

# Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy

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## Document Control

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## 1. Why Does the Council need this Policy

Aberdeen City Council values its employees and recognises the importance of their wellbeing and attendance at work. This policy aims to promote a fair, supportive, and transparent approach to managing sickness absence.

The Council values the contribution made by its employees and recognises that high levels of attendance at work are key to supporting the achievement of the Council's objectives and priorities. It is committed to high levels of attendance at work, whilst ensuring employees are treated fairly, consistently and are well supported.

## 2. Application and Scope Statement

2.1 This policy applies to all employees of the Council, including Chief Officers and Teachers/SNCT employees. It does not apply to casual or agency workers.

Teachers/employees whose terms and conditions are governed by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) are subject to the nationally negotiated SNCT Handbook of Conditions of Service. The provisions of this policy do not override or replace any aspect of the SNCT Handbook. Where there is any conflict or difference between this policy and the SNCT Handbook, the SNCT Handbook shall take precedence. A summary of these provisions can be found at appendix 1 and further details of SNCT terms and conditions can be found at [www.snct.org.uk](http://www.snct.org.uk).

2.2 The policy covers any sickness absence, regardless of the reason, and outlines procedures for addressing both short-term and long-term absences, ensuring consistency and clarity in application.

2.3 The main aims of this policy are to:

- ensure employees are supported during periods of absence from work due to sickness for mental or physical health reasons
- provide clear processes for managing sickness absences, in a fair and transparent manner, to help avoid or reduce the possibility for uncertainty and stress
- reduce sickness absence levels and support employees to return to work at the earliest opportunity, should they be able to
- maintain a productive and healthy work environment

2.4 In using this policy, reasonable adjustments should be made for those with a disability in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The same applies to those whose first language is not English or who have difficulty expressing themselves.

2.5 This policy and accompanying procedure are in line with [ACAS guidance on Managing Sickness Absence](#).

### 3. Responsibilities

3.1 In managing absence and supporting attendance the Council will follow a fair process and comply with duties arising under the Equality Act 2010. This includes ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for those employees with a disability. It also includes ensuring that employees are not treated unfavourably due to any pregnancy related absence.

3.2 Chief Officers are responsible for overseeing the application of this policy and accompanying procedure within their cluster area. They are also responsible for promoting a positive and supportive culture around health and wellbeing and leading initiatives that aim to improve attendance.

Chief Officers are also responsible for identifying a suitable manager to chair any formal meeting under this policy, where termination of employment is being considered (either under conduct or capability), and for any appeal against termination of employment.

3.3 Line Managers have responsibility for applying this policy and monitoring sickness absence across their team(s). Line Managers should also:

- Ensure that sickness absence is recorded promptly and accurately, both at the start of an employee's absence and on their return to work.
- Agreeing and maintaining the frequency and method of contact with employees while they are absent from work.
- Maintain confidentiality and sensitivity around the reasons for absence and the application of the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy.
- Take a supportive approach to managing sickness absence with the aim of supporting employee attendance and return to work.
- Take a balanced approach between improving attendance at work and supporting employees while sick.
- Take an individual employee's particular medical circumstances into consideration when applying the policy, including medical advice where appropriate, in consultation with People Services.
- Ensure that employees are treated fairly throughout the process.
- Create an environment where employees are aware of this policy, its expectations and the consequences of not meeting required standards of attendance.
- Consider whether reasonable adjustments could be made that will provide support and/or assist a return to work for persons who have a disability, as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

3.4 Employees have a responsibility to:

- Maintain their attendance at work in line with their contractual responsibility.
- Familiarise themselves with the contents of this policy and accompanying guidance.
- Co-operate with the requirements of this policy, procedure and guidance, including

- Complying with the notification and certification requirements when unable to attend work
- Attending meetings under the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy when requested and medically fit to do so
- Attending Occupational Health appointments
- Maintaining contact with their line manager for the duration of their absence from work
- Maintain their own general health and wellbeing and seek advice, where appropriate, to improve attendance at work or to facilitate their return to work from a period of sickness absence.

3.5 Non-compliance with this policy should be reported to the employee's line manager, or People Services.

3.6 Any feedback on the policy or suggestions for improvement should be communicated to the policy author or owner in the first instance.

## 4. Supporting Procedures & Documentation

4.1 Accompanying guidance on Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing has been developed to support adherence to this policy. The procedure for dealing with absence matters is detailed within the accompanying guidance.

4.2 This policy also links to:

- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [The Council's Guiding Principles](#)
- Managing Discipline [Policy](#) and [Guidance](#)
- Managing Grievances [Policy](#) and [Guidance](#)
- Dignity and Respect at Work [Policy](#) and [Guidance](#)
- [Managing Substance Misuse Policy](#)
- [Ill Health Retirement Guidance](#)
- [Extension of Occupational Sick Pay Guidance](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy](#)
- [Management of Stress Procedure](#)
- [Phased Return Guidance](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustment Passports](#)
- Flexible Working [Policy](#) and [Guidance](#)
- [Redeployment Procedure](#)
- [Special Leave Policy](#)
- Disability Guidance
- Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) Handbook of Conditions of Service. [www.snct.org.uk](http://www.snct.org.uk).

## 5. About this Policy

### Policy Statement and Core Principles

- 5.1 The policy is not creating any specific regulations or requirements other than what is stated under section 3 above.
- 5.2 The purpose of the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy is to ensure employees are supported during periods of sickness absence and assist them in returning to work.
- 5.3 Early intervention is key to providing support to employees who are experiencing difficulties in maintaining attendance levels.
- 5.4 Where an employee has a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010, managers should ensure reasonable adjustments are put in place to support employees to attend and remain in work.
- 5.5 Employees are expected to follow the notification and certification (Fit note) requirements as outlined in the guidance.
- 5.6 Line managers must record all sickness absences on the Council's HR/Payroll system to ensure employees are paid correctly.
- 5.7 A return to work meeting must be held after every period of sickness absence, unless there are extenuating circumstances which prevent this.

### Review Levels

- 5.8 In order to manage absence, there are review levels that, if met, place the employee into the formal Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing procedure. The levels are as follows:

#### Short Term

- 10 calendar days or more of absence in a 12-month period
- 3 occasions or more of absence in a 12-month period

The formal Short Term procedure will apply if either level is met (i.e. number of days or number of occasions)

#### Long Term

- 28 calendar days or longer

The formal Long Term procedure will apply if this level is met.

### Formal Stages

- 5.9 At any meeting held as part of the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing procedure an employee should be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a trade union

representative or a work colleague. Employees are not entitled to be accompanied by a family member or a legal representative.

- 5.10 All reasonable efforts will be made to identify solutions and suitable alternatives where employees are unable to fulfil their role due to an underlying health condition. Whilst the Council will make all reasonable efforts to assist the employee, it cannot guarantee to maintain employment in cases where the employee is unable to sustain the attendance standards required.
- 5.11 No decision to terminate an employee's contract of employment will be taken until all reasonable alternatives, adjustments and support options have been considered. Any termination of employment under this policy will be with contractual notice.
- 5.12 Where the decision is made to terminate an employee's contract of employment, either due to conduct or capability, the employee will be advised in writing of the reasons for the decision and of their right of appeal against the decision.
- 5.13 Employees have the right to appeal against any dismissal undertaken under this policy. Employees who have been dismissed under this policy may choose to have their appeal heard by Management or by Appeals Sub-Committee.
- 5.14 An appeal heard by Management will not be heard by the same Officer who took the decision to dismiss.
- 5.15 All matters will be dealt with promptly and in confidence.

## 6. Risk

- 6.1 The policy is designed to reduce compliance, operational, financial, and reputational risks.
  - **Compliance** – having this policy in place mitigates the risk of non-compliance with legislative requirements, including those within the Equality Act 2010.
  - **Operational** – having this policy in place mitigates the risk of disruption to Council services and service users by ensuring that sickness absence is reduced and ensuring sufficient resource available to meet service demands.
  - **Financial** – having this policy in place mitigates against and minimises costs to the Council due to sickness absence.
  - **Reputational** – having this policy in place mitigates against reputational risks to the Council by demonstrating our commitment to addressing issues of sickness absence and to supporting employees during times of sickness absence.
- 6.2 There have been no unintended effects, consequences and risks identified resulting from the introduction of the policy.

6.3 The risks identified will be managed and mitigated through application of the policy across the Council. This will be undertaken by ensuring the policy is readily available to managers and employees and that support is provided from People and Citizen Services in the interpretation of the policy, where required.

## 7. Environmental Implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this policy.

## 8. Policy Performance

8.1 The main factors determining the effectiveness of the policy and whether it adds the value intended is the usage of the policy to address absence from work, the consistency in its application by managers and the improvement in employees' attendance..

8.2 The effectiveness of the policy will be measured through analysing data on recorded sickness absence and the number of formal Supporting Attendance cases and their outcomes, and through collecting feedback from users of the policy.

8.3 The Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services will decide where and when data is reported on the effectiveness of the policy, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained.

## 9. Design and Delivery

9.1 The policy links to the 'Workforce' strategic outcome of the Target Operating Model 1.2 (TOM 1.2) in that it is concerned with organisational culture and promotion of equality in the workplace. The application of the policy and procedure on a fair and consistent basis should help ensure alignment with this principle. It also links to the Council's Guiding Principles, particularly in relation to the commitment to valuing and supporting staff.

9.2 The policy also links to the 'Prosperous People' theme in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which indicates that all people in the City are entitled to live in a manner in which they feel safe and protected from harm and supported where necessary. All citizens are equally entitled to enjoy these aspirations, including employees of the Council. Having an effective policy and procedure in place to address absence and support attendance at work should assist in ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for staff.

## 10. Housekeeping and Maintenance

10.1 The Policy will be reviewed biennially, and any necessary updates made to it and the accompanying guidance document.

## 11. Communication and Distribution

- 11.1 The policy and accompanying guidance will be communicated through the Council's Intranet, Leadership Forum and any other relevant measures to ensure that all relevant parties are aware of its content.

## 12. Information Management

- 12.1 Information generated by the application of this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and Supporting Procedures.

## 13. Definitions and Understanding this Policy

- 13.1 Long Term absences are defined as those lasting 28 calendar days or longer. Absences of less than 28 calendar days are defined as short term.
- 13.2 Disability is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities.
- 13.3 Termination of contract due to capability is where absence levels are due to an underlying health condition.
- 13.4 Termination of contract due to conduct is where absence levels are not due to any underlying medical condition.
- 13.5 Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.
- 13.6 The procedure for Supporting Attendance can be found in the accompanying Guidance.



## Aberdeen City LNCT Agreement

### Annex - Application of Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy to Teachers (SNCT and LNCT Provisions)

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This annex sets out how the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy must be applied to teachers, to ensure consistency with the SNCT Handbook and Aberdeen City Council LNCT agreements. Where there is any conflict between this Policy and the SNCT/LNCT frameworks, the latter shall take precedence.

#### **1. Notification of Absence**

Teachers may notify absence directly to their school, normally to the Head Teacher or line manager.

This reflects school-based management responsibility and ensures alignment with SNCT practice. Notification will normally be given personally by the teacher. However, where this is not possible (e.g. serious illness, accident, hospitalisation), a representative can notify on their behalf.

The school must accept third-party notification to avoid discrimination against teachers with disabilities or sudden serious illness.

#### **2. Phased Return to Work**

Teachers are entitled to a phased return on full pay following long-term sickness absence. In line with SNCT and Aberdeen LNCT Agreement, this entitlement is normally 4–6 weeks, with extensions considered locally where appropriate.

Managers must record and support phased return arrangements as part of the employee's Support Plan.

#### **3. Industrial Injury Absence**

Where absence relates to an industrial accident, teachers must be managed with reference to SNCT Handbook, Part 2, Section 6 (Absence Due to Accident at Work).

Such absences must not be counted towards absence triggers under this policy.

#### **4. Assault in the Course of Employment**

In line with SNCT Handbook, Part 2, Section 6, absences resulting from assault in the course of employment shall not be treated as sickness absence and shall not count against sick pay entitlement.

Such absences will be treated as SNCT special leave with pay, normally up to 6 months full pay and 6 months half pay, on the production of a fit note.

The employer must ensure the incident is reported under the appropriate violent incident and accident reporting procedures.

Absence must be kept under medical review, and reasonable adjustments must be provided to support return to work.

If the absence ceases to relate to the assault but continues due to another reason, it will then revert to sickness absence provisions under SNCT Part 2, Section 6.

## **5. Infectious Diseases**

In line with SNCT Handbook, Part 2, Section 6, an employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with notifiable infectious diseases shall advise the Council immediately and shall be entitled to full pay during absence.

Any such absence will be recorded as Special Leave and not count against the teacher's sickness allowance.

## **6. Respiratory Tuberculosis**

In line with SNCT Handbook, Part 2, Section 6, where a teacher is absent due to respiratory tuberculosis and supported by a doctor's statement, the teacher shall be entitled to full salary for up to 12 months and half salary for up to a further 6 months.

The teacher shall not return to duty until certified fit to resume work.

## **7. Ill-Health Retirement**

Teachers' ill-health retirement is governed by the Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme (SPPA) under SNCT provisions, not the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Managers must ensure the correct process is followed and that teachers are referred under SPPA arrangements.

## **8. Disability-Related Absence**

Disability-related absence must be managed in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and SNCT provisions.

Before escalation through absence triggers, managers must:

- Explore and implement all reasonable adjustments (including Reasonable Adjustment Passports where applicable).
- Record adjustments and support measures in the Support Plan.
- Ensure absences are treated in a supportive manner and not automatically escalated.

## **9. Pregnancy-Related Absence**

Absences relating to pregnancy or maternity must be managed in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the SNCT Handbook (Part 2, Section 6 – Sick Leave and Pay), and relevant LNCT agreements. Specifically:

- Pregnancy-related absences must not be used as a trigger for progression through absence review stages under this Policy.
- Pregnancy-related absences should remain at Level 1 supportive monitoring only, with no escalation to formal review levels.

Managers must ensure that pregnancy-related absence is recorded separately from sickness absence and handled in a supportive and non-discriminatory manner.

## 10. Work-Related Stress and Mental Health Absence

Where absences are related to work-related stress or mental health, managers should consider undertaking a stress risk assessment and make reasonable workload adjustments before any formal escalation.

## 11. Competence and Capability

In line with SNCT:

- Health or disability-related absence must not be confused with competence or performance issues.
- Where absence due to a health condition impacts attendance, the matter must be addressed under capability, not conduct.

## 12. Right to be Accompanied

Teachers have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague at all formal stages of the absence management process in line with Part 4, Section 1 of the SNCT Handbook.

## 13. Progression to Level 3

Teachers must not be moved directly to a Level 3 Capability Meeting unless:

- Medical evidence confirms that a return to work is not anticipated within a reasonable timeframe;
- All reasonable adjustments, phased return options, redeployment, and ill-health retirement routes (SPPA) have been considered and documented;
- Occupational health advice or medical evidence confirming the teacher's prognosis and fitness for work has been obtained, in line with Section 6.13 of the SNCT Handbook, to ensure that decisions regarding capability are evidence-based and fully informed.
- Advice has been sought from People Services.

This safeguard ensures Stage 1 and Stage 2 remain meaningful supportive stages.

## 14. Appeals

Teachers retain the right to appeal dismissal decisions to either:

- A Director who has had no prior involvement in the case, or
- The Appeals Sub-Committee.

## 15. Confidentiality of Medical Information

All medical information obtained in connection with absence or occupational health referrals will be treated as strictly confidential and will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

This maintains alignment with SNCT provisions for independent review.