

Attendance warning letter templates

An attendance warning is a formal step, so it follows the Acas Code: investigate, put the concerns in writing, hold a meeting the person can be accompanied to, decide, and offer an appeal. The letters below cover the invite, the outcome and the appeal. Skipping the Code can cost an employer up to a 25% uplift on any tribunal award - and from January 2027 unfair dismissal protection starts at six months, so far more people will be able to bring one.

Before you send anything

Four checks worth doing first

- Have you excluded what must be excluded? Pregnancy-related absence never counts; disability-related absence usually needs discounting or an adjusted threshold. See exclusions.
- Have you had the supportive conversation? A trigger should have prompted a chat long before a letter. If it did not, start there instead.
- Do you know the cause? If there is an underlying health condition, occupational health comes before formal steps, not after.
- Are you applying the threshold consistently? Inconsistent application is the raw material of a discrimination claim.

Letter 1 - inviting someone to an attendance review meeting

Copy from here

Dear [Name],

I am writing to invite you to a formal attendance review meeting on [date] at [time], in [place / by video call].

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss your attendance record, understand whether anything is affecting it that we should know about, and agree what support might help. Your recorded absence over the last 12 months is [X occasions totalling Y days], which has reached [the trigger point in our absence policy / a Bradford Factor score of Z].

The absences recorded are:

[List each: date range, working days, reason as given.]

You are entitled to be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague or a trade union representative. Please let me know by [date] who you intend to bring.

I want to be clear about what this meeting is: it is a review, and its most likely outcome is an agreed plan of support. However, because it is a formal stage of our absence procedure, one possible outcome is [a first written warning about attendance]. I am telling you that now so nothing in the meeting comes as a surprise.

If there is anything you would like me to consider beforehand - a health condition, a caring responsibility, anything at all - please tell me before the meeting or bring it with you.

Best wishes, [Name, role]

Letter 2 - the outcome

Copy from here

Dear [Name],

Thank you for meeting me on [date] to discuss your attendance. [Name] attended with you as your companion.

We discussed [summarise what they told you, in their terms - this matters].

The outcome is [a formal written warning about attendance / an agreed support plan with no formal warning].

[If a warning: This warning will remain live on your record until [date, e.g. 6 or 12 months], after which it will be disregarded for the purposes of the absence procedure.]

What we have agreed to put in place:

[List each: adjustment, referral, change to pattern, phased return, review date. Be specific and put a date on each one.]

What we have agreed you will do:

[e.g. follow the absence reporting procedure, attend an occupational health appointment.]

We will review this together on [date]. [If a warning: I should explain that if your attendance does not improve by then, the next stage of the procedure may be considered.]

If you disagree with this decision you may appeal, in writing, to [name] by [date - normally 5 working days].

Best wishes, [Name, role]

Letter 3 - the appeal outcome

Copy from here

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your appeal of [date] against the attendance decision of [date].

Your appeal was heard by [name, role] on [date]. They were not involved in the original decision.

Having considered the points you raised - [summarise them] - the decision is to [uphold the original outcome / revoke the warning / substitute the following].

[Explain what was reconsidered and why the conclusion was reached.]

This is our final decision under the absence procedure.

Best wishes, [Name, role]

How to adapt these

- List the actual absences. "Your attendance is unacceptable" is not something anyone can respond to. Dates and days are.
- Say the possible outcome in the invite. Someone should never discover at the meeting that a warning was on the table - that alone can make a process unfair.
- Record what they said, in their words. The outcome letter is your evidence that you listened, not just that you decided.
- Put a date on every commitment, yours and theirs. Undated support is support that never happens.
- Keep the tone human. Most attendance problems have a cause, and the ones that turn into claims are usually the ones where nobody asked.

Background: absence trigger points, how to run the meeting itself, and capability versus conduct if you are unsure which route this is. Acas publishes the underlying Code of Practice.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.