



# **ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**

## **SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE AT WORK POLICY**

<b>1. Scope</b>	
1.1	This policy and the associated procedures apply to all employees of Argyll and Bute Council.

<b>2. Policy Statement</b>	
2.1	We value our employees and want them to be fit and healthy, if people are able to work efficiently and effectively this also benefits the organisation. Whilst some absence due to sickness is inevitable, the Council's objective is to ensure that employees are supported and sickness absence is minimised through supporting staff wellbeing and fair and consistent procedures.
2.2	Absence due to sickness can be for a number of reasons. It is important that within a common policy approach, instances of sickness absence are dealt with on an individual basis. A balanced approach is required to support employee wellbeing and facilitate high levels of attendance whilst ensuring employees are treated fairly, consistently and sympathetically.
2.3	It is intended that this policy be used positively and constructively to support and enable employees to return or remain at work. At all stages, discussions will focus on exploring ways to improve and maintain attendance thereby ensuring service needs are met. The particular circumstances of each individual will be considered and relevant support measures implemented where these can contribute to improved attendance levels.
2.4	A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving higher levels of attendance and providing high quality services. With this in mind, the Council has developed a Wellbeing Strategy which outlines its commitment to improving the overall health and wellbeing of the workforce in line with the Council's corporate values (Caring, Committed, Collaborative and Creative). Through developing services such as Occupational Health, the Employee Assistance Programme, and by promoting health at work via Healthy Working Lives, events and initiatives, it is hoped to both better support employees and improve attendance levels.
2.5	There are a number of other Council policies which are complementary to the Council's wider approach to promoting health at work and these include the Equality and Diversity Policy and Health and Safety Policies as well as other procedures and guidance documents mentioned in the procedures.
2.6	In the case of illness resulting from a disability, "reasonable adjustments" will be made wherever practicable to support and facilitate an employee's attendance at work in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010.

2.6	<p>The effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored through regular reporting of relevant sickness absence management information to the Council's Strategic Management Team and Elected Members/Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A copy of the Supporting Attendance at Work Procedures and other related guidance can be found on <a href="#">The HUB</a> and <a href="#">MyCouncilWorks</a>.</p>
<b>3. Principles and Aims</b>	
3.1	<p>The following aims apply to the Council's procedures for dealing with sickness absence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting employee wellbeing</li> <li>• Minimising working days lost</li> <li>• Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing at work of our employees</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>The following principles apply to the Council's procedures for dealing with sickness absence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We value our employees and their health and wellbeing is important to us.</li> <li>• Good attendance is valued and all opportunities should be taken to acknowledge and recognise such attendance.</li> <li>• The Council will aim to promote a positive and preventative, rather than punitive approach.</li> <li>• The Council recognises that, depending on the nature of the health condition and/or absence, early intervention can be effective in promoting improved health and attendance.</li> <li>• Matters raised relating to an employee's attendance do not imply any distrust of the employee or concerns regarding their conduct.</li> <li>• Sickness/injury absence will be dealt with in a way that is non-discriminatory and in accordance with the <a href="#">Equality and Diversity Policy</a></li> <li>• Every employee will be treated as an individual but we aim to be consistent in our approach and the Supporting Attendance at Work Procedures will be fairly applied across the Authority.</li> <li>• Sickness absence cases will be conducted with respect for confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations, and Access to Medical Reports Acts.</li> <li>• The Council will be sensitive, and supportive of those suffering the effects of ill-health and promotes open communication between managers and employees to facilitate this.</li> <li>• Absence will be dealt with in line with our corporate values as an employer where we will demonstrate we CARE about our employees, we are COMMITTED to supporting them during their ill health, we will work COLLABORATIVELY with employees and other support mechanisms within the Supporting Attendance procedures to find mutually agreeable support and solutions and finally think CREATIVELY to ensure each employee is treated as an individual and progress within the Supporting Attendance Procedures is appropriate to their circumstances and adjustments tailored to their specific needs.</li> </ul>

<b>4. Roles and Responsibilities</b>	
4.1	<p>Responsibility for implementing and complying with the Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and Procedures lies with individuals at all levels within the Council and the HSCP.</p> <p>Specific responsibility is as follows:</p>
4.2	<p><b>The role of the Strategic Management Team is to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse and monitor corporate/departmental sickness absence data and trends based on quarterly returns</li> <li>• Determine, as necessary, the requirement for targets for improvement at a Council or Head of Service level along with targeted interventions in areas with higher sickness absence or where patterns or trends emerge</li> <li>• Report Council-wide sickness absence levels to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly and annual basis per service via scorecards.</li> </ul>
4.3	<p><b>Heads of Service are required to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage sickness absence in their service in accordance with the Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and Procedures.</li> <li>• Support line managers within their service to manage cases where triggers have been reached and follow up on progress.</li> <li>• Monitor sickness absence in their service and use this data to continuously improve the approach to staff wellbeing.</li> </ul>
4.4	<p><b>Line Managers are required to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let employees know that their contribution to the work of the Council is valued, and that their attendance at work makes a significant contribution to providing a quality service.</li> <li>• Manage the absence of the employees they are responsible for.</li> </ul> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting employees who are experiencing ill health and manage their absence in accordance with the Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and Procedures.</li> <li>• Ensuring that employees are aware of the notification (and where appropriate, certification procedures) for absences of any kind.</li> <li>• Maintaining regular contact with employees who are absent.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct Return to Work Discussions and, where appropriate, further meetings with employees in accordance with the Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and associated procedures.</li> <li>• Dealing immediately, fairly and sensitively with employees when they are ill and providing support to facilitate attendance.</li> <li>• Ensuring that accurate records are kept for each employee during each stage of the Supporting Attendance procedures and that copies are sent to Employee Relations for secure retention.</li> <li>• Make reasonable adjustments (where appropriate) to aid employees return to work or where the employee has raised concerns that their work is impacting their health.</li> </ul>
4.5	<p><b>Employees are required to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend work unless unfit to do so.</li> <li>• Advise their line manager of any illness or condition which may affect their ability to attend work or to undertake the duties of their post.</li> <li>• Take personal and contractual responsibility for attendance levels, their own well-being and seek medical advice and appropriate treatment promptly to maintain attendance, and/or facilitate an early return to work.</li> <li>• Raise concerns with their manager (or Employee Relations if appropriate) and where possible detail possible solutions if they believe their job is making them ill, or contributing to illness.</li> <li>• Report sickness absences promptly, in accordance with the Supporting Attendance at Work procedures.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate certifications are completed and submitted in accordance with notification and certification procedures.</li> <li>• Maintain regular contact with their manager during periods of sickness/injury absence.</li> <li>• Communicate effectively with their manager about their sickness/injury absence.</li> <li>• Co-operate as appropriate with the Council's Occupational Health Adviser and other organisations that provide support to the Council and its' employees.</li> <li>• Not knowingly abuse the Supporting Attendance at Work procedures or sick pay schemes.</li> </ul>
4.6	<p><b>The role of Human Resources is to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance to employees and line managers in managing attendance and support.</li> <li>• Provide reports and statistical information to managers to enable them to make informed decisions when monitoring and reviewing sickness absence</li> <li>• Maintain links with the Council's Occupational Health advisors and other similar agencies to support the implementation of this policy</li> <li>• Monitor the overall application of the policy and associated procedures</li> <li>• Provide coaching and/or mentoring sessions to managers in relation to wellbeing and attendance policies and procedures to ensure they have the practical skills and knowledge to apply the policy and associated procedures.</li> </ul>

<b>5. Proactive approach to tackling the Causes of Sickness Absence</b>	
5.1	<p>The Council has a Wellbeing Strategy and has also developed a range of procedures, guidance and initiatives designed to support employees to prevent and reduce sickness absence levels including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational Health who provide advice and guidance on the impact of ill health on work and what steps the Council and/or the employee may make in order to secure an early return to work where possible, or where appropriate, to consider early ill-health retirement where the employee is unable to return to work and meets the criteria for ill-health retirement.</li> <li>• Employee Assistance Programme who provide a confidential information, counselling and assistance service to employees in order to discuss concerns related to work or personal circumstances as well as a range of other practical support in relation to improving employee wellbeing physically, financially as well as emotionally.</li> <li>• Associated Procedures/Guidance that provide information and guidance to employees and managers on various associated issues such as Absence Notification and Certification Requirements; Medical Redeployment, Occupational Health etc.</li> <li>• Health improvement events and initiatives – developing initiatives which contribute to the improved health and wellbeing of the workforce.</li> <li>• Training and coaching sessions for managers via the Council’s e-learning system.</li> <li>• The availability of management information via My View and organisational reports which will enable managers to receive detailed information on the causes of absence and identify any trends that may be evident as well as the concentration of absence at a particular location in order that they can take the required action via the Supporting Attendance at Work procedures and develop action plans to support their teams with improved wellbeing.</li> </ul>
	<p>This is a “live” document and will be regularly reviewed by HR&amp;OD. We will therefore be pleased to receive any comments and/or suggestions in relation to the policy as part of this review cycle. These should be sent to the Head of Customer Support Services, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RT or via email to <a href="mailto:Jane.Fowler@argyll-bute.gov.uk">Jane.Fowler@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a></p>