

From: [Foi Enquiries](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FOI-17-0602 - Maximising Attendance
Date: 26 April 2017 14:47:39
Attachments: [Further Information - Right to Review & Appeal.pdf](#)
[FOI-17-0602 - Maximising Attendance Policy 2014.pdf](#)

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your information request of 20 April 2017. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) has completed the necessary search for the information requested.

Could you please email me a copy of Aberdeen City Councils Long Term Absence Policy.

Please see attached.

We hope this helps with your request.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Webster
Information Compliance Officer

INFORMATION ABOUT THE HANDLING OF YOUR REQUEST

ACC handled your request for information in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Please refer to the attached PDF for more information about your rights under FOISA.

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ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

10.7 MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE POLICY

POLICY

Revised March 2014

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1. POLICY

1.1 Policy statement

We are committed to maximising attendance at work. This policy seeks to ensure that this is achieved and encourages reliable attendance from all employees. It intends to convey to employees that we are concerned about their wellbeing, that management wishes to maximise attendance at work by providing all reasonable support to an employee and to remove or reduce any work-related factors that may discourage reliable attendance.

We recognise that employees become sick and, as a consequence, may require time off from work to get better. We will provide all reasonable support to employees with the aim of assisting their timely and sustainable return to work following a period of sickness.

The importance of effective attendance management

All employees have a contractual duty to attend work. Any absence has a financial and operational impact on the provision of services and customer service. When an employee is unable to attend work, managers are responsible for identifying, understanding and taking appropriate action in relation to the reason(s) for absence.

- Positive and immediate management of attendance issues indicates to employees that this issue is important to the Council. A relaxed attitude to absence notification, recording and monitoring and/or lack of effective management can send an incorrect message to employees that a certain level of non-attendance is acceptable.
- Managers will be provided with all the required support in applying this policy and will be held accountable for its implementation.

1.2 SCOPE

This policy applies to **all employees** of the Council. It does not apply to any casual or agency worker where a contract of employment does not exist.

1.3 CORE PRINCIPLES

Employees are paid and contracted to attend work. Ultimately, the responsibility for regular and reliable attendance rests with each individual employee.

The responsibility for **Maximising Attendance** rests with Line/Service Managers and will be supported by Human Resources who will provide advice and guidance.

Attendance issues will be dealt with promptly in accordance with the provisions of this and related policies.

All reasonable support will be given to employees who are absent with the aim of assisting a timely and sustainable return to work.

Employees will be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague of their choice at each stage of the formal procedure. The employee will not be permitted to be accompanied by a legal practitioner, partner or spouse.

Throughout the procedure, special allowance should be made for those employees whose first language is not English or who have difficulty expressing themselves.

The Council will always recognise its statutory obligations and comply with all relevant legislation and Council policy, including our responsibilities in relation to Health and Safety and the Equality Act.

Where requested, every employee will comply with any reasonable request to attend medical appointments with the Council's Occupational Health provider.

Employees are permitted to request a manager of the same gender to consider matters under the formal stages of this procedure, where the medical reason is of a gender specific and/or intimate nature and this will be granted where practical.

1.4 POLICY PROVISIONS

This policy covers issues relating to sickness absence and domestic crises.

Sickness Absence

In managing sickness absence (which can be subdivided into short-term and long-term sickness) it is necessary, in all cases, to have the appropriate immediate response by the manager. This is outlined in the procedure and guidance notes which support this policy.

The policy differentiates the management approach required to manage periods of short-term and long term sickness absence.

Short Term Sickness Absence Trigger Levels

In order to manage short term sickness there are trigger levels that, if met, require a formal management response (i.e. commencement of Stage 1 of the short term sickness absence procedure). **The table below shows the trigger levels at which the procedure must be applied.** For the sake of clarity the formal procedure will be applied if either of the trigger levels is met (i.e. lost number of working days **or** number of separate occasions).

Absence over a rolling reference period of:	Total Working Days lost to sickness absence	Number of separate occasions
12 months	10 days	3 occasions
24 months	15 days	5 occasions

The procedure may also be applied where an employee's sickness record, viewed over a period of time, indicates the employee is managing their sickness around the trigger levels.

Where an employee meets a trigger or the manager is required to apply the formal procedure, it is for the manager to use their judgement to determine whether referral to the Council's occupational health adviser, is appropriate. This is **NOT** automatic.

Long Term Sickness Absence

Long term sickness absence is where the employee has been absent from work for a continuous period that exceeds four calendar weeks from the first day of sickness.

The number of days lost due to long term sickness absence will not be taken into account when looking at the above short term trigger levels.

Overall Unacceptable Sickness Record

There will be circumstances where an employee has a mixture of long-term and short-term sickness that will inhibit the sickness record from being effectively managed under the above provisions. This is normally where cumulatively (both short-term and long-term) the overall level of sickness absence the employee has had is considered by the manager to be at an unacceptable level. In such cases the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the procedural guidance notes which accompany this policy. In all such cases the manager should seek advice from the Human Resources Service.

‘Employee AIDE’ (i.e. Absences Involving Domestic Emergencies)

Employee AIDE is a provision which recognises that, on occasion, employees may experience unexpected family, personal or domestic problems and may need to take time off work to deal with such emergencies. Employees facing these problems may not have the opportunity to give sufficient notice to take annual or flexi leave so may report that they are sick. Employee AIDE aims to provide an option rather than the employee reporting in sick, when they are not, to avoid being penalised for taking such time off work.

1.5 ABSENCE PREVENTION AND PROMOTION OF WELL-BEING

Absence prevention is vitally important and this starts with the recruitment process, ensuring new employees are medically fit to carry out the duties of the post. This will include undertaking preferred candidate health checks for specific posts and requesting/checking absence details from employer references in a manner that takes account of all legal implications.

The Council also seeks to promote a working environment which encourages healthy working lives and personal well-being.

2. PROCEDURAL PROVISIONS

The procedural provisions are detailed below and outline the different processes to be followed in dealing with short term and long term absence cases.

"Return to work discussion"

On the employee's return to work, their manager is required to contact/meet with them to enquire, in a supportive manner, about their absence and confirm their fitness to return to work. The manager should make a note of each return to work discussion.

This informal stage is viewed as good management practice and should take place following each period of sickness absence.

2.1 Dealing with Short Term Absence

The procedure consists of four stages. At each stage, except the appeal stage, a monitoring period for improvement will be set by the manager conducting the meeting.

Stage 1: Attendance Review Meeting

Stage 2: Attendance Improvement Meeting

Stage 3: Capability OR Conduct Assessment

Stage 4: Appeal

Where an employee's attendance has sufficiently improved they return to normal monitoring. Should their improvement in attendance fail to be sustained for a reasonable period of time due to sickness absence following their exit from the procedure, they will normally revert to the same stage of the procedure from which they last left.

Consideration of Short Term Sickness Issues

Where short-term persistent sickness is due to an underlying medical condition this will require advice from the Council's occupational health adviser and will be viewed as a **capability** issue. Where the reasons given for absence appear to have **no** underlying medical condition, the matter should be viewed (initially at least) as an issue of **conduct**.

- **UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITION (CAPABILITY)**

This route will normally be applied where there is an underlying medical condition, identified by the Council's occupational health adviser. The approach will be supportive with the employee being responsible for improving their sickness absence record. The manager will make all reasonable efforts to support the employee to improve their sickness absence record.

- **NO UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITION (CONDUCT)**

This route will normally be applied where there is **NO** apparent underlying medical condition. The approach will be focussed on the employee being responsible for improving their sickness absence record.

Should an issue initially be determined as one of conduct but, at a subsequent point, it appears that there is an underlying medical condition that contributes to their absence record, the manager should refer the employee to the Council's occupational health adviser.

Where the required improvement in the employee's attendance has not been realised despite all reasonable support, and where an employee has progressed through the procedure to Stage 3 – Capability **OR** Conduct Assessment, a decision on whether to dismiss the employee, or not, will need to be made following careful consideration of all facts.

2.2 Dealing with Long Term Absence

The procedure for dealing with long term sickness comprises four formal stages with the aim to manage the employee back to work in early course, where possible.

Stage 1: Initial Contact Discussion

Stage 2: Review of Progress

Stage 3: Capability Assessment

Stage 4: Appeal

Consideration of Long Term Sickness Absence

Long term sickness absence is where an employee has been off on sick leave for a continuous period that exceeds 4 calendar weeks from the first day of sickness. Referral to the Council's occupational health adviser will be made in all long-term cases at the appropriate juncture. Where an employee refuses to attend occupational health without reasonable explanation or where

circumstances have existed that have resulted in it not being possible to obtain an occupational health report, the manager will have to decide how to progress the case without access to the required medical information.

Where a sustainable return to work has not been realised despite all reasonable support and where an employee has progressed through the procedure to Stage 3 – Capability Assessment, a decision on whether to dismiss the employee, or not, will need to be made following careful consideration of all facts.

3 - : REVIEW OF THE POLICY

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Service will review this policy every 3 years. It will, nevertheless, be subject to continual review and amendment in light of experience of its operation, employment best practice and statutory requirements. Changes will only be made following normal consultation arrangements.