

Maximising Attendance at Work Policy

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1. Scope

This Policy and associated procedures apply to all employees of Argyll and Bute Council.

1. Policy Statement

Levels of attendance at work directly affect the quality and provision of services through the ability of employees to carry out their work efficiently and effectively. Whilst some absence due to sickness is inevitable, the Council's objective is to ensure that sickness absence is minimised through effective management supported by fair and consistent procedures.

Absence due to sickness can be for a number of reasons. It is important that within a common policy approach, instances of sickness absence are dealt with on an individual basis. A balanced approach is required which takes into account the need to maintain high levels of attendance whilst ensuring employees are treated fairly, consistently and sympathetically.

It is intended that this Policy be used positively and constructively to support and enable employees to return or remain at work. At all stages, discussions will focus on exploring ways to improve and maintain attendance thereby ensuring service needs are met. The particular circumstances of each individual will be considered and relevant support measures implemented where these can contribute to improved attendance levels.

A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving higher levels of attendance and providing high quality services. The Council is therefore committed to developing occupational health and related services, and to promoting health at work, as measures to improve attendance levels. In this regard there are a number of other Council policies which are complementary to the Council's wider approach to promoting health at work and these include the Equal Opportunities Policy, health and safety policies as well as the Stress Management Policy. The Council recognises that, depending on the nature of the health condition and/or absence, early intervention can be effective in promoting improved health and attendance.

In the case of illness resulting from a disability, "reasonable adjustments" will be made wherever practicable to support and facilitate an employee's attendance at work in accordance with relevant disability discrimination legislation.

The effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored through regular reporting of relevant sickness absence management information to the Council's Strategic Management Team and Elected Members/Audit Committee.

2. Principles and Aims

The following principles apply to the Council's procedures for dealing with sickness absence:

- Good attendance is valued and all opportunities should be taken to acknowledge and recognise such attendance.
- The Council will aim to promote a positive and preventative, rather than punitive approach.

- Matters raised relating to an employee's attendance do not imply any distrust of the employee or concerns regarding their conduct.
- Sickness/injury absence will be dealt with in a way that is non discriminatory and in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Employees will be dealt with consistently, and the sickness absence procedures will be fairly applied across the Authority. The Council will be sensitive, and supportive to those suffering the effects of ill health.
- Sickness absence cases will be conducted with respect for confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection, and Access to Medical Reports Acts.
- Open communication between managers and employees will be encouraged and promoted.

The Managing Attendance At Work Policy and associated procedures will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the Council's aims and comply with these principles.

3. Roles and Responsibilities in Implementing the Policy

Responsibility for implementing and complying with this Policy lies with individuals at all levels within the Council.

The role of the Strategic Management Team is to:

- Analyse and monitor corporate/departmental sickness absence data and trends based on quarterly returns
- Determine, as necessary, the requirement for targeted interventions in areas with higher sickness absence or where patterns or trends emerge
- Report Council-wide sickness absence levels to the Council's Executive Committee on a quarterly and bi-annual basis per department via scorecards.

Heads of Service are required to:

- Monitor sickness absence by service area on an ongoing basis using absence data provided by Human Resources
- Ensure line managers are trained in applying the Maximising Attendance at Work Policy and procedures
- Monitor action being taken by managers in respect of cases where triggers have been reached and follow up on progress

Line Managers are required to:

- Let employees know that their contribution to the work of the Council is valued, and that their attendance at work makes a significant contribution to providing a quality service.
- Manage absence among the employees for which they have responsibility. This includes:
 - Ensuring that employees are aware of the notification (and where appropriate, certification procedures) for absences of any kind.
 - Ensuring that accurate absence records are kept for each employee
 - Dealing immediately, fairly and sensitively with employees when they are ill and providing support to encourage attendance.
 - Maintaining regular contact with employees who are absent.
 - Make reasonable adjustments (where appropriate) to aid employees return to work or where the employee has raised concerns that their work is impacting their health.
 - Conduct Return to Work Meetings and, where appropriate, further meetings with employees in accordance with the Maximising Attendance at Work Policy and associated procedures.

Employees are required to:

- Attend work unless unfit to do so.
- Advise their line manager of any illness or condition which may affect their ability to attend work or to undertake the duties of their post.
- Take personal and contractual responsibility for attendance levels, their own well-being and seek medical advice and appropriate treatment promptly to maintain attendance, and/or facilitate an early return to work.
- Raise concerns with their manager (or Human Resources if appropriate) and where possible detail possible solutions if they believe their job is making them ill, or contributing to illness.
- Report sickness absences promptly, in accordance with the Maximising Attendance at Work procedures.
- Ensure appropriate certifications are completed and submitted in accordance with notification and certification procedures.
- Maintain regular contact with their manager during periods of sickness/injury absence.
- Communicate effectively with their manager about their sickness/injury absence.
- Co-operate as appropriate with the Council's Occupational Health Adviser and other organisations that provide support to the Council and its' employees.

- Not knowingly abuse the maximising attendance procedures or sick pay schemes.

The role of Human Resources is to:

- Provide advice and guidance to employees and line managers in managing attendance.
- Provide reports and statistical information to managers to enable them to make informed decisions when monitoring and reviewing sickness absence
- Maintain links with the Council's Occupational Health provider and other similar agencies to support the implementation of this Policy
- Monitor the overall application of the Policy and associated procedures

4. Tackling the Causes of Sickness Absence – Additional Support

The Council has developed a range of initiatives designed to support employees and prevent and reduce sickness absence levels including;

Occupational Health - provide advice and guidance on the impact of ill health on work and what steps the Council and/or the employee may make in order to secure an early return to work.

Counselling Service – to provide a confidential information, counselling and assistance service to employees in order to discuss concerns related to work or personal circumstances.

Health improvement policies – developing initiatives which contribute to the improved health and welfare of the workforce supported by the national Healthy Working Lives agenda.

Flexible and home working arrangements – Extending the scope of flexible and home working arrangements to help employees to better achieve a work/life balance.

Additional training for managers – training on the Maximising Attendance Policy & Procedures will be offered to provide additional support to managers.

The development of management information systems which will enable managers to receive detailed reports on the causes of absence and identify any trends that may be evident as well as the concentration of absence at a particular location.

Please refer to the “**Sources of Support for Managing Attendance**” document for further information.