealing with short term absence issues. The purpose of the trigger points is to encourage Performance coaches to act consistently and promptly to provide support to individuals and to take other action where appropriate. They are not part of a disciplinary process.

The trigger points are:

- 10 working days or more in any twelve month period;
- 3 separate occasions (totalling 6 days or more) in a 12-month period; or
- A pattern of absence - for example regular sickness on a particular day of the week.

Any of the above may indicate that the individual needs support to achieve a consistent standard of attendance. However, Performance coaches should apply their own judgement when deciding on any course of action, taking into account all the circumstances of the particular case.

- Monitor absence(s) - Once an individual has accumulated more than 10 days absence, had 3 separate absences in a 12 month period or demonstrated a pattern of absence Performance coaches should consider whether there should be further investigation;
- Investigate absence - Reasons for absence should be discussed at the return to work interviews. However a further meeting should be arranged once the trigger points are reached. There may be a range of possible reasons which could relate to underlying health conditions and/or disability, personal issues and the impact of negative experiences at work. Performance coaches should provide the opportunity for issues such as these to be discussed and the reasons for sickness absence to be clarified;
- Where persistent/frequent absence is caused by a stress-related or depressive illness this must be referred to the HR Business Partner, who may arrange a referral to the NAO's Occupational Health Advisers;
- Offer support or take further action as appropriate;
- Decide on the most appropriate course of action. In some cases no further action will be needed if the reason for the sickness absence is

clear and the absence was for a short period only (e.g. time taken for an operation or for physiotherapy);

- Consider whether the individual may be eligible for Disability Leave (attach link to policy);
- Keep up to date records of any action taken, support offered or provided, and any other relevant information. This could be in the form of brief hand-written notes; and
- Continue to monitor sickness absence and maintain an up to date understanding of the issues and progress.

Managing long term sickness absence

As a broad guide long-term sickness absence is 21 days or over in a 12 month period. Such cases can be complex and sensitive so, where an employee has been absent for 21 days and there is no clear return to work date, the Performance coach should:

- Inform their HR Business Partner as soon as they become aware that an individual will have a prolonged period of absence from the NAO. The Business Partner will support the Performance coach throughout the process of managing long term sickness absence;
- Investigate the reasons for the absence. There may be a range of possible reasons which could relate to underlying health conditions and/or disability, personal issues and the impact of negative experiences at work. Performance coaches should provide the opportunity for issues such as these to be discussed and the reasons for sickness absence to be clarified;
- Offer support, which may include providing details of the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Agree with the individual a schedule of regular contact throughout the process, keep the individual up-to-date with relevant changes in the NAO (if appropriate), discuss progress and medical reports and generally keep in touch by phone or e-mail; and
- Consider further action, in consultation with the HR Business Partner, where an individual is not able to return to work or to achieve or sustain a satisfactory level or regularity of attendance because of genuine ill-health in the foreseeable future.

Return to Work

Once the employee is ready to return to work (normally based on medical evidence) the Performance coach should plan for the return to work. The following actions may need to be taken:

- A risk assessment may be arranged for employees with: musculoskeletal conditions; a disability; expectant mothers or mothers returning to work following pregnancy; and where assessment might aid recovery;
- A discussion about reasonable adjustments might be required - although further medical advice or occupational health may be needed before applying such adjustments;
- A phased return to work following prolonged absence. This may require medical or occupational health advice on a phased return pattern. A phased return allows someone to return to work on reduced hours and build these up gradually until s/he is working their normal contracted hours. This facility would normally be available up to 6 weeks, although longer periods of up to 3 months will be considered for those covered by the Equality Act 2010. Under an agreed phased return, an employee will receive full pay as if they were working their normal contracted hours. Hours not worked will be regarded as special leave with pay and must be recorded as such in the employee's record. If an employee is not able to return to their normal contracted hours after the agreed period of the phased return, they will be paid for the hours they actually work. This will be reviewed periodically, and options will be discussed with the employee, where a return to their previous contracted hours becomes unachievable; and
- Consider whether disability leave may apply going forward.

4. Procedures for managing sickness absence

Advice and support

When managing both short term and long term absence it may be necessary to seek extra advice and support with the aim of ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to help employees remain in or return to work.

Occupational Health

It may be necessary to seek independent medical advice and the NAO has appointed an Occupational Health Provider to offer expert guidance on:

fitness for work; the possible causes of ill-health; the treatment required; the prognosis for recovery and a return to work (if applicable); the likelihood of a recurrence of the illness; and whether any reasonable adjustments are required.

The HR Business Partner will manage the referral process in conjunction with the appropriate Performance coach. The following employees will normally be offered a referral to an Occupational Health Adviser:

- Anyone who is absent due to a stress-related or depressive illness;
- All employees who are on long term absence;
- Employees whose absence levels are giving cause for concern; and
- Any other employees who have a medical condition that will affect work or be affected by work.

In addition an employee may request a referral to OH through their Performance coach or HR Business Partner.

All employees sign a contract of employment when they join the NAO and this explains that employees automatically give their consent to a) a medical examination by a provider nominated by the NAO and b) disclosure of any report produced in connection with the examination. However, employees will be asked to confirm their consent at the point of referral. Employees are not obliged to confirm their consent, but, they are strongly encouraged to do so, as this will enable the NAO to make timely and informed decisions about the type of support that is most appropriate for them. If an individual does not agree to be referred the NAO will take action based on the information available at the time.

NAO sick pay is conditional on the individual providing consent to an OH referral once 4 months' sick absence has been accrued in the last 12 months. Non consent may result in NAO sick pay being withdrawn after 4 months. Employees may still be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay.

Once consent has been given, a referral form outlining the issues related to the case is forwarded to OH and reviewed by one of the OH Medical Advisers who will decide on the next steps. They may: arrange a telephone assessment with an Occupational Health nurse practitioner and give advice based on this information alone; contact appropriate medical practitioners for specific advice; or arrange a face to face appointment with an

Occupational Health clinician to assess the individual. A confidential report will be provided to the NAO giving a range of advice on issues such as a likely return to work date, any impact on capabilities at work and any reasonable adjustments which are recommended.

Employee Assistance Programme

All employees have access to our Employee Assistance Programme (Confidential Care tel: 0800 0851376). This is available 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Confidential Care provide information and guidance on a range of life issues and will also offer up to six counselling sessions in appropriate cases.

Workplace Adjustments

It may be necessary to make reasonable adjustments to enable an employee to perform his/her duties satisfactorily. These will normally be based on medical evidence or specialist workplace assessments and may be permanent or temporary, depending on the reasons for making the adjustments. The following are examples of adjustments, but the list is not exhaustive or prescriptive:

- Adjusting premises, modifying equipment or providing specialist software;
- Re-allocating duties to another employee for a specified time;
- Transferring the employee to another vacancy or to a different place of work;
- Altering working hours;
- Agreeing to reduced work demands in terms of quantity of output (but not quality);
- Allowing time off to attend medical appointments; and
- Accepting a higher level of sickness absence as a direct result of a disability (this would need to be justified following medical advice and considered reasonable in the light of operational requirements).

Employees must discuss and agree any recommended reasonable adjustments with their Performance coach in the first instance, before completing a Reasonable Adjustments sheet. Further guidance on reasonable adjustments can be found [here](#).

If you do feel there are barriers relating to a disability or health condition that are impacting you at work, or you would like to talk about reasonable adjustments for someone you manage, or you would simply like more information, please contact your HR Business Partner and/or the disability network.

Disability Leave

Disability leave is an example of a reasonable adjustment which can be considered in applicable circumstances by the NAO in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010. It is a discretionary form of Special Leave which the NAO may consider granting for staff it considers may be disabled. Further information is [here](#).

Sickness Absence and Alcohol and Drug Dependency

As the [Code of Conduct](#) states, employees are required to demonstrate high standards of personal discipline, and avoid any forms of over-indulgence or addiction which might affect their conduct or work performance. Excessive use of alcohol affecting work or use of illegal drugs may potentially be viewed as gross misconduct for which the penalties include summary dismissal.

However, where such conduct is related to alcohol or drug dependency the NAO will provide appropriate support to individuals: those affected will be offered a referral to the NAO's Occupational Health service for a medical assessment of the extent of the problem and will give advice on the range of options available to address it. In addition access will be given to the specialist services of the NAO's Employee Assistance Programme including telephone and face-to-face counselling. Whilst employees will not be obliged to take advantage of either of these facilities, if they choose not to it will significantly reduce the scope for mitigating circumstances to be considered, should disciplinary action become necessary.

5. Sickness absence and probation, promotion and performance appraisal

Probation

Sickness absence (provided it is not disability or pregnancy related), should be taken into account, alongside conduct and performance, when deciding whether to confirm an appointment at the end of the probation period (see Chapter 6 of the HR Manual for further guidance relating to the probation procedure).

Promotion

Attendance - as well as performance and potential - will also be considered in our promotion processes, except for sickness absence which is directly related to disability or pregnancy.

Appraisal

Absence levels are considered as part of the performance appraisal process. Managers should use the following guidelines when making assessments:

- **Short-term absence.** Appraising managers should generally not make allowances for short term absences due to ill-health where there is no underlying health condition; the individual should be appraised against the full requirements of the role. Such absence can adversely affect the performance of the individual or team and this should, therefore, be reflected in the choice of the appraisal rating.
- **Prolonged sickness absence.** If someone has been off sick for a prolonged period due to a genuine underlying health condition, the appraising manager should make allowance for this when assessing performance. For example, if someone has been off for 3 months with such a condition, they should be assessed on the work expected from 9 months, not the full 12 months. If an individual has taken so much sickness absence that a reliable appraisal cannot be completed (i.e. an absence of 9 months or more) the Performance coach should consult with HR Business Partner who will be able to advise. Often in such cases the previous year's mark will be carried forward.
- **Disability.** If reasonable adjustments have been made to enable the individual to optimise attendance and perform duties satisfactorily, the individual's performance should be assessed and rated against the standards generally expected of staff in the grade, once the reasonable adjustments have been taken into account.

6. Sickness absence and pay

The NAO has an occupational sick pay scheme. Failure to comply with the NAO's policy and procedures on sick absence may affect an individual's entitlement to sick pay.

Employees with more than 6 complete months' service

Employees who have been employed continuously for at least six months will be entitled to NAO Sick Pay at the following rates:

For all employees who:

- joined the NAO from 1 April 2013; OR
- were in post prior to 1 April 2013 and who have subsequently accepted revised terms and conditions, e.g. on promotion to AA or AP
 - Full pay: up to a total of five months' absence in any rolling period of 12 months. Thereafter NAO sick pay will be reduced to half pay from the 153rd calendar day of absence;
 - Half pay: any absence in excess of five months (over 152 calendar days) in any rolling period of 12 months, up to a total of five months. Thereafter NAO sick pay will be reduced to nil from the 304th calendar day of absence;

There is a total limit of 10 months' pay for sickness absence in any period of up to four years. When an employee has exceeded 304 calendar days' sickness absence in a rolling four-year period, their NAO sick pay will be reduced to nil. HR will notify any employee approaching half or no-pay well in advance of either event taking place.

For all employees who were in post prior to 1 April 2013 and who remain on their original terms and conditions:

- Full pay: up to a total of six months' absence in any rolling period of 12 months. Thereafter NAO sick pay will be reduced to half pay from the 183rd calendar day of absence;
- Half pay: any absence in excess of six months (over 182 calendar days) in any rolling period of 12 months, up to a total of six months. Thereafter NAO sick pay will be reduced to nil from the 365th calendar day of absence;

There is a total limit of 12 months' pay for sickness absence in any period of up to four years. When an employee has exceeded 365 calendar days' sickness absence in a rolling four-year period their NAO sick pay will be reduced to nil. HR will notify any employee approaching half or no-pay well in advance of either event taking place.

NAO sick pay is conditional on the individual providing consent to an OH referral once 4 months' sick absence has been accrued in the last 12 months. Non consent will result in NAO sick pay being withdrawn after 4 months. Employees may still be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (see below).

In cases where sickness absence is a result of a disability the NAO may consider extending the limits to occupational sick pay as a reasonable adjustment.

In exceptional cases when an employee has reached the nil pay point and where there is a clear indication that he/she will be fit to return to work or where a decision on ill-health retirement is imminent, employees who are pensionable under the Civil Service Pension Scheme may be granted Sick Pay at Pension Rate (SPPR). This is potentially payable for up to a maximum of 12 months. The amount of reduced pay is equivalent to the amount of pension that would have been payable, had they retired on ill health grounds, calculated when their sick leave entitlement ended. Periods of SPPR are not reckonable for future pension benefits under the PCSPS.

Employees with less than 6 complete months' service

In their first six months of employment employees will be entitled to full pay for any absences, up to a maximum of two weeks, over the course of the 6 month period. Any absences beyond two weeks in the first six months, whether that is a single instance or multiples instances, will be unpaid. However, employees will be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

Employees are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay. Under the SSP scheme, sickness absences lasting up to three calendar days are not eligible for statutory sick pay. Sickness absence from four calendar days up to 28 weeks are in most cases covered by SSP, and paid at a rate related to earnings.

Any entitlement to SSP will be taken into account automatically by the NAO in the calculation of an employee's pay. SSP is assessable for Income Tax and National Insurance and contributions to the Civil Service Pension Scheme. For further advice on the rules regarding SSP payment, employees should contact the Payroll Team.

In some cases, employees who are not eligible for SSP may be eligible to claim State Sickness Benefit instead. State Sickness Benefit, added to occupational sick pay, may not exceed an employee's normal gross rate of pay. The HR team are able to advise employees on this provision.

Accidents and Injury

If an employee suffers injury in the course of official NAO duties and qualifies for payment of injury benefits under the PCSPS the maximum sick absence period with entitlement to full pay may be extended by six months. An injury allowance may be payable once they have exhausted their entitlement to sick pay at the full rate.

7. Sickness absence and annual leave

You will continue to accrue your normal annual leave entitlement (including your public leave entitlement) while on sickness absence.

If you are unwell during a period of annual leave you may change this to sickness absence. In order to change the type of leave that you have booked you will need to follow the standard sick leave procedures, including ringing your Performance coach on the first day of sickness. Once you have returned to work you can cancel the period of annual leave in and re book this as sick leave. You may be asked to provide a doctor's statement to cover the period. The NAO will reimburse any costs of obtaining certification if requested.

If your sickness absence continues, and your entitlement to sick pay, at either full or half rate, is exhausted, you may take any accrued annual leave. The period of annual leave will be paid at your normal salary rate. This period of annual leave will also count as sick leave if you are absent immediately before and after the period. The period would therefore be recorded as both sick and annual leave in . In such

circumstances the period will continue to count towards the accumulation of sickness absence in relation to half and no pay.

8. Further action

The NAO is fully committed to helping and supporting employees to achieve a level of attendance which allows them to deliver their job and, from our experience, this is achieved by NAO staff in the vast majority of cases. In some exceptional cases employees may not be capable, due to genuine ill-health, of achieving and sustaining a level of attendance necessary to deliver their job effectively. It would not be in the best interests of the individual or the NAO to accommodate prolonged periods of poor or unreliable attendance. This is not a disciplinary or misconduct issue, but reflects the fact that the individual is not in a position to deliver their job effectively due to genuine ill-health, despite relevant support or assistance provided. Performance coaches should work in collaboration with their HR Business Partner to explore the options set out below.

Performance coaches would not need to wait for half-pay or no-pay trigger points to be reached before considering these options and taking action:

- **Medical retirement.** This may be an option for the individual given their particular circumstances and should be discussed with them before taking further advice. Any application for medical retirement has to be approved by both the retirement scheme advisor and the HR Director.
- **Monitoring and formal review.** The aim of this process is to support and monitor an improvement in attendance. The process would provide up to 2 periods for improvement (e.g. of 1 to 3 months' duration each) which would be monitored against an attendance action plan. At the end of the period the Performance coach would review progress and depending on the outcome may submit this to be considered by the Director of HR. If the individual's attendance does not improve sufficiently following this process or is not sustained despite appropriate support, the Director of HR may have to terminate the individual's employment.
- Termination of employment where an individual's absence is long term and OH medical advice is that a return to work or to an acceptable level of attendance cannot be achieved or is unlikely in

the foreseeable future, the Director of HR may have to terminate the individual's employment. This option would only be considered where:-

- ill-health retirement was not an option for the particular individual;
- absence was, in the judgement of the NAO, unacceptably high and unsustainable;
- in cases involving a disability, the individual was not able to carry out their duties to an acceptable standard even following reasonable adjustments.