

Absence Management

Version 2
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1. Introduction

A high level of attendance at work is essential to the effective functioning of the Council, to the maintenance of its strategic values, and particularly to the provision of quality services. To secure such attendance requires commitment from managers, employees and trades unions.

High absence rates are costly, disruptive, reduce morale and lower Service standards. The Highland Council already has policies relating to authorised leave, and a policy on the management of absence is essential to secure both high levels of attendance, and a consistent, fair and reasonable approach towards staff which will complement existing policies on authorised leave.

Elected members, managers, employees and trade unions must be committed to playing their part in the operation of this policy. This will ensure the development of a partnership towards the achievement of a highly motivated and healthy workforce committed to attaining high attendance levels.

2. Policy Principles

The Council's wish to secure a high level of attendance, and consistency in its management, is based on the following principles:

- the Chief Executive, Service Directors, managers and supervisors being accountable for the management of attendance and absence.
- commitment to the maintenance of the health, safety and welfare of staff and the promotion of occupational health.
- provision of guidance and training to managers on the treatment of absence and attendance in a fair

and consistent way.

- expectation by staff of fair and consistent treatment.
- understanding by staff of their responsibilities in the event of absence.
- staff awareness of the need to minimise absence.
- use of records and information systems to assess and control level of absences
- recognition of the importance of non-discriminatory practices.

3.

Implementation of Policy

The implementation of the Council's policy will be primarily through the following measures:

i. Information, Guidance and Procedures

The provision of clear information to staff, guidance to managers, and procedures which will:

- inform employees what to do in the event of absence
- give employees clear guidance on the issue of remuneration during sickness absence.
- guide management action in the event of absence, including training/briefing.
- advice on the procedures to be followed in the event of medical examination.
- ensure accurate recording and provision of information to assist the management of absence.
- address the management of unauthorised absence.

ii. Communication

To ensure the effectiveness of this policy, clear communication to managers, staff and the trade unions is required. Such communication will take place through:

- induction of new employees.
- specific reference by line managers to staff of the existence of the policy and its availability for examination.
- reference within the Council's employees handbook.
- specific training and briefings to managers, trade union representatives and administrators on the operation of the policy.
- the production of management guidelines.

- the provision of professional support.

iii. Recording & Analysis

It is the responsibility of Service Directors to ensure that accurate records are kept for each employee of absence and attendance, which will be regularly reviewed by the responsible line manager to ensure :

- concise data is available for each employee.
- the cause of any problem can be identified.
- accurate information is available should difficulties occur.

In addition each Service Director should regularly review aggregated statistics, to assess levels and trends of absence, and arrange for quarterly submissions to be made to the Chief Executive through the Service Quarterly Performance Reviews.

iv. Monitoring and Review

To ensure that the policy is operated effectively and achieves its objectives, Services will be subject to periodic random audit by officers directed by the Director of Corporate Services, and will be required to produce regular statistical returns and reports to the Chief Executive. Such audits and reports will include the examination of absence rates and action taken to overcome absenteeism. In addition, the operation of the policy will be

subject to annual review and report to the Resources Committee.