



Long-term Sickness Absence Policy

Adopted: 7th October 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council recognises that employees may sometimes suffer ill health resulting in extended absence from work. The purpose of this policy is to manage long-term sickness absence fairly, sensitively and consistently, while balancing the operational needs of the Council.

1.2 This policy applies where an employee's sickness absence lasts for **28 calendar days or more** (whether continuously or through linked medical certificates).

1.3 This policy does not form part of the employment contract and may be amended at any time following Council approval.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 The Council / Personnel Committee

- Maintain regular, sensitive communication with employees on long-term absence.
- Keep accurate records of absence, medical certificates and correspondence.
- Consider advice from medical professionals and occupational health (if used).
- Explore reasonable adjustments and options for phased return.
- Ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, particularly regarding disability.
- Make decisions about formal absence management and possible dismissal.

2.2 The Employee

Employees are expected to:

- Keep the Council updated on their condition and likely return date.
- Provide ongoing medical certificates ("fit notes") to cover the full period of absence.
- Cooperate with medical assessments and occupational health referrals (if required).
- Engage constructively in discussions about reasonable adjustments or a return-to-work plan.

3. Sick Pay

3.1 Employees are entitled to **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** in accordance with current legislation.

3.2 In addition, the Council provides **Occupational Sick Pay (OSP)** in line with the Clerk's contract and the National Joint Council ("Green Book"):

- 1st year of service: 1 month full pay & (after 4 months' service) 2 months half pay
- 2nd year: 2 months full pay & 2 months half pay
- 3rd year: 4 months full pay & 4 months half pay
- 4th & 5th years: 5 months full pay & 5 months half pay
- After 5 years: 6 months full pay & 6 months half pay

3.3 Payment is conditional on compliance with notification and evidence requirements.

4. Contact During Absence

4.1 The Personnel Committee (or its nominated councillor) will maintain regular contact with the employee during long-term absence. The frequency and method will be agreed with the employee but will normally be at least once every two weeks.

4.2 The purpose of contact is to provide support, update the employee on Council matters, and discuss progress and possible return to work.

5. Medical Reports

5.1 The Council may, at its expense, require the employee to attend a medical examination or provide consent for a medical report.

5.2 Reports may be sought from:

- The employee's GP or consultant (subject to the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988).
- An occupational health provider or independent medical adviser.

5.3 The employee will be fully informed of their rights and asked for written consent before any report is obtained.

6. Return-to-Work Planning

6.1 Where a return to work becomes possible, the Council will consider:

- Phased returns to work.
- Temporary adjustments to duties or hours.
- Reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities.

6.2 The Council will meet with the employee prior to return (or as soon as practicable on return) to agree a plan.

7. Formal Absence Management Procedure

7.1 Where long-term absence continues without a clear return date, or repeated long-term absences occur, the Council may consider formal action.

7.2 The Personnel Committee will invite the employee to a **formal absence review meeting**. The employee will:

- Receive at least **five working days' written notice**.
- Be provided with all relevant information, including medical reports.
- Have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

7.3 At the meeting, the Committee will discuss:

- The employee's current health position and prognosis.
 - Any medical advice or adjustments available.
 - The impact of the absence on the Council's operations.
 - Any alternatives to dismissal (such as redeployment, if feasible).
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8. Outcomes

Possible outcomes of a formal review may include:

- Agreement to continue monitoring absence.
- Adjustments to role, hours or duties.
- Redeployment to a suitable alternative role (if available).
- Dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health, if no reasonable alternative exists.

Dismissal will only be considered after all alternatives have been explored, medical advice obtained, and the employee has had an opportunity to present their case.

9. Appeal

Employees have the right to appeal any decision to dismiss. Appeals must be lodged in writing within **five working days** of the decision.

The appeal will be heard by councillors not previously involved in the case, and their decision will be final.

10. Pregnancy, Disability & Special Cases

- Absence related to pregnancy will be managed in line with maternity provisions and not counted towards absence triggers.
- Disability-related absence will be considered under the Equality Act 2010, with reasonable adjustments made where appropriate.