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Managing Absence Policy

For Local Government, Craft and Chief Officers
(Excludes Teachers).



Renfrewshire
Council

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 We are working hard to be the most supportive, caring, and inclusive employer we can be, providing you with a workplace where you feel safe, valued, and listened to, a place where you will have a good experience each day and feel supported to achieve your own goals and aspirations, helping you to reach your full potential. Whatever you're employed as in the Council, the work you carry out every day matters a great deal to communities and colleagues, and without it, we simply cannot deliver essential services to our communities or achieve our Council vision.
- 1.2 Your health, safety and wellbeing remain our top priority as we continue to recover from the covid pandemic and settle into new and different ways of working. We recognise that there will be times when you can't come to work because of illness, and when this happens, we will support you to come back to work as soon as possible, providing you with different support options.
- 1.3 Over the years we have implemented a range of successful initiatives to reduce absence levels and improve well-being at work, but we need to do more, we need to do things differently and work more closely with our trade union colleagues and partners to improve well-being. Through the application of this policy, we want to improve our culture of wellness, inclusiveness, and continuous improvement and therefore this policy sets out our expectations for you to attend work and our intention to take all reasonable steps to minimise the impact sickness absence has on our services, communities, budgets, and reputation.
- 1.4 We recognise the importance of training in the managing absence process, and we will ensure that those taking part in any managing absence activities are appropriately trained and are aware of equal opportunities legislation, ensuring you are treated fairly and given equal opportunity through this process, regardless of any protected characteristic.
- 1.5 This information which follows in this policy outlines the key stages in our managing absence processes and our commitment to reduce the level and costs of absence to the Council. This policy replaces our previous Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and takes effect immediately.

2 Purpose and Aims

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to support the Council to manage absence cases using a consistent and supportive process.
- 2.2 The policy aims to:
 - Promote the overall health, safety, and wellbeing of employees through education, training, and support.
 - Improve absence levels through applying early intervention strategies.
 - Ensure that managers adopt a fair and consistent approach when managing absence, taking account of individual circumstances.
 - Ensure our expectations are understood on managing absence.

- Ensure those suffering from chronic or terminal illness are given the necessary consideration and support.
- Encourage closer analysis and reporting of absence cases.

3 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all employees, excluding Teachers who have their own supporting attendance arrangements in place.

4 Sickness Absence Categories

4.1 There are 2 categories of absence:

- **Short Term Intermittent Absence:** any spell of absence of up to and including 28 calendar days. (pro-rated).
- **Long Term Absence:** any single spell of absence of more than 28 calendar days. (pro-rated).

5 Absence Reporting Procedures

5.1 If you are too ill to attend work, you are required to contact your line manager on day the **1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 7th** days of absence by phone and where possible, at least one hour before the time you are due to start work. In certain circumstances and if required, someone else may contact us on your behalf.

5.2 If you have more than one job, you must contact each line manager to let them know of your absence.

5.3 When reporting absence, you will be required to provide the following information:

- The reason for your absence and how long you expect to be off work ill.
- When your illness started.
- If your absence is work-related.
- Your phone number so your manager can maintain contact.
- Details of any urgent or outstanding work that needs picking up.

5.4 If your absence is not reported on time, this may be recorded as unauthorised absence and could result in loss of pay and action under the disciplinary procedures. If we have reason to believe that your sick leave is not genuine, we may investigate this under the Disciplinary Procedures.

6 Keeping in Touch

6.1 If your absence extends beyond the 3rd day, you are required to contact your line manager on the 7th day of absence. If your absence extends beyond this, then regular contact must be made at least once per week, or as agreed with your line manager.

7 Sickness and Fit Note Certification

- 7.1 If your absence is for 7 calendar days or less, you are required to submit a self-certificate on Businessworld. If your absence continues beyond 7 days, you will be required to submit a Fit Note from a certified medical practitioner or an appropriate healthcare professional. All your absences will be recorded on Businessworld for each job role you hold.

8 Sick Pay

- 8.1 You may be entitled to receive Occupational Sick Pay (OSP), depending on your length of service. If you are not entitled to OSP, you may receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for up to 28 weeks. OSP and/or SSP may be stopped in certain circumstances if:

- You have not followed the absence procedure without good reasons.
- You do not provide a Fit Note.
- You are found to be engaging in activities including other work, (paid or unpaid, or any sports or hobbies) during your absence that delay recovery or make your illness or condition worse. This may also be considered as misconduct and investigated under the Disciplinary Procedures.

- 8.2 Managers must contact HR&OD for advice before stopping any pay.

- 8.3 If your absence is due to industrial accident or a notifiable disease you will receive an industrial injury allowance and this absence will not count towards the calculation for absence review points which are used for managing absence processes.

- 8.4 Managers may also refer you to Occupational Health to enable relevant support and advice to be provided. If there is a need to cancel or reschedule this appointment, a minimum of 2 days' notice must be given to Occupational Health where possible.

9 Returning to Work

- 9.1 Your line manager will arrange to have a return to work meeting with you after every period of absence. All return to work meetings will be recorded on Businessworld.

10 Absence Review Meetings

- 10.1 Your line manager will arrange an absence review meeting with you when you have reached an absence review point (previously known as an absence trigger). If you have more than one job with the Council, absence review points will be considered separately in each of your job roles.

- 10.2 There are 3 absence review meetings, as detailed below. Your line manager is encouraged to have more informal support meetings with you if required. The purpose of the absence review meetings is to explore the reasons for your absence and the impact your absence is having on service delivery. Your line

manager will agree appropriate interventions and/or additional support with you to improve your attendance at work.

10.3 At the end of each absence review meeting, your line manager will issue you with an outcome letter advising you that your absence levels may be of concern and the potential consequences of failing to achieve a reasonable improvement in your attendance. This letter will also outline the agreed steps you will take to improve your attendance at work and the supports available to help you.

10.4 You will be asked to attend a third and final absence review meeting if your absence levels can no longer be sustained, despite appropriate support and/or reasonable adjustment(s) being made throughout the process. During this meeting, consideration is being given as to whether you can fulfil your contractual obligations to attend work on a regular basis. Dismissal may also be considered, or alternatives to dismissal.

10.5 **First Absence Review Meeting**

- 5 days (pro-rated) or 2 occasions of absence in a rolling 12-month period.
- 4 continuous weeks of absence.
- Where there's a pattern of absence.
- Any unauthorised absence.

10.6 **Second Absence Review Meeting**

- A further 5 days (pro-rated) or 2 occasions of absence in a rolling 12-month period.
- 6-12 weeks of a long-term absence.
- Where there's a pattern of absence.
- Any unauthorised absence.

10.7 **Third Absence Review Meeting**

- A further 5 days (pro-rated) or 2 occasions of absence in a rolling 12-month period.
- 12-26 weeks of a long-term absence.
- Where there's a pattern of absence.
- Any unauthorised absence.

10.8 In some circumstances, your line manager may apply discretion and decide not to progress you to the next absence review meeting. This decision should be taken after advice from HR&OD for consistency.

11. **Annual Leave and Phased Return to Work**

11.1 You may take annual leave during sickness absence if agreed with your line manager. This will not impact on your sick pay, but fit notes are required if your absence lasts more than 7 days. If you have been unable to take all your leave in the calendar year that you have been absent, you can carry forward any unused leave into the next calendar year.

- 11.2 To support your return to work, your line manager may agree a phased return to work of up to 4 paid weeks in any calendar year. You may also agree with your line manager to use your accrued annual leave to assist with a longer phased return to work period.

12. Disability Related Absence

- 12.1 If you have a disability, we will make reasonable adjustments throughout the managing absence process to support your return to work, that may include review. of any management absence review points, ensure you are not disadvantaged in any way.

13. Pregnancy Loss, and Menopause Related Absence

- 13.1 If you are impacted by pregnancy loss or menopause symptoms, we will support you throughout the managing absence process and facilitate a supported return to work.

14. Supports to Enable a Quicker Return to Work

- 14.1 In some circumstances, your line manager may agree to provide you with support to your daily duties, work location, start times etc during absences. This may help you to return to work quicker or in some capacity rather than remaining off sick. We may also consider risk assessed alternative duties to facilitate a return to work.

15. Scheme of Unpaid Leave of Absence due to Sickness Absence

- 15.1 In circumstances where you have exhausted your entitlement to sick pay but there is a reasonable prognosis that you may be able to return to work in the near future, a period of up to 13 weeks unpaid leave may be approved, subject to the discretion of the Head of Service. In exceptional circumstances, an extended final period of unpaid leave up to 13 weeks may be approved to allow more time for you to return to work.

16. Confidentiality

- 16.1 Information relating to your health and absence will be recorded, maintained, and processed confidentially and securely by your service, line manager, HR&OD and relevant partners. Information will not be divulged to any third parties without your written consent.
- 16.2 Information processed may include paper or electronic records and will be done so in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation EU 2016/679) ("GDPR"), the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 (as may be amended by the proposed Regulation on Privacy and Electronic Communications) and any legislation that, in respect of the United Kingdom, replaces, or enacts into domestic law, or any law relating to data protection, the processing of personal data and privacy as a consequence of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.

17. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment

- 17.1 This policy has been impact assessed in line with the Council's obligation to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

18. Monitoring and Review

- 18.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly and in line with any legislative and organisational changes. The recognised trade unions will be consulted on any future changes to this policy.