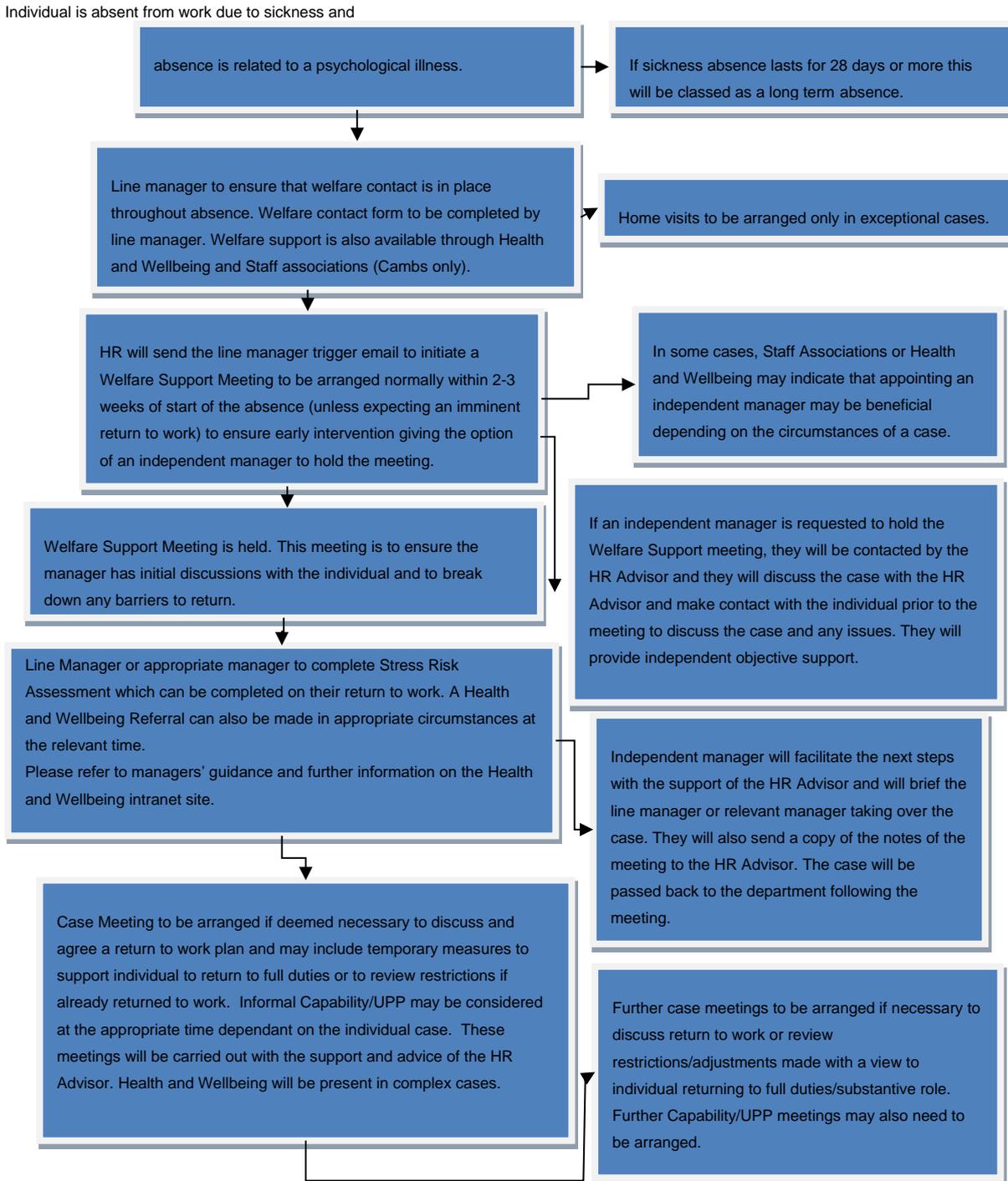2.1   **Appendix i - Managing Psychological Illness**   **BACK**

Managing Psychological Illness

This flow chart provides a summary of each step of the process for managing an absence which is related to psychological illness. This also includes line managers' responsibilities and activities. Line managers are required to familiarise themselves with the full Attendance Management procedure. Support is available at any point through your HR Advisor, Health and Wellbeing Department and Support groups.

Individual is absent from work due to sickness and

absence is related to a psychological illness.	→	If sickness absence lasts for 28 days or more this will be classed as a long term absence.

Line manager to ensure that welfare contact is in place throughout absence. Welfare contact form to be completed by line manager. Welfare support is also available through Health and Wellbeing and Staff associations (Cambs only).

Home visits to be arranged only in exceptional cases.

HR will send the line manager trigger email to initiate a Welfare Support Meeting to be arranged normally within 2-3 weeks of start of the absence (unless expecting an imminent return to work) to ensure early intervention giving the option of an independent manager to hold the meeting.

In some cases, Staff Associations or Health and Wellbeing may indicate that appointing an independent manager may be beneficial depending on the circumstances of a case.

Welfare Support Meeting is held. This meeting is to ensure the manager has initial discussions with the individual and to break down any barriers to return.

If an independent manager is requested to hold the Welfare Support meeting, they will be contacted by the HR Advisor and they will discuss the case with the HR Advisor and make contact with the individual prior to the meeting to discuss the case and any issues. They will provide independent objective support.

Line Manager or appropriate manager to complete Stress Risk Assessment which can be completed on their return to work. A Health and Wellbeing Referral can also be made in appropriate circumstances at the relevant time.
Please refer to managers' guidance and further information on the Health and Wellbeing intranet site.

Independent manager will facilitate the next steps with the support of the HR Advisor and will brief the line manager or relevant manager taking over the case. They will also send a copy of the notes of the meeting to the HR Advisor. The case will be passed back to the department following the meeting.

Case Meeting to be arranged if deemed necessary to discuss and agree a return to work plan and may include temporary measures to support individual to return to full duties or to review restrictions if already returned to work. Informal Capability/UPP may be considered at the appropriate time dependant on the individual case. These meetings will be carried out with the support and advice of the HR Advisor. Health and Wellbeing will be present in complex cases.

Further case meetings to be arranged if necessary to discuss return to work or review restrictions/adjustments made with a view to individual returning to full duties/substantive role. Further Capability/UPP meetings may also need to be arranged.

Managers' Guide to Managing Psychological Illness

What is mental health? The definition of mental health covers a very wide spectrum, from day-to-day worries and pressures to suicidal depression or complete loss of touch with everyday reality.

Stress – can be defined as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them'. We all need and, to a degree, thrive on pressure: it gives us energy, helps with performance and inspires confidence. But excessive pressure can lead to stress. It is, therefore, the reaction people have when the pressures or demands placed upon them are not matched by their ability to cope, or by any other available resource. Stress can be caused by different factors and it can give rise to a range of different symptoms that can present themselves in isolation or combination. Symptoms can include impaired concentration, exhaustion, insomnia, irritability, tearfulness, changeable moods and physical e.g. headaches, aches and pains, high blood pressure. The individual may find it difficult to make decisions or perform certain tasks and may even be unable to attend work.

Anxiety becomes a problem when feelings of tension and fear prevent a person from carrying out everyday tasks. Individuals with anxiety find it hard to control their worries and their ability to think clearly can be affected, which can impact on their performance in the workplace.

Depression can be described as mild, moderate or severe. Symptoms include feelings of deep sadness which can last weeks, or even months, and are serious enough to interfere with everyday life. Motivation and performance at work can be affected by depression.

The causes of **stress, anxiety or depression** may not be work-related. Non-work related stress, anxiety and depression cause more sickness absence than work-related difficulties. At such times, work may be a 'safe place'; the place where they feel supported and valued, and your role as a Line Manager will be an important one. Even if the cause is not work-related, performance at work could be affected by a psychological illness. Similarly, work related pressure can also impact on personal lives.

Creating a Mentally Healthy Workplace

At least 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their life. Among adults of working age, 1 in 3 will have a mental health problem at some point in their life and about 1 in 100 people will experience a severe mental health condition such as Bi-Polar Disorder (manic depression), Psychosis and Schizophrenia. Please refer to the following website for further information: www.mindfulemployer.net

Encourage open and honest communication

Develop a culture where it is ok to talk about mental health; aim to reduce stigma and misunderstanding

Encourage individuals to tell you if they need support or any adaptations to their role; early intervention could prevent long-term absences

Ensure that everyone is listened to and given the opportunity to be involved

Give staff control over their work

Ensure your staff have the right skills and ability to do their job

Ensure workloads are manageable

Check for physical factors e.g. flickering lights or excessive noise. Check physical environment is supportive

Encourage staff to share their ideas and suggestions

Develop a culture where 'thank you' is the norm and people are praised and encouraged

Get to know your staff and their normal behaviours – this will make it easier to spot changes in their usual behaviour

Use your regular 1:1 meetings to ask how the individual is and discuss any unusual behaviour for example "I've noticed that you seem to have been withdrawn lately".

Individuals are able to self-refer to Health and Wellbeing for welfare reasons

Terminology

Do Say…	Do not say…
Mental health problems / mental ill heath	Mental illness
Living with… / Experiencing…	Suffering…
People with a diagnosis of… People living with… / People with…	Schizophrenics, depressives
Have a conversation in a private space where the individual will feel comfortable.	Attempt a conversation in front of other people or where you could be overheard.
Make sure there are no interruptions. Switch off your mobile phone.	Initiate a conversation if you have another meeting looming.
Focus on obtaining information that will help you support the individual.	Attempt to diagnose or act as a counsellor or use phrases such as "when you are better".
Ask open questions. For example "I was wondering how you were doing?" and "what support do you feel would help you?"	Ask questions that could cause pressure like "what's wrong with you?", "are you stressed or something" or "pull yourself together?"
Use neutral language. For example "how are you today?"	Use medical language like "you seem depressed today" or asking questions about what medication they are taking.
Allow the individual time to answer and let them talk at their own pace.	Push for answers or rush with another question.
Be empathetic.	Tell them what to do.
Make arrangements for a follow-up meeting.	Don't leave things up in the air.

Discussion Points

Current coping strategies

Support available to help them with these strategies

Length of time the individuals has felt this way

Identify whether it is an on going issue or something that immediate action could resolve

Discuss whether there are any work-related factors that have contributed

Identify whether there are there any external problems that they would like to share with you

Make the individual aware of the support available from Health and Wellbeing, EAP, L&D i.e. appropriate training course.

Discuss whether there are there any aspects of their medical care that they would like you to know about e.g. side effects of medication.

Listen to any suggestions they have about adjustments to their work

Decide upon what they would like their colleagues to be told and who will say what to whom

If there are work-related concerns, take time to review workload and assist where required

Agree next steps

Keeping in Touch

There is a requirement to keep in touch with an individual who is absent from work. Managers are often concerned though that contacting someone who is off sick will be seen as harassment. However, lack of contact can actually make an individual feel less valued and can make returning to work even more overwhelming. Early, regular and sensitive contact is a key factor in enabling an early return to work.

Evidence shows that no contact at all can greatly hinder and reduce the chances of a successful return to work. An individual may request no contact due to feeling anxious or embarrassed, however, a sympathetic and sensitive approach to contact can help to overcome this. Agreeing with an individual early on how they would like to communicate with you and sticking to this agreement will allow for more effective communication. In exceptional circumstances a home visit may be appropriate.

If you have reason to believe that you are perceived to have been a factor in the individual becoming unwell, please refer to the Managing Long Term Psychological Illness Flow Chart on appointing an alternative manager to make contact. Ensure that this is done at the earliest opportunity to avoid any delays with contact being made.

Remember that individuals have a responsibility to keep in contact as well. If you have made all reasonable efforts to communicate with an individual and they refuse to remain in contact with you then you cannot be expected to anticipate what reasonable adjustments might help them return to work.

Remember to record details of all contact and attempted contact on the Welfare Contact Form and send to your HR Adviser.

Communicating with Colleagues

It is also important to agree with the individual whether, and precisely what, they wish colleagues to be told.

If you would normally send a card for someone who is off sick with a physical condition for example, do not treat someone who is off with mental health problems any differently.

The individual's illness may have an impact on the rest of the team, especially if they are required to take on an increased workload.

Four useful points to remember:

- Don't assume work pressures affect everyone in the same way.
- Don't assume it has to do with work. It could be something going on at home that is affecting them.
- Make adjustments if a person is not coping.
- Conversations should be **positive and supportive.** Explore the issues and how you can help.

It would be advisable to:

- Be open and honest with the team as long as it does not breach any confidentiality with the individual concerned

- Identify working conditions that may negatively influence the wellbeing of the team, and change them where necessary
- Create an environment where staff can voice their concerns openly to avoid any gossiping or resentment towards any individuals who are off sick

Reasonable Adjustments

Once a return to work date has been agreed it may be a good idea to meet with them in a location that they feel comfortable with, which may be an offsite location or another police station, to discuss the details of their return. They may also wish for a colleague to accompany them. If you arrange to meet them at work ensure that they are in agreement with what room you have arranged and check where they want to meet you and whether they want to see anyone else. They may want to come into the office and meet with some colleagues on an informal basis to help them feel at ease about returning to work.

The Forces are committed to supporting individuals with their return to work and preventing long-term absences. There are a number of temporary adjustments and measures that Line Managers can put into place which will assist an individual who is experiencing mental health problems return to work and over time return to meeting the full requirements of their role.

Temporary adjustments can be agreed locally e.g. agreeing temporary changes to start/finish times without the need to refer to Health and Wellbeing. Other adjustments will be advised by Health and Wellbeing as detailed below.

Modification of working hours/shifts

Allowing changes to shift start and finish times. This may be to allow for the affects of medication in the morning or to allow the individual to avoid rush hour traffic

Agreeing a phased return to work plan e.g. gradually increasing the number of hours worked each day over a set number of weeks

Flexible break times to allow for the individual to go home, take medication or meet any caring responsibilities that they may have

Alternative rest day patterns to allow for a break mid-week for example

Job Modification

Temporary removal of certain responsibilities for example supervisory tasks, time or accuracy critical tasks e.g. these tasks could be temporarily removed or work could be double checked.

Temporary redeployment to another role either within or outside of the team

Give the individual meaningful work; do not make assumptions about their ability based on their mental ill health. Meaningful work can quickly make someone feel useful.

Avoid asking the individual to pick-up an overwhelming back-log of work. Instead workload should be adjusted according to the temporary working hours and current capabilities.

Environment Modification

Temporary move to another location for example working from a station closer to home

If an individual cannot drive due to medication for example review what public transport is available and where the most convenient location would be for them to work from

Temporary desk move either within the same office or to a different office

Permanent desk moves within the team depending on what the issues are for example the need to be by a window or closer to the exits

Measures to reduce stress factors such as noise or for example by reducing the volume of telephone rings

If in a hot-desk environment is it possible to allocate the individual a desk to help relieve any stress or anxiety this can cause?

Policy Implementation

Flexible approach to the individual taking time off for medical appointments

Allowing the individual to make up any time owed at a time convenient to them

Reviewing and discussing PDR objectives especially if the absence has been long term.

Refer to the Performance Management Policy

Flexible and sensitive approach to any capability measures taking place; remembering that avoiding discussions around

Human Assistance

Resilience training

Health and Wellbeing

Staff Associations and other support groups

EAP

Offering to drive the individual to meetings

Accompanying the individual to meetings that they would normally carry out alone but feel they need support with temporarily

Supervisory Considerations

Offering additional supervisory support – increased 1:1 meetings for example

Ensuring the Stress Risk Assessment is reviewed in line with the guidance on the form

Agreeing how to manage their return to work and adjustments in your absence – is there someone else they would feel comfortable talking to?

Ensuring there is a clear and consistent approach to managing the individual's mental ill health amongst Line Managers in the team, without breaching confidentiality

Offering additional training on certain processes or procedures

Carry out a learning styles questionnaire to determine personal preferences and adapt any training/coaching accordingly. Further information can be found on the Learning & Development intranet site.

Ensuring the individual has been updated on any changes that have taken place while they have been away, taking care not to overload them on their first day back

Take positive steps to make them feel welcomed and integrated into the workplace rather than just expecting them to get on with things

Being absent from work due to a psychological illness does not exclude an individual from being managed under UPP/Capability.

Please speak to your HR Adviser for advice on individual circumstances.