

Sickness Absence Policy

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Guiding Principles

We prioritise the health and wellbeing of all our colleagues. We encourage our teams to speak openly about health issues and to seek support from their manager or the People Team (Human Resources) as early as possible.

We use supportive measures to help prevent absence and to assist during or after a period of sickness absence. When a team member is too unwell to work, we tailor our support based on the nature of the absence.

This support may include sick pay, welfare calls, and occupational health (OH) advice.

Like every organisation, we rely on a level of good attendance to deliver excellent service to our customers and colleagues. We understand each situation is different and apply guiding principles to manage this policy. We base our decisions on individual circumstances, the impact of absence on the service and team, and medical advice. We consider reasonable adjustments to help our colleagues carry out their work.

To apply the policy fairly, we give managers training and toolkits to help them justify their decisions. The People Team supports both managers and colleagues throughout the process.

Notification and Recording

Before the normal workday starts, all colleagues must notify their manager if they are too ill to come to work. It is the responsibility of the manager to record this sickness absence on iTrent as promptly as possible.

See our toolkit for more information.

Keeping in Touch

All colleagues must keep in touch with their manager and/or People Team while they are off sick.

Colleagues may self-certify their illness for up to seven days, including weekends, non-working days, and bank holidays. From the eighth day of absence, they must provide a GP certificate or a hospital discharge letter. If this does not happen, we reserve the right to withhold occupational sick pay.

We may request additional medical advice from specialists or an occupational health provider to support a return to work. This advice helps in making decisions to support the colleague in performing their job. If such advice is not available, decisions will be made based on the information available.

A failure to attend a scheduled OH appointment without an acceptable reason will result in the cost of the appointment to be re-paid by the team member.

Managers will hold wellbeing meetings with colleagues during their absence and upon their return to work.

Returning to Work after Sickness Absence

Most individuals can return to work in their full capacity once they feel better.

Sometimes, colleagues are not able to perform their entire role due to their medical condition or fatigue. It is possible for a manager and team member to agree on a phased return to support the transition back into the workplace. This agreement might include working shorter hours, fewer days, working from home, or performing restricted duties. During this period, the colleague receives full pay.

A manager can approve a phased return lasting up to two weeks.

For a phased return between two and six weeks in length, a clinical recommendation from the Council's Occupational Health (OH) provider or the employee's GP or consultant is required. If adjustments are needed beyond the agreed period, the salary will be reduced to reflect the actual hours worked.

It might be that they need to meet additional requirements before returning to work, depending on their job. For example, DVLA rules apply to those who drive large goods vehicles (LGVs).

If both the manager and team member agree, an earlier return to work can be arranged before expiry of their GP certificate.

Cause for Concern

If a manager is concerned about the frequency or the impact of sickness absences, they will discuss this with the individual in a wellbeing meeting upon their return to work. The manager will also arrange a formal meeting with a member of the People Team present. The individual will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at any formal meeting.

Holding a cause for concern meeting does not mean that the absence is not genuine. Rather, it reflects the impact of the absences - such as an inability to perform full duties or the frequency of absence affecting the role or organisation.

At a cause for concern meeting, the manager may issue an improvement target, further support or a formal warning for capability.

If two or more warnings are issued, the Council may hold a case review, which could lead to dismissal on grounds of capability. Full details are available in the **Sickness Absence Toolkit**.

If the Council suspects misconduct, the disciplinary procedure will apply.

Examples of misconduct include:

- Falsifying the reason for absence
- Engaging in inappropriate activities while off sick (e.g., working for another employer)
- Failing to follow the correct absence notification or evidence procedures

Employees have the right to appeal any formal warning for capability. Appeals must be sent to the Head of Transformation People & Transformation. Any disputes during the informal wellbeing stage should be resolved informally or through the **Respect and Resolution Policy**.

Long Term Absence

We are committed to supporting employees who are off work for extended periods due to ill health and aim to assist with their rehabilitation and return to work. We seek to balance our operational needs with the genuine health needs of our colleagues.

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) defines long-term absence as lasting four weeks or more.

We support colleagues in staying in employment wherever reasonably possible. This may include redeployment to another role within the Council—either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Colleagues who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) may apply for ill health retirement before a case review meeting is held. The case review will consider all options, including potential dismissal due to capability based on ill health.

Please refer to the **Sickness Absence Toolkits** for further guidance.