

# Absence Policy - Dec 2022

Trial January 2023 – May 2023

## Contents

Absence Policy .....	1
Guiding Principles .....	1
Notification and recording .....	2
Keeping in touch .....	2
Returning to work .....	3
Cause for concern .....	3
Long term absence .....	4

## Guiding Principles

We (SCDC (South Cambridgeshire District Council)) prioritise the health and wellbeing of all our colleagues. We want our teams to feel safe to speak about health issues and seek support as early as possible from their manager or HR (Human Resources). We will use these supportive measures, to prevent absence, during or after a period of sickness absence.

The support provided to our teams, when they are too unwell to work, depends on the nature of the absence. This can include measures such as sick pay, welfare calls and occupational health advice.

As in every organisation we need a good level of attendance to provide an excellent level of service for our customers and colleagues.

We recognise that every case is individual and so use guiding principles to operate this policy. We will base decisions on individual circumstances, impact of absence, medical advice and we will also consider reasonable adjustments to support our colleagues to undertake their work. To ensure of application of the policy is fair, we will provide managers with mandatory training and tool kits so they are able to justify their decisions and HR will support using data analytics.

### **Notification and recording**

All colleagues should notify a manager if they are too ill to attend work. Colleagues should notify their manager before the start of their normal working day and as per their team charters. \*During the trial if your non-working day is in between the start and end date of your absence it will be counted as a sick day. Each team needs to agree the process for nominating an alternative manager on their non-working days. All absence details will be recorded on I Trent

### **Keeping in touch**

All colleagues have a responsibility to engage with their manager and/or HR whilst off work due to illness. Colleagues can self-certify for up to 7 days. From day 8 of absence, a GP certificate or equivalent hospital discharge letter must be provided. If this does not happen, we reserve the right to withhold occupational sick pay. We may also seek further medical advice from your specialists or our own occupational health provider to further support your attendance in the workplace. This helps us to make decisions to support you to carry out your job, if we do not have this advice, we will have to make decisions based on what information we have available. If you fail to attend a scheduled OH appointment without an acceptable reason you will be

charged for the appointment. Wellbeing meetings will take place with your manager when you are absent from work and on your return to work.

## **Returning to work**

Most colleagues will return to work in their full capacity once feeling better, but on some occasions, colleagues may not be able to return to work to do the entirety of their role due to either their medical condition or fatigue. If the manager and colleague both agree, you may return before the end of a GP certificate, or a phased return may be agreed to support your transition back into the workplace. This might be an agreement to work shorter hours, less days, working from home or restricted duties. During this period, you will be paid in full. Managers can agree a phased return period of up to 2 weeks, or following clinical recommendation the Council's OH provider, the employee's GP/ consultant, 6 weeks. If adjustments continue after this time, the employee's salary will be reduced to reflect the hours worked.

Depending on your job, you may need to meet other requirements before you can return to work. For example, DVLA rules will apply if you drive:

- a large goods vehicle (LGV), such as a lorry

## **Cause for concern**

If a manager has a cause for concern about the frequency of short-term absences, or long term they will discuss this with you in a wellbeing meeting when you return to work. Your manager will also arrange a formal meeting with HR. You will have the right to bring a companion (TU rep or colleague) to any formal meeting.

Cause for concern, does not mean that the absence isn't genuine but the impact that the absence is having is causing concern. This might be that your condition is preventing you from carrying out your full duties or it may be that the number of times you have been absent is having an impact on the role.

At a cause for concern meeting, an improvement target or warning for capability may be issued. If there have been two or more warnings issued, a case review may be convened and dismissal for capability considered, more details can be found in the Process map.

If it is suspected that misconduct may have occurred, our separate [disciplinary procedure](#) will apply, examples of this may include:

- absence is not genuine or not for the reason provided;
- the employee is undertaking inappropriate activities while off sick, such as carrying out work for another employer;
- the correct sickness absence notification and evidence procedure has not been followed.

An employee has the right to appeal any formal warning for capability, which should be sent to the Head of HR. Any dispute in the informal wellbeing stages should be resolved using existing processes informally or by using the Grievance process.

## **Long term absence**

We are committed to dealing fairly and sympathetically with colleagues who are absent from work for prolonged periods because of ill health and aim to assist them with their rehabilitation and return to work. By implementing this policy, we aim to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of our operational needs and the genuine needs of colleagues to take time off work because of ill health. SCDC define long-term sickness absence as an absence lasting 4 weeks or more.

SCDC are committed to supporting staff to stay in employment we can do this through redeployment into another role in the Council if one is available, this could be on a temporary or permanent basis. All colleagues in the local government pension scheme (LGPS) will have the option to apply for ill health retirement before a

case review meeting is held to consider any other options which may include dismissal due to capability due to ill health.

Please see the colleague and manager tool kits and process map for further details