

Sickness Absence Toolkit

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Sickness Absence Procedure

- Day One
 - If you feel too unwell to work, you should contact your line manager (or nominated manager*) to let them know before the start of your normal working day.
- The first seven days of sickness absence (days one to seven)
 - You can self-certify (meaning that you do not need a GP note/Statement of Fitness for Work during the first 7 calendar days).
- Day Eight
 - Speak to your GP and obtain a GP Certificate. This is called a Statement of Fitness for Work which signs you are unfit to work. You must provide this to your manager in order to receive occupational and statutory sick pay.
- Day Nine and Onwards
 - Contact should be agreed and maintained with your manager about the duration of your absence and likely return to work. This may be weekly phone calls, wellbeing meetings with HR present, occupational health referrals etc.
- Once you are feeling better
 - When you are feeling well enough to return to work full time or on a phased return (reduced duties/hours/reasonable adjustments), you should have a conversation with your manager and a wellbeing meeting will be arranged on your return to work.

**You may have a nominated manager to contact if it is your line manager's non-working day.*

Wellbeing meetings

During your sickness absence, and upon your return to work, your manager will arrange regular wellbeing meetings with you. The frequency and duration of these meetings will depend on the nature and length of your absence.

These meetings are informal and supportive in nature. The aim is to provide a space to check in on your wellbeing and discuss any support you may need. Your manager will talk with you about:

- How you are feeling
- Any relevant medical updates, such as treatments or medications
- The impact of your absence on the business
- Any ongoing or additional support you may need
- Potential referrals or signposting to further help, such as Occupational Health

Your manager will use a standard template to ensure all key points are covered and to keep a record of the discussion.

It's important that you are open and honest during these meetings so that we can identify any reasonable and supportive measures that may help you in your recovery and return to work.

What we expect from you

Our priority is that you get the treatment, support, and rest you need to recover fully. While you are off work, it's important that you avoid any activities that may delay your recovery or affect your ability to return to work safely.

You should stay in regular contact with your manager (usually via phone calls or text) to ensure that any necessary support, such as Occupational Health referrals or workplace updates, can be discussed with you.

Please note that any misuse of the sickness absence policy, such as working elsewhere while off sick, falsely reporting sickness, or failing to follow the policy may be treated as a disciplinary matter in line with our disciplinary policy.

What you should expect from your manager

- Your manager will treat all discussions and information confidentially and will apply the relevant toolkit and policies in a professional and fair manner.
- They will arrange regular check-ins with you during your absence to see how you are doing and to discuss any support you may need.
- If you feel you are being treated unfairly, you are encouraged to speak with a more senior manager or HR, or to refer to the [Respect and Resolution Policy](#).

On Your Return to Work

If there are concerns related to your absence or wellbeing, your manager may invite you to attend a Cause for Concern Meeting or a Case Review Meeting. These are structured opportunities to review the situation and agree on any appropriate next steps or support measures.

Cause for concern meeting

When there is a cause for concern about your sickness absence levels, your manager will meet with you and put a plan in place to help improve your attendance.

How will I know if my absence is a cause for concern?

There is no fixed "trigger" for a **Cause for Concern Meeting**. The decision to hold one will depend on individual circumstances and may consider factors such as:

- The nature and duration of your absence
- Any underlying health conditions or disabilities
- Your absence history
- The impact on the business and operational needs

These meetings are not disciplinary in nature. They are intended to understand any concerns, explore support options, and consider appropriate next steps.

Who will be at the cause for concern meeting?

You, your manager, and a member of the People Team will be at the meeting. You have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union (TU) representative or a colleague companion. If you wish to be accompanied, it is your responsibility to arrange this and inform the People team in advance.

If you or your TU representative are unable to attend the originally scheduled meeting, please let us know as soon as possible. We will propose a new date and time based on availability. While we will make reasonable efforts to accommodate your representative's schedule, the rescheduled meeting may not be arranged solely around their availability.

What happens at the meeting?

You will be given at least three business days' written notice of the meeting. Your manager will use a structured template to ensure all key areas are covered.

During the meeting, you will be invited to discuss:

- Your current state of health
- Any ongoing support or adjustments needed
- The impact of your sickness absence
- Possible next steps and future actions

You are welcome to request a break at any point during the meeting if you need one.

What is an improvement target?

Any support measures or improvement targets will be considered on an individual basis, considering your specific circumstances. This may include factors such as:

- Disability or long-term health conditions
- Menopause or related health issues
- The reason(s) for your absence
- The nature and demands of your role

Setting an improvement target does not mean that your absence is not genuine. It simply reflects that the impact of the absence is causing concern. For example:

- Your health condition may be affecting your ability to carry out the full duties of your role
- The frequency or duration of absences may be affecting the team's ability to function effectively

These targets are intended to support you in managing your health while also addressing the needs of the business.

What can the outcome of a cause for concern meeting be?

The outcome of a Cause for Concern Meeting will depend on the discussions held and your individual circumstances. The aim is always to ensure appropriate support is in place while addressing any concerns related to your absence or ability to carry out your role.

Possible outcomes may include:

- Setting an improvement target
- Providing support or signposting to relevant resources or services
- Requesting further medical information from your GP or specialist (with your consent)
- Making a referral to Occupational Health for further assessment
- Issuing a capability warning (e.g. a 12-month written warning with an agreed improvement plan)
- Agreeing on a schedule of structured wellbeing meetings
- Referral to other internal procedures, such as the Stress Toolkit or Reasonable Adjustments process

If You Do Not Meet Your Improvement Target – Stage 2 Cause for Concern Meeting

If you do not meet the attendance or improvement target set during your first written warning for capability, you will be invited to a Stage 2 Cause for Concern Meeting. This meeting will follow the same procedure as the initial meeting and will again consider your individual circumstances.

Possible outcomes of a Stage 2 meeting may include:

- Setting a new or revised improvement target
- Continued support and signposting to relevant services
- Requesting further medical information from a specialist (with your consent)
- Occupational Health referral

- Issuing a second written warning for capability (12 months), alongside an updated improvement plan
- Extending the first written warning period to allow more time for improvement
- Agreeing on structured and regular wellbeing meetings
- Referral to other procedures, such as the Stress Toolkit or Reasonable Adjustments process

Second Stage Warning

If you do not meet the improvement target set as part of your second stage written warning for capability, you will be invited to attend a Case Review Meeting.

This meeting will review your case in full, including:

- Your attendance record.
- Any support or adjustments that have been provided.
- Medical or Occupational Health advice.
- The impact of your absence on the role and the wider business.
- Any ongoing barriers to improvement.

For more information, please refer to the [Case Review Meeting](#) section below.

Occupation Health (OH) Explained

Occupational Health (OH) plays a vital role in supporting the relationship between health and work. It focuses on two key areas:

- How work and the work environment can impact an employee's physical and mental health
- How an employee's health may affect their ability to perform their role

In simple terms, OH considers both the *effect of work on health* and the *effect of health on work*.

Unlike your GP, who may not be familiar with the specific requirements of your role, Occupational Health professionals provide advice with a better understanding of your

job and the workplace context. This allows them to offer practical, work-focused recommendations.

What OH Can Do:

- Offer expert guidance to both you and the Council on how best to manage health concerns at work.
- Suggest supportive measures, including physical adjustments or changes to duties.
- Help identify whether additional support or adjustments are needed to help you remain in or return to work safely.

The Council has a legal duty to implement reasonable adjustments where required, in line with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Long-Term Sickness Absence

We define long-term sickness absence as any period of sickness lasting four weeks or more.

During a period of long-term absence, your manager will arrange regular wellbeing meetings with you. The purpose of these meetings is to maintain supportive contact and to explore any steps that may assist your recovery and return to work.

Discussions may include:

- Referral to Occupational Health
- Return-to-work requirements or reasonable adjustments
- Potential redeployment opportunities
- Consideration of ill health retirement, where appropriate

The frequency of these meetings will vary depending on your individual circumstances. If the People Team are attending the meeting, you have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague.

Meetings will take place at a mutually convenient location, taking your personal circumstances into account. Virtual meetings may also be considered where appropriate.

In most cases, colleagues are supported to achieve a successful and sustained return to work. However, in some situations where all reasonable steps have been taken to support your return, it may become necessary to consider ending your employment on the grounds of long-term ill health.

Before any such decision is made:

- All possible supportive measures will be explored.
- Redeployment options will be fully considered.
- A Case Review Meeting will be arranged to carefully assess the situation.

We are committed to treating all colleagues with dignity and fairness throughout this process and will work with you to explore every reasonable option to support your health and employment.

What is medical redeployment?

Redeployment is when your employer offers you an alternative role, which may involve different duties or working in a different location. This can be either temporary or permanent, depending on the reason for the redeployment and your individual circumstances.

If redeployment is being considered:

- You may be offered a suitable vacancy within your current department, if available
- You will be asked to complete a Redeployment Form, which captures:
 - Your current skills and experience
 - The types of duties or work you may be able to conduct, considering any medical conditions or disabilities.

Once you complete the Redeployment Form, the People Team will notify you of any vacant roles across the Council that may be appropriate, based on your profile and medical advice.

Redeployment is an important part of the support process and helps ensure all reasonable steps are taken to keep you in meaningful employment wherever possible.

Medical Redeployment Process

1. Identification for Medical Redeployment

You may be identified for medical redeployment following advice from Occupational Health or due to ongoing health-related difficulties in fulfilling your current role.

2. Sharing the Process

Your manager and People Team will meet with you to explain the redeployment process and provide you with a Redeployment Form.

- You are encouraged to complete this form in detail.
- Support is available from your manager, the People Team, or your Trade Union representative, if required.

3. Form Submission

Once completed, email the questionnaire to both your manager and the People Team.

- Your form will be reviewed by a member of the People Team, who will also liaise with the recruitment team to highlight your skills and experience.

4. Placement on the Redeployment Register

- You will be added to the Redeployment Register.
- All relevant SCDC and City Council vacancies will be emailed directly to you and your People Team support.
- You should also actively review available vacancies and discuss any roles you feel may be suitable with your manager and the People Team.

5. Guaranteed Interview

- If your skills and experience match the essential criteria of a vacancy, you will be guaranteed an interview.
- The recruitment team will inform the hiring manager of your redeployment status.

6. If You Are Successful at Interview

- You will be offered the role on a 4-week trial basis to assess suitability.
- If the trial is successful, your appointment becomes permanent, and you will be removed from the Redeployment Register.

7. If You Are Unsuccessful at Interview or Trial

- You will remain on the Redeployment Register.
- Redeployment will be reviewed after 6–8 weeks.
- If no suitable roles are identified, a Case Review Meeting may be arranged to discuss next steps.

8. Important Notes

- You are not obligated to accept any redeployment offers.
- Redeployment is a supportive measure and does not affect your rights under other policies such as Capability, Equality, or Reasonable Adjustments.

Case Review Meeting

The purpose of a Case Review Meeting is to assess, in line with the Council's legal responsibilities, whether any further support or adjustments can be made to enable you to continue in your role. If all reasonable options have been explored and you are unable to perform your duties due to ill health, the meeting may consider termination of employment on the grounds of incapability due to ill health.

Who Attends the Meeting?

- The relevant Head of Service will chair the meeting.
- A member of the people team (who has not previously been involved in your case) will also provide guidance and ensure fairness.
- If the individual involved is a Head of Service, the Chief Operating Officer will chair the meeting.
- A Trade Union representative or a work colleague can accompany you.

Case Review Meeting – What Happens & Outcomes

- You will be given five business days' written notice of the meeting.
- Your line manager will present a summary of your case history and explain why they consider your attendance levels are a concern.
- They will outline the support, actions, or adjustments that have the council has provided throughout the process.
- This information will be shared with you at least three business days before the meeting to allow you time to prepare.

During the meeting, you will have the opportunity to:

- Explain any mitigating circumstances affecting your attendance.
- Respond to questions from the Chair, who will seek to:
 - Understand the reasons for your unsatisfactory attendance, including any underlying causes.
 - Review actions taken by both you and the Council to improve attendance.
 - Discuss support provided for alternative employment opportunities.
 - Consider any medical advice received (where applicable).
 - Assess the impact your absence has had on service delivery.
 - Consider other relevant factors such as absences covered by the Equality Act 2010, your work history, and any other mitigating circumstances.

This list is not exhaustive; the emphasis on each point will depend on your individual circumstances.

You will be treated fairly and reasonably throughout the process.

Potential Outcomes of the Case Review Meeting

- Issuing a warning for capability and setting an improvement target (12 months)

- If dismissal is appropriate, the Chair will recommend dismissal on capability grounds to the Chief Executive for confirmation. This confirmation may be via email but must be documented.
- Identifying further support or adjustments to be implemented by you or the Council
- Offering redeployment opportunities

If the outcome is dismissal

- You will receive a formal dismissal letter detailing the notice period and the termination date.
- You will be entitled to your contractual notice period.
- If you are unable to work during the notice period due to illness, a payment in lieu of notice may be considered.

You may be informed of the decision at the meeting, or the Chair may adjourn to consider the information and write to you with the outcome.

You will receive the decision in writing within five business days of the meeting.

Rescheduling the Meeting

If you or your representative are unable to attend the originally scheduled meeting, you must notify us as soon as possible.

- A new date and time will be proposed, considering availability.
- While efforts will be made to accommodate your representative, the rescheduling will not be based solely on their availability.
- If there is no reasonable prospect of your attendance within two weeks of the original date, the meeting will proceed in your absence.
- In this case, you may:
 - Submit a written response before the meeting, or
 - Have representations made on your behalf by a colleague or representative.

Disability

We are committed to ensuring that all employees can reach their full potential. The Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its policies, practices, and workplace culture do not discriminate against disabled people, including those with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, mental health conditions, or who are neurodiverse.

We understand that some individuals may not have a formal diagnosis or assessment or may feel uncomfortable disclosing their condition. Additionally, each person's experience is unique, and multiple conditions may overlap. Therefore, our approach is to identify and provide support tailored to everyone's specific needs.

Support needs will primarily be determined through Occupational Health referrals and workstation assessments, as outlined in the Council's policies and Corporate Risk Assessment Guidance, respectively. This personal evaluation ensures we offer reasonable adjustments that best enable employees to perform their roles effectively.

Reasonable Adjustment Disability Passport Policy

The goal of the Reasonable Adjustment Disability Passport Policy is to encourage everyone with a disability to have high quality conversations with their line manager and explain how their conditions impact them at work so effective support measures can be put in place.

The template document for recording conversations between you and your line manager is called a 'passport' as it's designed to follow you if you move to different roles within the Council. Although you consent for others to see your passport, disclosing this information to a new manager keeps them fully informed about your requirements without the need to repeat potentially difficult conversations.

The Council will provide adjustments where it is reasonable to do so. What is considered reasonable will be considered on an adjustment-by-adjustment basis.

Please remember that HR, Health and Safety and Occupational Health are always available if you would like advice about implementing reasonable adjustments.

You can read our Reasonable Adjustment Disability Passport Policy here:

[Reasonable Adjustment Disability Passport Policy](#)

Support for Work Related Stress

We understand that work-related stress can have a significant impact on your wellbeing, and we are committed to providing a wide range of resources and support to help you manage and reduce stress effectively.

There are extensive tools and guidance available to support you, including resources specifically designed for both staff and managers. These can be found in the Mental Wellbeing section on Insite, accessible here:

[Mental Wellbeing | Insite \(scambs.gov.uk\)](#)

Among these resources, you will find stress identification tools that can help you explore and understand the specific stressors you may be experiencing. These tools can be completed:

- Independently, or
- Together with your line manager, depending on your preference.

Once completed, the next step is to identify any actions that could help reduce or eliminate those stressors. You do not need to do this alone, your line manager, a member of the People Team, a trusted colleague, or a trade union representative can support you in identifying solutions or exploring what options are available.

Remember, recognising and acknowledging stress is the first and most key step in managing it. We are here to help you take the next steps toward improving your wellbeing.

Medical Suspension

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to suspend a colleague from work on medical grounds when it is believed that their role or work environment poses a risk to their own health or to others, including the public.

Medical suspension is not a disciplinary action—it is a precautionary and supportive measure taken in consultation with the People Team.

Examples of when medical suspension may be appropriate include:

- A Fit Note is issued by a GP that contradicts advice previously given by the Council's Occupational Health provider.
- A manager, in discussion with People team, has serious concerns about an employee's fitness to work and determines that the individual should not remain in the workplace for health and safety reasons.

In such situations, the Council has the right to send the employee home immediately pending further medical advice.

Key points:

- The employee will remain on full pay during the period of medical suspension.
- The suspension will not be recorded as sickness absence.
- An emergency Occupational Health referral will be arranged where appropriate.
- The period of suspension will be kept as short as possible and will be reviewed regularly.
- If they are then subsequently signed off as sick following medical suspension, sick pay will commence from the first day of the certificate, and the absence will be recorded as sickness absence from that point onward.

Appeals against Warnings

If you receive a written warning, you have the right to appeal the decision.

To appeal, you must submit a written request to the Head of Transformation, People Team and Corporate Services within ten business days of receiving the letter confirming the warning. Your appeal must include your grounds for appeal.

Who will hear the appeal?

- Your appeal will be heard by an independent officer at second or third tier level who has had no prior involvement in your case.

- If you are a second or third tier officer yourself, or report directly to one, your appeal will be heard by the Chief Operating Officer or another nominated senior officer.

An appeal hearing will be arranged as soon as practicable, and you will be informed of the date in advance.

III Health Retirement and Dismissal on Grounds of Capability

If you are unable to return to your substantive post (your current role), and there is no reasonable prospect of redeployment, the Council will consider whether your employment should be ended on the grounds of incapacity due to ill health.

Eligibility for III Health Retirement

If you have been a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for two or more years, and your medical condition prevents you from undertaking any work, you are entitled to be considered for ill health retirement under the terms of the scheme.

The Council will not proceed with ill-health retirement without first exploring all reasonable options to support your return to work, this includes redeployment and reasonable adjustments.

Medical Assessment Process

- Occupational Health (OH) will review your existing medical evidence to determine whether there appears to be a basis for ill health retirement.
- If more information is needed, you may be asked to:
 - Attend an additional OH appointment, and/or
 - Provide consent for your GP or medical consultant to submit a report.
- If sufficient evidence is available, the case will be referred to an Independent Registered Medical Practitioner (IRMP) with no prior involvement in your case for an impartial decision.

Only once all options have been explored and appropriate medical advice has been obtained will a recommendation for ill health retirement or dismissal be made.

Right of Appeal – Dismissal on Grounds of Ill Health

If your employment is terminated on the grounds of ill health, you have the right to appeal this decision.

To appeal, you must:

- Write to the Head of Transformation, People team and Corporate Services
- Do so within ten business days of receiving your dismissal letter
- Clearly state your grounds for appeal

Appeal Process

- The Chief Executive or Chief Operating Officer will hear your appeal.
- A member of the People Team who has had no prior involvement in your case, will attend to support the Appeal Chairperson.
- You have the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing by a trade union representative or a colleague companion.

FAQs

How do I notify my manager? Who do I notify if my manager is not in?

You should follow your team charter as every team is different. Some teams may accept a text message or email, followed up with a call. It is always best to have a conversation with your manager about how they would like to be contacted.

What do I do if my GP is unable to see me before the end of the seven-calendar day period (one week)?

It's a good idea to speak with your GP before the end of the first week of absence if you think you might still be unwell into the second week. While a Statement of

Fitness for Work is needed for occupational sick pay, it should be provided within a reasonable time based on circumstances.

My manager has not contacted me, what do I do?

It is for both you and your manager to stay in contact with each other. You can call or email your manager about your absence as you need to. If you are unable to reach your manager for any reason you can contact the People Team.

I feel well enough to return to work, but my GP note has not expired, what should I do?

You should speak with your manager to discuss whether it is appropriate for you to return to work before the end of your GP certificate. You and your manager can agree up to two weeks phased return without medical advice. If a longer phased return to work is needed, guidance will be sought from your GP (you can request a maybe fit for work note) or Occupational Health.

When do I have the right to be accompanied to a meeting?

Cause for concern and case review meetings. However, if you want to bring someone to an informal meeting then speak with your manager or the People Team to see if this is an option.

What is my sick pay entitlement?

Occupational sick pay is contractual so will depend on the length of service you have. You must provide a GP Statement of Fitness for work for the below entitlement.

Length of Continuous Local Government Service	Full Pay Entitlement	Half Pay Entitlement
0 – 1 year	1 month	2 months (<i>after 4 months' service</i>)
1 – 2 years	2 months	2 months

Length of Continuous Local Government Service	Full Pay Entitlement	Half Pay Entitlement
2 – 3 years	4 months	4 months
3 – 5 years	5 months	5 months
Over 5 years	6 months	6 months

Sickness pay entitlement is based on any sickness absences taken by the employee within the rolling 12-month period prior to the first date of the current sickness absence.

What if I need to go to the doctor or to a hospital appointment?

Colleagues should try their best to arrange these appointments outside of normal working hours. However, we appreciate that this is not always possible. In these circumstances speak with your manager to ensure work output is not affected and disruption is minimised.

What is a phased return?

A phased return to work is an agreed arrangement that allows you to gradually return to your full duties and/or hours over a defined period.

Purpose

Phased returns offer a valuable period of readjustment, supporting recovery by helping you to gradually reintegrate into your normal working routine and duties.

Possible Adjustments

Adjustments may include:

- Reduced working hours.
- Fewer working days.
- Temporary remote working.
- Modified or lighter duties.

Any arrangement will usually be made in consultation with:

- The Council's Occupational Health provider
- Your GP or consultant
- Your line manager

Duration

- Managers can approve a phased return of up to two weeks without the need for an Occupational Health referral.
- In cases where clinically recommended (e.g., by a GP, consultant, or Occupational Health), the phased return may extend up to six weeks.

Pay During Phased Return

- For the first two weeks, you will continue to be paid at your normal rate of pay, regardless of hours worked without the requirement for OH clinical advice.
- For full pay between two and six weeks, a GP or OH advice is required.
- If a phased return extends beyond six weeks (based on clinical advice), pay will be adjusted to reflect actual hours or duties worked.

What happens if I am in my probation period?

If you are absent due to sickness during your probation period, you must follow the usual sickness reporting procedures. Your manager will hold wellbeing meetings with you, conducted in the same supportive manner as for other employees.

In cases of significant absence during probation, the probation period may be:

- Extended, or
- A Case Review meeting may be arranged,

in accordance with the Council's Probation Policy.

What if I do not want to be put on the redeployment register?

If you do not want to be offered redeployment, a member of the People Team will discuss this with you. Following this, you can confirm in writing you do not wish to be redeployed, and the process will move to the next stage.