

Having the right conversation scenario - Level 1

Base scenario

- A team member has had several one-day absences, giving the reason as a headache or cold
- They have hit the first absence trigger
- They have been employed with Co-op for 18 months
- You are not particularly close to them
- They are usually a good team member, who has no other issues about their performance
- You need to have a conversation with them about these absences

Ask the group to prepare and have the conversation using their mnemonic.

Depending on how the conversation is planned, be prepared to reveal some (or all) of the 'extra' information

Extra information

- The team member is a private person who doesn't share much about their personal life – you know they have a spouse and two children and that they occasionally visit their mother in a care home, but that's about it
- Sometimes you notice that they make minor mistakes, but they always rectify them
- Sometimes they seem to 'space out' and lose focus
- They have mentioned to others (but not to you) that they sometimes feel useless or like they're not coping
- That the team member's mother recently died
- That they have been going to counselling for their bereavement
- That they didn't believe that "feeling low" was a good enough reason to be off sick

Best outcome

- Any measures that are put in place regarding their absences is communicated and is supportive. On this occasion, it might mean that the colleague knows that, on this occasion, no formal action (the absence won't trigger any formal or informal processes) but that this will be reviewed at the next absence
- The colleague is referred to Occupational Health
- The team member is offered services through LifeWorks
- That ER are informed and the appropriate record keeping is done
- It is made clear that we can support the colleague with their counselling sessions by being flexible with work, possibly by changing start/finish times or making up hours

Having the right conversation scenario - Level 2

Base scenario

- A colleague has a diagnosis of depression, anxiety and low mood.
- They are often absent for 3-4 weeks at a time, then will return to work a few weeks or sometimes months before they are absent for another few weeks or a couple of months.
- Their performance is up and down.
- They have been employed for approximately 5 years

Ask the group to prepare and have the conversation using their mnemonic.

Depending on how the conversation is planned, be prepared to reveal some (or all) of the 'extra' information

Extra information

- They have had 9 occasions of absence in the last 12 months
- The colleague is on a Final Warning/3rd Absence warning
- Their home life is turbulent, and they say that their ex-partner was/is abusive, and they are still in touch with them because of shared custody for their children but that it makes the depression worse and they admit they struggle to maintain reliable attendance.

Best outcome

- A plan is in place to support the colleague, this may include agreeing reasonable adjustments.
- Lifeworks is offered to the colleague.
- The colleague is aware of what will happen in the event of further absences and what will and will not be tolerated.
- An outcome for the most recent occasion of absence is delivered to the colleague; here may have been no further formal action/the final written warning was reissued/current final written warning was extended.

Having the right conversations scenario - Level 3

Base scenario

- A team member has been off work for the last 9 months with back issues
- They have worked in this role for 25 years
- They have had several Occupational Health reports, the latest one states that they are no longer able to fulfil their current job role and will need to transfer to an office-based role where they can stay seated for most of the day
- You know that they love their job and miss it, and their colleagues, a lot

Ask the group to prepare and have the conversation using their mnemonic.

Depending on how the conversation is planned, be prepared to reveal some (or all) of the 'extra' information

Extra information

- That the team member refuses a desk job and insists they are able to continue their duties with a few reasonable adjustments (such as extra time on tasks or regular breaks)
- The Occupational Health report states that if they return to their current role, there it will cause further injury to their back
- That the team member is worried that they will not be able to do a desk-based role because they have little experience with computers
- They are desperate to remain employed have dependents and do not feel 'able' to claim benefits

Best outcome

- The team member is transferred to an office role
 - The team member is offered support in upskilling in IT
 - The team member feels reassured that they will be fully supported in their transfer
- or**
- Termination of their contract by way of capability is considered, if appropriate
 - The team member accepts that this is the best solution
 - The team member feels that Co-op/their line manager has explored all possible options for keeping them employed

Difficult conversations scenario - Level 3

Base scenario

- The colleague has had an injury at work, injuring their back
- They have made a personal injury claim against the Co-op
- They were off for about 4 months but are now looking to return to work.
- The occupational health report says 'When their back does become especially problematic adjustments to work may help maintain their attendance such as a temporary reduction in targets to 80% and that wherever possible they avoid undertaking heavy physical activity such as manual handling, pushing pulling lifting and carrying particularly from below knee level. If this type of activity is unavoidable then I would suggest that they only do so for short periods with tasks arranged in such a way to allow them periods of rest at frequent intervals.'
- The colleague has asked for an adjusted pick rate of 60%

Ask the group to prepare and have the conversation using their mnemonic.

Depending on how the conversation is planned, be prepared to reveal some (or all) of the 'extra' information

Extra information

- The colleague is adamant that they can still do some picking
- The occupational health report says 'I suggest amending their shift pattern so they do not work more than two consecutive days per week'. The occupational health report also says that the colleague would benefit from reducing their hours from 37.5 hours per week (5 days) to 30 hours (4 days).
- The colleague is refusing to reduce their hours and refusing to change their shift pattern for personal reasons.
- The colleague will agree to work 4 days per week if they are still paid for 5 days per week.

Best outcome

- Speak with our occupational health provider and the colleague to establish what 'heavy' lifting is and what is feasible in terms of bending, lifting, pulling and pushing.
- Implement an appropriate Work Adjustment Plan.
- Understand what reasonable adjustments could help in this situation and consider what is or is not reasonable.
- Understand what the colleague's personal reasons are and if there is any other support needed that would help the colleague to change their shift pattern/weekly hours.
- Suggest a trial of the reduced hours and no more than 2 consecutive days.
- In the longer terms, manage the colleagues capability and performance to either assist the colleagues recovery and performance or manage them out of the business with capability (with support from ER Services)