

# Attendance Policy and Procedure

## Policy Statement

At Lancashire County Council we recognise the positive impact that a healthy and motivated workforce has in being able to successfully deliver a high quality service. We are committed to promoting health and wellbeing and supporting every employee to achieve good attendance and be productive at work. To enable this, we offer a range of resources and services, including:

- A dedicated [health and wellbeing](#) site which includes:
  - Support for [mental health concerns](#) and [musculoskeletal problems](#), including evidence-based information, resources and sources of support within the council as well as from external organisations.
  - Guidance on [continuing to work with a long-term health condition](#).
  - Tools and resources for [managing stress](#).
- [Stress risk assessments](#) and [wellness action plans](#).
- Access to free and confidential mental health support services: [Remploy](#) and [Able Futures](#).
- A comprehensive [Occupational Health Service](#), which, via manager referral, offers psychological wellbeing services including counselling and CBT, physiotherapy and other [specialist services](#).

Whilst we recognise you may be prevented from attending work through illness on occasion, absence of any length can have an impact on the team and the service you work within. As such, it is important we have appropriate procedures in place to enable absence to be managed effectively across the council.

## Scope

This policy applies to all council employees on LCC terms and conditions, excluding teaching and non-teaching staff employed by schools and employees who transferred to the council in accordance with TUPE regulations and who remain on their previous terms and conditions of employment.

Any sickness absence(s) during the probationary period will need to be reported through the absence reporting procedure but the management of the absence(s) will be handled under the council's [probation arrangements](#).

This policy covers instances of sickness absence and time off for medical appointments. It does not cover absences for any other reason, such as [emergency time off for dependants](#) or [annual leave](#).

## Principles

Every instance of sickness absence is unique and any action taken to manage your absence and/or support you will be based on your individual circumstances, the nature of your role and the service you work within.

If you are not well enough to work, it is essential you engage with your manager throughout the period of absence, as your ongoing discussions and updates will enable your manager to determine what support to provide to you, what steps to take to manage your absence and over what timeframe.

## Responsibilities

All employees are required to:

- Take personal responsibility for their health, safety and wellbeing.
- Attend work when they are fit to do so.
- Follow the absence reporting procedure and provide the correct absence certification if they are not well enough to attend work.

- Maintain regular and meaningful contact with their manager whilst absent due to illness.
- Engage with the absence management and monitoring procedures, including attending all meetings and OH appointments.
- Refrain from any activities outside work that are incompatible with their illness / condition or that may delay recovery, including undertaking work in a second job, whether it is paid or unpaid / voluntary.
- Take up any support identified to assist recovery and a return to work.

All managers are required to:

- Promote a culture of good attendance and take responsibility for monitoring sickness absence levels.
- Comply with and instigate the procedures for managing attendance set out in this policy.
- Act fairly when applying the procedures.
- Take appropriate action to manage and progress sickness absence cases.
- Maintain regular and meaningful contact with employees throughout the period of absence.
- Be supportive towards employees who are absent due to illness and, where appropriate, aim to identify ways in which to assist them to return to work and/or improve their attendance in the future.
- Record all sickness absence accurately on the Oracle HR & Payroll System immediately after being informed of the start and end of an absence, through Oracle Manager Self Service.
- Conduct return to work discussions following every period of sickness absence.

## Procedure

The following sections set out the procedure for managing absence.

### Absence Reporting

If you are not well enough to work, you must contact your manager before your work start time to notify them of the reason for absence, the expected length of absence and any work that needs to be picked up to allow your manager to make contingency / operational / business arrangements and/or arrange cover. You are required to keep your manager updated throughout the sickness absence on your progress and likely return to work date.

It is expected that you will report your absence and maintain contact with your manager by telephone to allow proper discussion to take place, unless an alternative method has been agreed with your manager.

You can self-certify for the first 7 calendar days of sickness absence, however you must obtain a fit note from your GP or hospital to certify your absence from the 8<sup>th</sup> calendar day onwards and for the remainder of your absence.

### Accidents Involving a Third Party

If you are unable to work due to an accident involving a third party, even if this happened outside work, you will need to refer to the [recovery of sick pay third party accidents policy](#) and ensure that you complete the [accident / incident form](#) at the earliest opportunity.

### Absence Management

During periods of absence, your manager will agree suitable contact arrangements with you and use the information you provide in relation to your health and recovery to determine the most appropriate course of action to manage your absence and support you to return to work. It is therefore really important that you engage with your manager throughout the absence.

Any action taken will be based on the nature of your illness, length of absence and the role or service you work in, but may include an Occupational Health referral, a risk assessment, a wellness action plan, a phased return to work and/or temporary adjustments, reasonable adjustments if you have a disability, redeployment or ill health retirement.

## **Welfare Visits**

If you have been absent for a prolonged period, your manager may arrange a welfare visit with you to ensure they are offering support as needed, to receive updates in relation to your ill health and identify any potential steps that could be taken to aid a return to work.

The welfare visit could be an agreed catch up at your home, a mutually convenient location or via video conferencing where appropriate.

## **Occupational Health Referrals**

Depending on the reason, length or frequency of sickness absence, your manager may talk to you about whether it would be helpful to seek advice from [Occupational Health](#) (OH), or whether you both feel there's already enough information available from your GP / consultant. The purpose of an OH referral is to provide independent advice on your health and fitness to work, respond to specific questions, provide guidance on how workplace adjustments might assist you to return and indicate relevant timeframes for potential recovery.

If your manager considers it would be helpful to make a referral to OH, you are required to attend the appointment; doing so forms part of your contract of employment with the council and is a condition of you receiving sick pay. We hope you will see the benefits of obtaining such advice, however if you choose not to engage with the referral or to allow OH to provide your manager with feedback, any decisions on your absence and, if applicable, your continued employment with the council, will be taken based on the information available at that time.

Following the appointment, OH will prepare a report for your manager to consider. The report will offer advice to inform your manager's decision-making, but it is not intended to prevent managers from taking reasonable action to manage your absence or making appropriate decisions for the service. Your manager will discuss the content of the report with you to understand your thoughts on the most appropriate course of action, but it is ultimately for your manager to determine whether any OH recommendations or adjustments are operationally achievable based on service requirements.

## **Returning to Work**

When you are well enough to come back to work, your manager will hold a return to work discussion with you to consider the practicalities of your return and any support you may need. The discussion will normally take place on your first day back in work, however if this is not possible, your manager will arrange a suitable time to follow up with you.

### **Returning to Work Early**

If you wish to return to work earlier than the end date stated on your fit note, you will need to discuss this with your manager prior to returning to allow them to consider the implications for you and the service. Provided you are fit to return to work, your manager may agree to an earlier return and will catch up with you at appropriate intervals to review your progress. However, if there are concerns that you may not yet be well enough to return to work, your manager may take further advice from OH and/or HR and/or advise you to obtain further medical advice from your GP / consultant to verify your fitness to return.

Your health and wellbeing are a priority and returning before you are ready to do so may have a detrimental impact on your health in the long term. It also may not be in the best interest of your colleagues or service users for you to return to work sooner than you are well enough to do so, particularly if where doing so could put them at risk. It is important you work with your manager and your GP or any other relevant health professionals to ensure that at the point of your return, you are well enough to do so.

### **Phased Return to Work**

A phased return may be an option to support you back into work if you have been absent for a prolonged period and feel you would struggle to return to your normal hours straight away. It involves gradually increasing the hours you work over a fixed period of time and should not usually last longer than 4 weeks.

If a phased return is recommended by OH or your GP / consultant, you should discuss the matter with your manager who will consider how it could be accommodated. Your manager may need further advice or information from OH or HR before agreeing to a phased return.

During a phased return, you will receive your normal rate of pay for the hours you work. You should agree with your manager how the remaining time will be covered; this can either be by annual leave, sickness absence or a combination of both. In the case of sickness absence, you will receive any remaining sick pay entitlement for up to a maximum of 4 weeks, and the full period must be covered by a fit note.

If you think you need a longer phased return than 4 weeks, you will need to talk to your manager who will consider your request in line with service needs. If a longer phased return is agreed, the non-worked time can be covered by annual leave, unpaid leave, sickness absence or a combination of these.

## Temporary Adjustments to Support a Return to Work

Temporary adjustments, such as altered hours or amended duties, may be helpful in supporting you to return to work following a prolonged period of absence. The adjustments can be flexible but we would not normally expect them to last longer than 4 weeks.

If you are returning to work following a prolonged period of absence and consider temporary adjustments would be helpful, you should discuss this with your manager who will assess whether the adjustments can be accommodated operationally. You and your manager could also consider any additional information provided by OH as part of this discussion.

## Reasonable Adjustments to Support Employees with a Disability

The aim of reasonable adjustments is to remove any barriers preventing an employee with a disability\* from returning to or continuing to work.

A disability\* is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' (i.e. it has lasted or is likely to last for 12 months or more) negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Examples of 'normal daily activities' include mobility, speech, memory, ability to concentrate, learn or understand.

If you have a disability that affects your ability to carry out your role, you may wish to discuss reasonable adjustments with your manager. Reasonable adjustments may need to be implemented on a permanent basis and may include workplace adaptations, changes to equipment, altered hours and amended duties, for example:

- A change to the workplace – For example, an employee who uses a wheelchair because of their disability is struggling to get to the office as they can only manage to use the wheelchair for short distances, so their employer provides an accessible car parking space near the office entrance.
- A change to the way things are done – For example, an employee with epilepsy is struggling with drowsiness and a lack of energy in the mornings, so their employer agrees for the employee to start their working hours later when this happens.
- A change to get someone to help – For example, an employee with an eyesight condition agrees with their employer to have a support worker.

Please be aware that adjustments can only be put in place where they are "reasonable" and can be accommodated within your role and the service in which you work. When considering the reasonableness of your request, your manager will look at:

- The potential effectiveness of the adjustment, i.e. would you be able to meet the standards of service delivery, targets or performance requirements associated with your role to an acceptable standard?
- The practicalities of the suggested adjustment, for example, can the premises be adapted as required, is it feasible to accommodate an adjustment in the way that is being suggested?
- Whether any disruption might be caused to service delivery, working arrangements or premises and how this could be managed.
- The cost of the adjustment – your manager may suggest that you contact [Access to Work](#) if the adjustment involves changing or replacing equipment or furniture.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be additional factors specific to the individual circumstances of the case for your manager to consider.

Sometimes it may not be possible to accommodate adjustments. In these circumstances, your manager will explain the reasons why the adjustments cannot be accommodated and discuss the next steps with you.

## Risk Assessments and Wellness Action Plans

As part of your return to work, your manager may suggest exploring the following options:

- [Risk assessments for employees with a health condition / disability](#) to help ensure the workplace is safe and identify any reasonable adjustments.
- [Stress risk assessments](#) to help identify potential causes of stress within the workplace and identify any necessary action to reduce stress.
- [Wellness action plans](#) to guide discussions about what keeps an individual well at work and which situations can trigger them to become unwell, as well as helping individuals who are recovering from an illness.

## Trigger Levels

The council has trigger levels in place to help manage absence and highlight when management action is needed. The trigger levels are as follows:

- Any absence(s) within a rolling 12 month period which amounts to more than 2 of your working weeks;
- 3 instances of absence in any rolling 12 month period; or
- Where there is reasonable cause for concern about patterns of absence when looking at your absence history.

All pregnancy-related absence will be excluded from the trigger levels.

If you reach any of the trigger levels your manager will review the circumstances of the absence(s), including whether any of the absences are disability-related, and they may ask you to attend a stage meeting.

## Stage Meetings

The purpose of a stage meeting is to review your absence record, understand the reasons for absence and explore any underlying health, personal or work-related issues which may be contributing to your absence levels.

Stage meetings work sequentially as follows:

- If you reach the trigger levels you may be asked to attend a stage one meeting.
- If you do not achieve the required levels of improvement within the stage one review period, you will be asked to attend a stage two meeting.
- If you do not achieve the required levels of improvement within the stage two review period, you will be asked to an attendance hearing.

The manager chairing the stage meeting will inform you that your levels of absence are unsatisfactory and that improvement is required. They will explain the improvement expected of you and the length of the review period, for example that you are not expected to incur any more than X days or X instances of absence within the following X months.

If you meet the required standard of improvement during the review period, no further action will be taken. However if you do not, the next stage of the procedure may be applied.

It is also important to note that if your attendance levels deteriorate during the 12 months after the end of the review period, even if you have not reached any of the trigger levels, your manager may apply the next stage of the procedure, i.e. the process will not restart from the beginning.

## Access to Work

[Access to Work](#) (ATW) is a government scheme aimed at assisting people with a disability or health condition by providing practical support and helping to meet additional costs associated with overcoming work-related obstacles resulting from their disability or health condition.

ATW may help pay for:

- Adaptations to premises and equipment;
- Special aids and equipment which a non-disabled person doing the same job would not need;
- Support when extra costs in travelling to and from work are incurred because of the disability;
- A contribution towards a support worker;
- A communicator at a job interview.

ATW funding may be available if:

- Your disability or health condition stops you from being able to do parts of your job;
- You have work-related costs because of your disability or health condition;
- You have a mental health condition which affects your ability to do a job and you need support to do the role.

Please note that this process is employee led; your manager cannot refer you to ATW, nor will they receive any information or advice from ATW. Your manager will provide whatever support they can, although ATW can only be commissioned by the employee themselves. As such, if you feel that the type of work you undertake is affected by a disability or health condition that has lasted or is likely to last for 12 months or more, and/or OH have suggested equipment, travel assistance or support to facilitate a return to work, you should contact ATW to check whether you meet the criteria for help.

## Redeployment

### Redeployment to Facilitate a Return to Work

If you are not well enough to return to your substantive role but you are well enough to continue working in some other capacity, OH may recommend exploring redeployment to another role.

In these circumstances, your manager will first consider if there are any suitable alternative roles within the service, taking into account your capabilities, skills and relevant experience. If there are no redeployment opportunities within the service, your manager will contact HR for you to be granted priority status on the [council's recruitment portal](#) for 12 weeks. From there, you will be able to search for suitable vacancies in the normal way and when you submit an application you will be doing so as a redeployee and you will be considered ahead of other job applicants for the role.

It is important you clearly demonstrate how you meet the essential criteria for the role within your application. For guidance on applying for roles and attending interviews, please refer to the CVs and interview skills section of the [career support](#) page.

Once a vacancy reaches the closing date, the manager responsible for recruitment to the vacancy (hiring manager) will only receive applications from redeployees in the first instance, with applications from employees with a disability released ahead of other redeployees. At that point, the hiring manager will assess each redeployee's suitability for the role based on the essential criteria. If you have demonstrated that you meet the essential criteria for the role, you will be invited for interview.

Opportunities for redeployment are dependent upon vacancies that exist within the council at the time.

It is important to note that by entering into the redeployment process, you are accepting that you are not considered fit to return to work in your substantive role, even where adjustments have been made, and this therefore has implications for your continuing employment with the council. As such, if you do not secure a suitable alternative role by the end of the 12 week search period, an attendance hearing will be arranged where a decision on your continued employment will be made. One of the potential outcomes of the hearing is that you could be dismissed from your employment with the council.

For further information on redeployment, please refer to the [vacancy management policy](#).

### **Disability Retention Process for Employees in Work**

If you are in work but are struggling to carry out the full remit of your role due to a health condition or disability, your manager may meet with you to discuss whether the [disability retention process](#) might be applicable in your case.

### **Ill Health Retirement**

If OH consider the nature of your illness / condition is likely to mean you will be unfit for any work in the foreseeable future, and you meet the qualifying pension scheme criteria, they may suggest exploring ill health retirement. For further information on this, please refer to the [ill health retirement policy](#).

### **Absence Review Meeting (for Prolonged Absences)**

If you have been absent for a prolonged period, it becomes clear that there is no realistic prospect of you returning to work within a reasonable timeframe and the service is not able to sustain the absence any longer, your manager will ask you to attend an absence review meeting. The purpose of the review meeting is to consider whether there are any further options that can be explored to support you to return to work before the case is referred to an attendance hearing.

An appropriate manager will chair this meeting and you can be accompanied by a work colleague, trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union if you wish.

### **Attendance Hearings**

Whilst we will support you during sickness absence, repeat or continued absence cannot be sustained indefinitely. As such, you may be asked to an attendance hearing in the following circumstances:

- You are repeatedly absent and your attendance levels have not improved during the stage two process; or
- You have been absent for a prolonged period and there is no prospect of a return to work in the foreseeable future.

The purpose of an attendance hearing is to consider the current position and how this affects your ongoing employment with the council. As such, one of the potential outcomes of the hearing is that you could be dismissed.

#### **Medical Information prior to an Attendance Hearing**

It is important that we understand any medical information relevant to your absence(s) prior to the attendance hearing as this will enable the manager chairing the hearing to make an informed decision.

Prior to the hearing your manager will ask you to review the latest available medical information, for example the most recent OH report or information from your GP / consultant, and advise whether the information is still up-to-date. If you confirm that the information is still up-to-date, the manager chairing the hearing will consider this as part of the attendance hearing. However, if there has been a change in your circumstances since that information was provided or it has been a while since medical information was obtained, your manager may make a referral to OH prior to the attendance hearing.

#### **Attendance Hearing Process**

Attendance hearings will be chaired by an appropriate manager, advised by a member of the Corporate HR Team.

You will be asked to attend the hearing in writing with a minimum of 5 working days' notice and you will be provided with a copy of all the documentation that will be considered at the hearing.

When a hearing has been scheduled, you must take all reasonable steps to attend. If you are prevented from attending the hearing due to health reasons, you can seek to agree an alternative date within 5

working days of the original with your manager. If you are not well enough to attend the rescheduled hearing, you can submit a written statement for the manager chairing the hearing to consider.

You have the right to be accompanied at the hearing by a work colleague, trade union representative or official employed by a trade union. For further information on this, refer to the **Other Procedural Matters** section below. If your companion is unavailable on the proposed date, you may suggest an alternative date within 5 working days of the original.

If a hearing has been re-arranged at your request but you do not attend, a decision on your continued employment with the council may be made in your absence based on any written submissions available, and the outcome will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days.

During the hearing, the manager who referred the case will present a record of your sickness absence for the manager chairing the hearing to consider.

You will be given the opportunity to respond to this and present any further information that will assist the hearing manager to understand your illness / condition and/or reasons for your sickness absence levels. The manager chairing the hearing, the HR representative and the manager who referred the case will have the opportunity to ask you questions about the information you have presented.

The manager who referred the case will be asked to sum up, then you will be given the opportunity to do the same before the meeting adjourns to enable the manager chairing the hearing to consider the outcome.

You will be verbally notified of the outcome as soon as reasonably practicable following the hearing, and this will normally be confirmed to you in writing within 5 working days of the verbal notification.

## **Appeals**

If you are dismissed at an attendance hearing, you have a right of appeal which will likely fall into the categories that either the absence management procedure was not followed correctly or that relevant information was not considered.

You must submit your grounds for appeal in writing to the manager named in the outcome letter within 5 working days of the date you receive the letter. It is really important that you set out the grounds on which you are appealing so that the manager considering your appeal can prepare to address these at the hearing.

A senior manager who has not previously been involved in the decision-making process will chair the appeal hearing, advised by a member of the Corporate HR Team.

The manager considering the appeal will invite you to a hearing without unreasonable delay; this will normally be held within 20 working days of receipt of your appeal. If it is not possible to achieve this timeframe, this will be explained to you and the date of the hearing will be confirmed.

The appeal hearing is your opportunity to talk through your grounds of appeal but it is not a repeat of the original hearing. The manager hearing the appeal will consider evidence presented at the original hearing which is relevant to the grounds of appeal or any new information relating to your absence(s) that could have had a bearing on the outcome but was not available at the time.

After the appeal hearing, the manager will notify you in writing of their final decision without unreasonable delay. This decision is final and there will be no further right of appeal.

## **Other Procedural Matters**

### **Formal Meetings**

A formal meeting is a meeting that may impact on your continued employment with the council, for example a stage meeting, absence review meeting, attendance hearing or appeal hearing.

Under this procedure, you have the right to be accompanied at any formal meetings by a work colleague, trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union. The work colleague, trade union representative or official employed by a trade union can present your case and respond to any views



expressed at the meeting on your behalf, but cannot answer questions on your behalf or prevent others from presenting or explaining their position / information.

We do not allow meetings to be recorded as this could make those present feel uncomfortable and therefore less willing to contribute, but the manager chairing the meeting will take notes to summarise the key points of the discussion. Notes taken by the manager will not be detailed minutes of the meeting and will not be shared with you as a matter of routine, therefore if you wish to make your own notes during the meeting, you are welcome to do so.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information received during the absence management procedure will be treated in the strictest confidence and any records will be kept in accordance with data protection legislation.

## **Sick Pay Entitlement**

If you are unable to work due to illness, you may be entitled to receive sick pay. However, this is conditional upon you following and engaging in the procedure and there may be situations where sick pay may be withheld.

The council applies the sickness scheme set out within your national conditions of service (for example, the National Joint Council for Local Government Service sickness scheme). If you have TUPE transferred into the council, please refer to your terms and conditions for details of your sick pay entitlement. If you require further information about your sick pay entitlement, please contact [AskHR](#).

Sick pay is calculated on a rolling 12 month basis from the start date of absence and is made up of two elements; occupational sick pay (OSP) as set out below and statutory sick pay (SSP). SSP is payable at the appropriate rate, irrespective of your actual earnings, during the period of absence for up to a maximum of 28 weeks. On the expiry of 28 weeks' SSP, Payroll will provide you with the appropriate notification forms so that you can claim any government benefits.

<b>Length of Continuous Service</b>	<b>Occupational Sick Pay Entitlement</b>
During 1st year of service	1 month's full pay and, after completing 4 months' service, 2 months' half pay
During 2nd year of service	2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay
During 3rd year of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay
During 4th and 5th year of service	5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay
After 5 years' service	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay

### **Support where Sick Pay Entitlement is Exhausted**

If you reach a point where you have exhausted your sick pay entitlement, you may want to:

- Speak with the [Welfare Rights Service](#) (01772 533633 between 10:00-12:00 and 14:00-16:00 Monday-Friday or via email on [HQWRS@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:HQWRS@lancashire.gov.uk)) for advice and guidance on benefits.
- Contact [Citizen's Advice](#) to see if you are entitled to any financial support.
- Explore options with your bank or building society, mortgage provider or landlord, such as payment holidays.
- Notify your critical illness cover provider, if applicable.
- Speak with your trade union, if you are a member, as they often have hardship funds in place for such situations.
- Refer to the council's [money worries – debt and financial planning guide](#) for useful links and advice on managing your finances.

## **Withholding Occupational Sick Pay (OSP)**

You need to be aware that OSP is conditional and may be withheld where:

- There is evidence that your absence is not due to you being unwell.
- You do not engage with your manager or the absence management procedure, including attending OH appointments.
- You do not follow the absence reporting and certification requirements of the procedure.
- There are patterns to your absence that are of cause for concern, for example, absences immediately before or after a weekend or bank holiday, or during sporting events.
- There is a genuine belief that you have reported in sick because your annual leave request was denied.
- You choose to participate in any activity that is prejudicial to your recovery.

If a decision is taken to withhold your OSP, the reason(s) will be explained to you and you will have a right of appeal against the decision. If the manager considering the appeal decides that the grounds for withholding OSP were justified, you will forfeit the right to any further payment in respect of that period of absence. If the manager upholds the appeal, OSP will be applied.

## **Possible Actions Related to Withholding Sick Pay (OSP)**

We also reserve the right to consider action in line with the disciplinary procedure where:

- There is reasonable belief that your actions may hinder or prolong your recovery.
- Your conduct during your absence conflicts with what you have told us about your health or recovery.
- There is repeated abuse of the OSP provision.

## **Time Off for Medical Appointments**

If you need to take time out of work to attend a medical appointment, please ensure you give your manager as much notice as possible and provide any written confirmation of appointments if requested.

You should endeavour to book medical appointments outside working hours wherever possible. If this cannot reasonably be arranged, appointments should be made at a time that is least disruptive to service delivery, for example at the beginning or end of your working day.

### **Routine Medical Appointments**

Where doctor, dental, hospital or optician appointments cannot reasonably be arranged outside working hours, you should agree with your manager how the lost time will be made up. These appointments will not be regarded as sickness absence and therefore do not need to be recorded on Oracle and will not count towards the sickness trigger levels.

### **Hospital Admission**

If you are admitted to hospital for treatment and are unable to work as a result, this would fall within the sickness absence provisions and the time off would be recorded as sickness absence.

### **Antenatal Appointments**

If you require time off during working hours for antenatal care, please refer to the [parental information pack](#) or to the [special leave with pay](#) provisions for prospective fathers / partners.

### **Fertility Treatment**

If you require time off during working hours for fertility treatment, you will receive your normal pay for the time you are not in work and you will not be expected to make up the lost time.

### **Elective Surgery**

If you wish to take time off work for elective surgical procedures or appointments, for example cosmetic surgery or laser eye surgery, the time should be taken as annual or unpaid leave.

## **Sickness as a result of Medical Treatment**

If you are unfit to work as a result of a medical appointment or procedure, you must notify your manager as soon as possible. Your absence will be recorded as sickness absence and sick pay provisions will apply. If the absence continues, you will need to follow the absence reporting procedure.

## **Annual Leave and Sickness Absence**

You will continue to accrue annual leave during periods of sickness absence.

You are encouraged to use annual leave while you are absent due to sickness, as you would if you were in work. This may be particularly helpful where the leave would assist in your recovery, if you are reaching the end of your sick pay entitlement, or where you are returning to work from absence and wish to use some leave to break up the week(s) to help ease you back in.

If you are prevented from taking annual leave while absent because of the nature of your illness / condition, you may be able to take the leave at another time upon your return to work.

Please be aware that if you are absent due to sickness and you have more than the statutory 20 day annual leave limit remaining by the end of the annual leave year, you will lose the difference. For example, if you are absent due to sickness and you have 28 days' annual leave left on 31 March, you will be able to carry over 20 days' leave into the new leave year but you will lose the remaining 8 days.

### **Pre-arranged Annual Leave**

If you are prevented from taking pre-arranged annual leave due to illness, or you fall ill during a period of annual leave, your manager may approve a request to treat some (or all) of the period of annual leave as sickness absence. However, requests will only be agreed where you have followed the absence reporting procedure and provided satisfactory medical evidence (i.e. a doctor's statement or hospital discharge paperwork) covering the dates you were ill.

If you have pre-arranged leave and you use the leave for the purpose it was intended, for example to go on holiday or to visit family, the time will remain recorded as annual leave. Taking annual leave during a period of sickness absence does not break the period of sickness absence, i.e. it will be recorded as a single instance of sickness absence rather than 2 instances either side of your annual leave.

## **Additional Support**

There is a wealth of useful resources and information to support you in keeping well on the [health and wellbeing](#) site.

If you have a disability or an underlying medical condition that affects your ability to undertake your role, or if you feel you are struggling with your health or attendance, we encourage you to be open with your manager. Talking about these matters early on will enable us to support you to continue attending work and providing an effective service.

We recognise that the absence management procedure can be stressful and we encourage you to speak with your manager in the first instance if you have any questions or concerns.

Similarly, you can contact the [Employee Support Team](#), who can provide an impartial listening ear and practical help to all employees who may have work-related or personal problems or concerns. Alternatively, you can contact your trade union if you are a member.

You may also wish to reach out to the various support networks within the council, which include the [Disabled Workers Forum](#), the [Forum of Asian and Black Employees \(FABE\)](#) and the [LGBT Employee Network](#).

Employees with a disability or long-term health condition may also find it helpful to refer to the Government's [Access to Work Scheme](#), which can provide practical advice and support.

# Policy Version Control

Version	Date	Change
1	TBC 2021	<p>The "management of sickness absence policy and procedure" has been renamed "attendance policy and procedure" to reflect the focus on promoting good health and attendance, in addition to managing sickness absence.</p> <p>The approach has shifted from short-term and long-term absence management to procedures for managing all absences (regardless of length) and supporting employees to return to and remain in work.</p> <p>Prescriptive timeframes and procedures have been removed to allow managers to make appropriate judgements based on the individual circumstances of the absence and the needs of the service.</p> <p>Referrals to Occupational Health are now optional rather than mandatory, to enable managers to consider the option with the employee and refer as and when necessary.</p> <p>The 8-weekly case review meetings have been removed from the procedure for managing prolonged absence, yet there is greater emphasis on the manager and employee having ongoing, meaningful conversations throughout the absence.</p> <p>An absence review meeting has been introduced into the procedure for managing prolonged absence to consider any final options that may facilitate a return to work ahead of an attendance hearing.</p> <p>The search period in the redeployment process has been increased to 12 weeks for all employees as standard; previously this was limited to 4 weeks unless the employee had a disability. However, employees with a disability will retain a higher priority status when being considered for alternative roles.</p> <p>There has been an amendment to the wording around phased returns. The new procedure reiterates that a phased return should not usually last longer than 4 weeks, as per the current policy, but the wording "unless occupational health advice recommends otherwise" has been removed.</p> <p>A new sickness absence trigger has been added for situations where the numerical triggers have not been reached but there is reasonable cause for concern about patterns of absence.</p> <p>The wording of the existing trigger level has been revised from "a total of 10 working days (pro rata for part time employees)" to "any absence which amounts to more than 2 of your working weeks" to avoid confusion around pro rata calculations.</p> <p>The appeal period for employees who are dismissed at an attendance hearing has been reduced from 10 days to 5 days in line with other HR procedures.</p> <p>Example scenarios of where occupational sick pay may be withheld have been added.</p> <p>The extension of sick pay guidance has been removed and instead, useful information and guidance have been added to support employees who are in half or nil sick pay.</p> <p>The carry-over of annual leave during sickness absence has been aligned to the statutory requirements.</p> <p>The 'Time Off for Medical Appointments' and 'Manage Sickness Absence and Annual Leave' guides have been incorporated into this policy.</p> <p>A revision has been made to how time off for hospital admission is covered so that if an employee is admitted for treatment which leaves them unable to work, the time off will be recorded as sickness absence.</p>