

POLICY STATEMENT

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Chorley Council values the contribution of its staff in the delivery and maintenance of quality services to the community. Whilst recognising that employees may be prevented from attending work through ill health, the Council has a duty to maintain service delivery and minimise disruption. The Council is therefore committed to managing attendance and sickness absence and believes that this is the responsibility of the Council's managers, trade union representatives and employees to work together to promote an attendance culture, the management of sickness absence and ill health.

2. CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY

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.
- Matters raised relating to an employee's attendance do not imply any distrust of staff or concerns regarding their conduct
- Employees will be dealt with consistently and the sickness absence procedures will be fairly applied across the Council
- The Council will aim to promote a positive and preventative rather than punitive approach
- The Council will be sensitive and supportive to those suffering the effects of ill health
- Sickness and absence cases will be conducted with respect and confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Protection and Access to Medical Records Acts
- Open communication between managers and employees will be encouraged and promoted
- The Council will aim to distinguish between absences due to sickness and the abuse of the sickness absence system
- The Attendance Policy and Procedure will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the Council's aims and complies with these principles. Staff and trade union representatives will be encouraged to be involved in this process
- The Council will not tolerate abuse of its good employment practices and unjustifiable poor levels of attendance will be viewed as inconsistent with the aims of the Council

In order to support this policy, the following services are available to managers and employees:

- Occupational Health – To provide advice and guidance on the impact of ill health on work and what steps the Council and/or employee can take
- Counselling Service –Via Occupational Health, providing a confidential service to employees in order to discuss concerns related to work or personal circumstances
- Physiotherapy Services – To provide treatment and advice to employees suffering from muscular or skeletal problems
- HR and OD Directorate – To provide support and guidance to managers and employees in dealing with sickness absence and ill health and in the use of the Council's related policies and procedures.

3. EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees will be expected to:

- Attend work unless unfit to do so
- Be aware that the management of attendance is the joint responsibility of the manager and employee.
- Take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, which can be supported through the provisions and initiatives within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Raise concerns with their manager or Human Resources if they believe their job is making them ill or contributing to illness
- Report sickness absences promptly in accordance with the sickness absence procedures
- Ensure that the appropriate certifications are completed, in accordance with the procedure.
- Maintain contact with their manager during periods of sickness absence.
- Communicate effectively with their manager about their sickness absence
- Co-operate fully with Occupational Health (OH) and other organisations that provide support to the Council and its employees
- Ensure that medical advice and treatment, where appropriate, is received as quickly as possible in order to facilitate a return to work
- Not abuse the sickness absence procedures or sick pay scheme.

4. OUTCOMES

The Council will achieve this through:

- A healthy, well-motivated workforce
- A culture where the health, safety and well being of all employees is paramount.
- Accurate and timely production of statistics to meet government and the Council's targets.
- A consistent approach to manage absence, whilst dealing with unjustified and/or high levels of sickness absence

POLICY PROCEDURE

1. DEFINITION

Absence is defined as all non pre-authorized time off work including self certified absence, medically certified absence and unauthorised absence.

2. PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ABSENCE

If an employee is absent from work for any reason without prior permission it is their responsibility to ensure the Council is notified.

The employee must inform their Manager or if unavailable another Manager within their Directorate as soon as possible on the first day of absence. If no contact is made the Manager should ring the employee to enquire regarding their whereabouts. Any significant delay in contacting their Manager will require an explanation and should the reason be unacceptable, a disciplinary investigation will be instigated which may result in pay being withheld.

The employee's Manager will ring the employee back if they have been unavailable to take the initial call.

It is not acceptable for employees to report their absence to a colleague, via a mobile phone text message. Employees must telephone their manager in person. In exceptional circumstances the employee may nominate somebody to report in on their behalf if they are unable to do so themselves i.e. they are in hospital.

If the employee has made no contact they will be classed as unauthorised absent and pay will be stopped until a suitable explanation is given. On their return to work a disciplinary investigation may be instigated.

In cases of industrial/work related injury, it is essential that employees complete the corporate accident/incident report form (forms can be located in the Health and Safety Section of the loop) and inform their Manager as per procedure.

When employees contact their Manager they must give as much information as possible relating to the nature of their illness, treatment they have received and the estimated date of return. It is essential that managers use sensitivity and tact when establishing the facts. The following questions provides managers with best practice examples:

- Enquire as to the nature of the illness or problem
- How long have the symptoms persisted?
- Have they visited or do they plan to visit their GP if so when?
- What treatments have they received/medication taken?
- How long do they estimate they will be absent for?
- What meetings, deadlines or important events are pending and may require cover?
- Request an update on the 3rd day of absence

The Manager must then complete, with as much detail as possible the Absence Notification form on the Intranet. <http://www2.intranet.chorley.gov.uk/section.asp?catid=12215>

On receipt of the absence notification the ICT Directorate will automatically ensure that an out of office notification is added to employee's emails.

The employee should make contact with their Manager on the 3rd working day of absence providing them with an update of their condition and estimated date of return.

On the 5th working day of absence, employees must notify their Manager of the reason for their continued absence.

Medical Certification

For absences of 8 calendar days or more a medical certificate must be submitted to cover employee's from the eighth day of absence. The medical certificate must have been signed by their doctor on or before the eighth day. All medical certificates should be sent promptly to their Manager.

If an employee does not comply with the above procedure, appropriate deductions of pay will be made. Employees may also be subject to disciplinary action.

Return to Work

The employee must notify their Manager prior to their return to work. If medical certificates from a doctor have been submitted, the refrain from work end date of the certificate must have expired or if an employee is returning to work prior to this end date, they must get a further medical certificate confirming their fitness to resume their duties. A Return to Work Notification <http://cbc-us-crm/tkflow/Flow.aspx?f=HRSicknessReturnNotify> and a Return to Work interview must be completed for each period of absence.

<http://cbc-us-crm/tkflow/Flow.aspx?f=HRSicknessReturnInterview>

3. RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS

The Manager (or appropriately designated officer) will review the absence with the employee on the day that they return to work, after each and every absence [or as soon as practicable for those employees who work shifts or unusual hours]. These interviews should provide an opportunity to:

- Demonstrate to the employee that they are a valued member of the team and the Manager cares and takes the employee's state of health seriously.
- Ascertain whether the employee feels sufficiently fit to return to work
- Confirm the reason for absence and ensure that correct details relating to the absence are recorded
- Offer support if appropriate from the Council's Occupational Health or Physiotherapy provider
- Raise the profile of the Council's sickness attendance policy and procedures, ensuring that the employee understands the details of the policy and his/her own responsibilities
- Discuss any factors which may be affecting the welfare of the employee

The content of this discussion must be treated as confidential except where, with the employee's permission, information is shared in order to facilitate the provision of appropriate support.

These will not be formal meetings but should be part of the normal process of completing paperwork in relation to the absence and taking an interest in colleagues' welfare. A Return to Work Form must be completed during the interview and once signed must be sent to Human Resources marked as private and confidential, to be retained on the employee's personal file.

4. EMERGENCY ACTION

The Manager may take emergency action if they believe that an employee has become medically unfit to continue carrying out their duties or the welfare of other employees/service users may be put at risk by the employee's condition. This action may include sending the employee home or suspending them from duty pending medical advice. Such medical suspension will be on full pay. Managers should be aware of the Corporate Accident/Incident Procedure in particular with regard to notifiable work related diseases to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

In these circumstances, the Manager must discuss the matter with Human Resources/Health and Safety before such action is taken.

Managers must consider referring an employee to the Occupational Health Physician following an accident at work.

5. MANAGING SHORT TERM ABSENCES

It is accepted that all employees will have occasional absences due to minor ailments. However, cause for concern arises when the frequency of such absences is considered to be excessive, or a pattern of absences becomes apparent.

The incentives and initiatives that are explained in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy aim to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of employees throughout the Council. It is believed that with this support employees can take reasonable steps to ensure they are fit to maintain regular attendance.

Managers will review absence levels on a formal basis when the trigger points in the table are reached or where there is a pattern of absence, e.g. absence on Mondays or Fridays, absence directly after annual leave, absence at the end of the leave year.

Conditions which may be covered by the Disability Discrimination Act will be given further consideration and where ever possible reasonable adjustments will be made.

The following absences will not be considered in relation to the trigger points for short term absence:

- Pre-authorised hospital stays/operations, including the recuperation period.
- Industrial injury, providing an accident reporting form has been completed and returned to their manager
- All pregnancy related absence

Trigger Points	Meeting	Potential Outcome	Period Valid
3 occasions or 7 working days or more within a rolling 6 months	Stage 1	Verbal Warning	6 Months
A further 2 occasions or a further 6 working days or more in the following 6 months	Stage 2	Written Warning	6 Months
A further 2 occasions or a further 6 working days or more in the following 6 months	Stage 3	Final Warning	6 Months
A further 2 occasions or a further 4 working days or more in the following 6 months	Stage 4	Dismissal	

Once a trigger point has been reached the attendance hearing will take place following the period of absence and not at the end of the 6 month monitoring period.

An employee whose absence is maintained at an acceptable level for 6 months following a verbal or written warning will exit the short term absence procedure. If an individual has received a final written warning and their attendance is maintained for the next 6 months, they will 'step back' to a verbal warning which will remain valid for a further 6 months.

Should acceptable attendance be maintained during this 6 month monitoring period the individual will exit the procedure.

Informal Process – Welfare Meeting

If the employee has 2 occasions of absence in a 6 month period an informal welfare meeting will take place. This meeting can be done as part of the return to work interview or a separate meeting can be arranged.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- make the employee aware that the manager is concerned about him/her;
- provide the employee with the opportunity to comment on the factors which have contributed to his/her absence level;
- advise him/her of support services available and discuss other action which may be taken by the individual, or the Directorate, in order to assist them to improve their attendance;
- specify the improvement required in line with the trigger points

If any action points are agreed they should be confirmed in writing either on the return to work form or this can be done via email to the employee.

If there are no further absences in the specified period no further action will take place. Both parties should still follow up on any commitments made during the welfare meeting.

If there are further absences the employee will go into the formal procedure.

Stage 1 - Verbal Warning Hearing

This meeting will be heard by the employee's Manager or if not available another suitable Manager within the employee's Directorate. If support is required a member of Human Resources may be present to provide advice to the Manager.

The employee will be informed in writing of the formal meeting. This can be done via email if appropriate.

The employee will be given a minimum of 3 working days notice of the formal meeting and offered the right of Trade Union representation or work colleague present.

At the meeting the following will be taken into consideration:

- The employees absence history.
- The nature of the absences and any treatment that has been received.
- The effect the absence is having on Directorate performance and colleagues within the Directorate.
- Any action taken to improve attendance.
- Any support that can be provided by the Council.

The employee and his or her representative will be given the opportunity to provide any mitigating circumstances.

The employee's Manager will make the decision at the end of the meeting, if no further investigation is necessary. If further investigation is necessary the meeting will be adjourned and reconvened for a decision to be made.

The Manager must confirm this in writing to the employee, including the improvements required. The employee has a right to appeal against this warning by writing to the Corporate Director Human Resources and Organisational Development, within 5 working days of receipt of the letter, giving reasons for the appeal.

An appeal would be heard by another more Senior Manager in the employee's Directorate and should be conducted within 10 working days of the appeal being received.

Stage 2 - Written Warning Hearing

This meeting will be heard by the employee's Manager or if not available another suitable Manager within the employee's Directorate. If support is required a member of Human Resources may be present to provide advice to the Manager.

The employee will be informed in writing of the formal meeting. This can be done via email if appropriate.

The employee will be given a minimum of 3 working days notice of the formal meeting and offered the right of Trade Union representation or work colleague present.

At the meeting the following will be taken into consideration:

- The employee's absence history.
- The nature of the absences and any treatment that has been received.
- The effect the absence is having on Directorate performance and colleagues within the Directorate.
- Any action taken to improve attendance.
- Any support that can be provided by the Council.

The employee and his or her representative will be given the opportunity to provide any mitigating circumstances.

The employee's Manager will make the decision at the end of the meeting, if no further investigation is necessary. If further investigation is necessary the meeting will be adjourned and reconvened for a decision to be made.

The Manager must confirm this in writing to the employee, including the improvements required. If not already done so an appointment with Occupational Health will be arranged to provide the Council with further information on the employees medical issues.

The employee has a right to appeal against this warning by writing to the Corporate Director of Human Resources, & Organisational Development within 5 working days of receipt of the letter, giving reasons for the appeal.

An appeal would be heard by another more Senior Manager in the employees Directorate and should be conducted within 10 working days of the appeal being received.

Stage 3 - Final Written Warning Hearing

This meeting will be heard by the employees Manager or if not available another suitable Manager within the employees Directorate. A member of Human Resources will be present to provide advice to the Manager

The employee will be informed in writing of the formal meeting. This can be done via email if appropriate.

The employee will be given a minimum of 3 working days notice of the formal meeting and offered the right of Trade Union representation or work colleague present.

At the meeting the following will be taken into consideration:

- The employees absence history.
- The effect the absence is having on Directorate performance and colleagues within the Directorate.
- The nature of the absences and any treatment that has been received.
- Any action taken to improve attendance.
- The report from Occupational Health following the Written Warning.
- Any support that can be provided by the Council.

The employee and his or her representative will be given the opportunity to provide any mitigating circumstances and further medical evidence that the employee may wish to provide including a report from the employee's own GP.

The employee's Manager will make the decision at the end of the meeting if no further investigation is necessary. If further investigation is necessary the meeting will be adjourned and reconvened for a decision to be made.

The Manager must confirm this in writing to the employee, including the improvements required. An appointment with the Occupational Health Physician will be arranged to provide the Council with up to date information on the employee's medical issues.

The employee has a right to appeal against this warning by writing to the Corporate Director Human Resources & Organisational Development, within 5 working days of receipt of the letter, giving reasons for the appeal.

An appeal would be heard by another more Senior Manager in the employees Directorate and should be conducted within 10 working days of the appeal being received.

Stage 4 - Dismissal Hearing

Dismissal should not be considered until both a Written and Final Written Warning have been issued and attendance has been found to be unsatisfactory.

This meeting will be heard by the employee's Corporate Director or if unavailable another suitable Corporate Director, with a Human Resources Consultant present to advise. NJC conditions apply for Chief Officer Sickness Absence

The employee will be informed in writing of the Dismissal Hearing.

The employee will be given a minimum of 5 working days notice of the formal meeting and offered the right of Trade Union representation or work colleague present.

If an employee wishes to submit a medical report from his/her own Doctor/ Consultant then they must write to them within 1 week of being informed of the hearing. The hearing will be postponed for a maximum of 4 weeks to provide adequate time for the Dr's/ Consultants report.

All documentation which is to be presented at the Hearing must be submitted at least 3 working days beforehand, by both parties, to the Corporate Director for Human Resources.

At the hearing the following will be considered:

- If there have been signs of improvement,
- The employees absence history.
- The nature of the absences and any treatment that has been received.
- Any action taken to improve attendance.
- The effect of the absence on the performance and effectiveness of the Service.
- All individual circumstances, including medical reports from the Occupational Health Physician and employee's Dr and/or Consultant.

The employee and/or their representative have the opportunity to put forward all their reasons for the continuing levels of absence and these are given consideration.

When making their decision the Corporate Director should consider if the:

- Employee should be dismissed due to being incapable of carrying out the requirements of their post due to consistent high levels of absence.
- A further review period be set to continue to monitor attendance levels.
- If any reasonable adjustments need to be considered under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Corporate Director will normally announce the decision at the end of the Hearing and this will be confirmed in writing to the employee within 5 working days. In cases of dismissal the appropriate notice period will be paid according to the employees Terms and Conditions of Service.

Any appeal against the decision of the Corporate Director must be lodged, in writing, to the Corporate Director Human Resources and Organisation Development, within 10 working days of receipt of the letter confirming the decision. This letter must clearly state the grounds for appeal [a letter purely requesting an appeal will not be acceptable].

The Human Resources Appeals Committee will hear any appeals against dismissal.

The Appeal Hearing will be convened for a mutually convenient date as soon as reasonably practicable following receipt of the letter lodging the appeal.

6. MANAGING LONG TERM ABSENCES

If an employee is absent due to long term illness he/she must be treated fairly and sympathetically, however, there may come a time where the need to run the service efficiently has to be balanced with the need to provide employment for the employee.

A Manager must maintain weekly contact with the employee during the first 4 weeks of absence via telephone calls, meetings or letters depending upon what seems to be the most appropriate in the circumstances.

If an employee is absent due to stress, work related/occupational stress, depression, nervous debility or anxiety an immediate welfare meeting and an appointment with Occupational Health will be arranged. It is good practice that the employee is asked to complete a stress risk assessment, the Stress Management Policy provides guidance on this process.

None consecutive periods of long term sickness absence

Should an employee have 16 weeks or more of none consecutive periods of long term (absence of 4 weeks or more) sickness absence in a 12 month rolling period, the periods of

absences will be added together and for the purposes of managing the attendance the employee will enter the long term absence procedure at Stage 2.

Stage One [Within the first 4 weeks of absence]

A welfare visit should be organised in conjunction with Human Resources, this may be either via a home visit or an appropriate neutral base dependent on the relevant circumstances. At this first visit the following should be established:

- make the employee aware that the Manager is concerned about him/her;
- reasons for absence;
- progress on the absence, on going treatment
- possible likely return date
- referral to the Occupational Health;
- advise of welfare services available and discuss other action which may be taken, by individual or Directorate, in order to help the employee to return to work;
- explore other options such as redeployment or a change in hours, or assisted/phased return;
- ensure that reasonable adjustments are explored, through the agreement of the employee
- offer of any assistance that may be required e.g. returning on reduced hours
- how future contact should be maintained

The Manager must continue to maintain contact with the employee in the agreed way, and must assess the likely impact of the absence, taking account of the comments made by Occupational Health. During the next 12 weeks it would be appropriate for a further 2 welfare meetings to be organised which follow a similar pattern to the first welfare meeting.

Stage Two [12 weeks of absence] Sickness Review Meeting

A further meeting/visit must be organised in conjunction with Human Resources, this again may either be via a home visit or an appropriate neutral base dependent on the relevant circumstances. At this meeting the following should be discussed:

- All details relating to the current absence
- Review of the date of return
- Review need for assistance

It is also important at this meeting if the employee is unlikely to return to work in the near future to discuss:

- Informing the employee that a first warning is being issued regarding the sickness absence due to the serious operational problems created by his/her absence.
- Referral to Occupational Health.
- Whether it would be possible for the employee to return to work on a part time basis;
- Whether it would be possible for the employee to be assisted to return to work
- Whether redeployment of the employee is feasible, if he/she is unfit for only certain types of work;
- The implications of the absence on the service provision, other employees, the budget etc;
- If appropriate, dependent on the illness concerned, the employees previous sickness record and length of service;

- That the next stage of the absence procedure includes the issue of a second warning, due to the serious operational problems that the employee's absence is creating.

If it is unlikely that the employee will return to work in their substantive post the following issues need to be discussed:

- Redeployment
- Reasonable adjustment
- Retirement

Stage Three [16 weeks of absence] Sickness Review Meeting

All situations will vary depending upon the nature of the medical problems and the prognosis of the employee's condition, however by Stage Three it may become clear whether or not the employee is likely to return to work in the near future. If this seems unlikely the following options should be considered:

- discussing ill-health retirement with the employee, giving details of estimated benefits (this option is only available to employees who are found to be permanently incapacitated)
- setting a review period pending further medical advice;
- informing the employee that a second warning is being issued regarding the sickness absence due to the serious operational problems created by his/her absence. Consideration is also being given to the termination of his/her employment. The employee may wish to obtain his/her own medical advice at this stage;
- whether redeployment of the employee is feasible, if he/she is unfit for only certain types of work
- ensure that reasonable adjustments are explored, through the agreement of the employee
- advise of welfare services available and discuss other action which may be taken, by individual or Directorate, in order to help the employee to return to work.

If at this stage the employee is due to return within the next 4-8 weeks the following options should be considered:

- whether it would be possible for the employee to return to work on a part time basis;
- whether it would be possible for the employee to be assisted to return to work;
- whether redeployment of the employee is feasible, if he/she is unfit for only certain types of work.

Stage Four [24 weeks of absence] Sickness Review Meeting

If all other options have been considered, the employee is unlikely to return to work in the near future and ill-health retirement is not possible, then dismissal should be considered and this needs to be reiterated at this meeting. The meeting should follow the first and second sickness review meetings and it must be explained that if the employee is unlikely to return to work in the near future, then a Medical Incapability Hearing will be convened at 26-30 weeks of absence.

A further referral to the Occupational Health Physician may be appropriate should there be significant changes in the prescribed medical condition and/or a significant period of time has elapsed since the last examination.

Stage Five [26-30 weeks of absence] Medical Capability Hearing

A Medical Capability Hearing must be convened, according to the procedure detailed in Dismissal Hearing in Section 5 of this procedure. If the employee is prevented from attending the hearing, due to his/her medical condition, he/she may send a representative and /or written statement for the Corporate Director to consider (NJC conditions apply for Chief Officer Sickness Absence Management).

7. ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT

Upon receiving advice from the Occupational Health Physician that an employee is permanently incapable of discharging his/her duties in their substantive post and there are no suitable redeployment opportunities then the Manager and a member of the Human Resources Directorate will immediately make arrangements to interview the employee and inform him/her of this advice and explain the implications, including financial benefits.

The employee also has a right to appeal against not being granted ill health retirement to Lancashire County Pension Fund under the Internal Dispute Procedure.

Any decision to terminate an employee's contract on the grounds of medical capability is a management decision based on medical advice. In circumstances when the Council has received medical advice indicating that an employee is permanently incapable of discharging their duties, but where ill health retirement has not been granted, then whilst any appeal against the decision not to grant ill health retirement is being processed, the employee's service will continue and the appropriate rate of sick pay will be maintained.

In cases where an employee does not return to work, despite medical advice that he/she is fit to do so, the employee will be subject to disciplinary action due to the employee being absent without authorisation.

Refer to the Council's Ill Health Retirement Policy for more information.

8. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND REDEPLOYMENT

On the advice of the Occupation Health Physician, the appropriate Corporate Director must give urgent consideration to whether the employee's post can be modified, giving it a different balance of duties which the individual will be able to fulfil.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 obliges employers to give consideration to making "reasonable adjustments" for employees who have a physical or mental impairment that will have a substantial long term adverse affect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Reasonable adjustments would include alterations to premises, reallocation of duties, provision of specialist equipment and allowing the employee to be absent during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment. Such adjustments must be considered in all cases where the employee's incapability results from an underlying medical condition.

If reasonable adjustments are not a practical possibility, consideration must be given to the availability of alternative employment for the employee within the Council.

Any offer of alternative employment must be made to the employee, in writing, detailing the main terms and conditions including any trial period arrangements as appropriate. Should an employee seek alternative employment to a lower graded post, protection will normally be at the salary or wage rate application for a period of two years, at which time the substantive grade of the new post will normally become effective. The Council will look on each case on

its own merits but will limit the down grading to one grade below the previous grade. For example, a SO2 would only be eligible for protection if s/he sought redeployment to a SO1 post or a Scale 5 to a Scale 4. Also pay protection would be on the individual's scale point.

Protection will apply as follows:

Year 1:	100% protection and
Year 2:	50% protection.

If the dismissal relates to short term absence and no underlying medical condition exists consideration of job redesign or alternative employment would not normally be appropriate.

9. SUPPORTED RETURN TO WORK

When managing long term sickness absence one of the options that may be suitable to aid an employee to return is to offer a return to work on reduced hours, different duties or different role. An assisted return to work will be agreed with the employee's manager in conjunction with Human Resources. For this to be acceptable approval must be obtained in writing from either the employee's own doctor or the Occupational Health Physician.

This process needs to be reviewed on a weekly basis in conjunction with the employee, Manager and Human Resources. Individual circumstances and the time of annual leave year will dictate how an adjustment to reduced hours is achieved. Wherever possible annual leave and additional flexi hours will be taken to cover the hours that have not been worked. However it is imperative that an employee is not left with a nil annual leave balance at the start of the leave year - further information on this issue can be obtained from Human Resources.

There are two forms of return to work:

Phased return to work - reduced hours either part days or part weeks in current position and performing all duties on job description. It is recommended that a phased return to work does not exceed more than 4 weeks. As a guide, hours can be reduced as follows: 1st week 25% of normal hours, 2nd week 50% normal hours, 3rd week 75% of normal hours, returning to normal hours and duties in the 4th week.

Therapeutic Return – Returning on a full or part time basis either doing part of own role or a different role in the Council for a temporary period to ease employee back to work.

9. REFERRAL TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Employees who are referred to the Occupational Health Physician for a medical examination are advised that:

“An employee failing to attend a medical examination arranged by the Council in accordance with this procedure will have to pay the full cost of the medical examination and may cease to be eligible for occupational sick pay unless evidence of inability to attend without notice is provided, e.g. a doctor's statement. Failure to attend will result in the employee being subject to disciplinary investigation, which may result in the employee facing disciplinary sanctions, as well as having their Occupational Sick Pay suspended indefinitely.”

10. REPAYMENT OF SICKNESS ALLOWANCE FOLLOWING AN ACCIDENT

In the event that an employee is absent as a result of an accident (including none work related accidents) the normal sickness allowance will be paid. However should the employee be entitled to receive damages from a third party in respect of the accident, they will be required to refund the Council the amount of sickness allowance already advanced to them.

Any period of absence where a refund of sickness allowance is made, shall not be recorded for the purposes of the attendance management process and statistics.

11. ANNUAL LEAVE

In circumstances when an employee's sickness absence has exceeded four weeks but has not been for the entire leave year, and where annual leave was taken prior to and following the absence, a maximum of 10 days annual leave can be carried forward to the next leave year. The carried forward leave will be added to the new leave years entitlement and is not restricted to when it can be taken.

An exception to this is where an employee has been on long term sickness absence for the entire annual leave year, in these circumstances will be entitled to the statutory 20 days annual leave (less any leave taken prior to the absence). If the employee had more than 20 days leave prior to the absence, additional days will be lost. Leave owing will be payable at the end of the annual leave year. The employee has the option to carry forward a maximum of 3 days to the next leave year.

12. REVIEW PROCESS

In order to ensure that the Attendance Policy continues to meet the Council's aims and complies with the objectives, the policy will be monitored and reviewed within the first 12 months of implementation and a 3 yearly basis thereafter. Employees and Trade Union representatives will be encouraged to be involved in the review process.

Appendix A

Reporting and Recording Absence

ATTENDANCE POLICY

	Employee	Manager
Day 1 – first day of absence	<p>Report absence before the start of their normal working day to their manager giving the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of sickness • How long they have had the illness/problem • Have they visited or intend to visit their GP • What treatment / medication have they taken • How long they estimate they may be absent for • Give details of any commitments or meetings 	<p>Discuss nature of the absence, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of sickness • How long they have had the illness/problem • What treatment / medication have they taken • How long they estimate they may be absent for • Give details of any commitments or meetings • Request an update on the 3rd day of absence <p>Report individual as absent via the online notification on theloop providing as much information as possible</p>
Day 3	<p>Notify manager with an update of their condition and the estimated return date</p>	<p>If no contact has been made, contact the individual to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the continuing nature of the absence, • discuss the availability of support services such as counselling • estimated date of return
Day 5	<p>Notify manager of the reason for their continued absence</p>	<p>If no contact has been made, contact the individual to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the continuing nature of the absence, • discuss the availability of support services such as counselling <p>estimated date of return</p> <p>Employees should also be reminded that a medical certificate will be required for absences lasting 8 days or more</p>
Between 8 days and 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide manager with a medical certificate • Keep in weekly contact with and advise their manager of any progress or developments concerning their absence • Attend Occupational Health appointments as arranged • Attend home welfare meeting in 4th week of absence (or sooner if stress/anxiety/depression related) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain weekly contact with the individual • Remind individual of the importance of keeping in contact with the line manager and the necessity of notifying them if they are to be away from their home address for any reason • Arrange home welfare meeting in 4th week of absence (or sooner if stress/anxiety/depression related) • Arrange referral to occupational health

ATTENDANCE POLICY

After 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep in weekly contact with and advise their manager of any progress or developments concerning their absence• Ensure that an up to date medical certificate covers their continuing sickness• Attend welfare and OH appointments as arranged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain weekly contact with the individual• Discuss return to work plans and supported return to work if appropriate• Refer to the procedures for Managing Long Term Absences and issue warnings to the individual that their employment could be at risk
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