



Attendance Policy

The purpose of this policy is to manage the attendance of employees in line with the values and culture of the Council and our commitment to provide the highest standards of service.

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Relevant forms and letters:

- [Absence letter templates](#)
- [Return to work guide](#)
- [Attendance procedure guide](#)
- [Occupational Health guide](#)

Related policies:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)

If you have any questions about this policy or require any further support, please contact the HR team by emailing hr@southkesteven.gov.uk

For independent support, our Employee Assistant Support service offer a completely confidential helpline for employees. Call 0800 716 017 to receive support for mental health, legal signposting, practical help, manager coaching and much more.

1.0 Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to manage the attendance of employees in line with the values and culture of the Council and our commitment to provide the highest standards of service.

The Council encourages attendance and will support employees where health issues impact on their ability to be at work.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all employees working for South Kesteven District Council.

3.0 Guiding principles

- Employees will be treated with dignity and respect and their attendance record considered on an individual basis.
- The Council wants to provide employees with the advice and support to help them achieve consistently good levels of attendance.
- Employees should make every effort to meet the attendance standards.
- SKDC wants to ensure employees are provided with clear and consistent guidelines for recording, monitoring and reporting absence, as well as for addressing any issues or concerns related to attendance.

4.0 Absence Reporting and Keeping in Touch

When an employee is unable to attend work due to being unwell, they should advise their manager, or an agreed alternative contact. This should be by telephone unless other contact arrangements have been agreed. Employees should only use a third party to report their absence in exceptional circumstances.

The notification should include the following wherever possible:

- reason for absence and expected length of absence
- phone number and other contact information so the manager can keep in touch
- details of any urgent or outstanding work that needs picking up during the absence.

For absences not covered by a fit note, the employee should speak to their line manager at the end of each day of absence to advise if they will be returning the following day. Absences of more than seven calendar days require a medical certificate (fit note).

Employees should continue to keep in touch with their manager (or an alternative nominated contact) throughout their absence. The manager and employee must agree arrangements for contact during sickness absence including the method and frequency of contact (for example, a weekly phone call and a face-to-face meeting after 4 weeks absence). Face-to-face meetings will usually take place in at an SKDC site but by exception, if the employee’s preference is for a home visit, this can take place where this is a reasonable distance for the manager.

These arrangements are intended to facilitate supportive conversations that can include:

- enquiring after the employee’s health and wellbeing
- keeping the manager up-to-date with progress in relation to the employee’s health
- planning for their return to work and identifying support which might aid this.

If the employee feels the reason for the absence is related to work, a supportive meeting will be put in place at the earliest opportunity to try and address any issues and support the employee.

Where the employee fails to notify or provide appropriate certification, this may result in loss of pay and referral to other workforce policies.

4.1 Long Term Absence

Long term sickness absence is where an individual is absent for a period of more than 4 weeks. During this absence, the manager will hold absence meetings regularly.

4.2 Occupational Health

Occupational health advice will be sought as appropriate to assist managers in making decisions and support employees in their recovery. Our Occupational Health provider offers an independent, objective specialist assessing and advising both the employee and employer in relation to an individual’s health and their work. It is expected that managers would normally implement OH advice but ultimately it is a matter for the manager to decide if implementation is reasonable and feasible.

Where an individual refuses to attend a medical assessment or refuses to give consent for the Council to receive a summarised report of the medical assessment, decisions will be made on the basis of the information available.

5.0 Pay during sickness absence

If the employee has fully complied with this policy, the Council will provide sick pay as outlined in the table below.

Length of service at date of first day of current absence	Maximum benefit (including SSP) in preceding rolling 12-month period commencing from first day of current absence
Up to 4 months	1 months’ full pay
Between four months and one year	1 months’ full pay and 2 months’ half pay
1 years to 2 years	2 months’ full pay and 2 months’ half pay
2 years to 3 years	4 months’ full pay and 4 month’s half pay

3 years to 5 years	5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay
5 years plus	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay

The Council reserves the right to withhold or suspend sick pay at its discretion. The decision to do so is taken by the senior manager and Head of HR. Circumstances in which sick pay may be withheld include:

- the employee not following this Sickness Absence policy, including the absence reporting procedure and attending absence meetings without good reason.
- not providing a Fit Note when required.
- not engaging with Occupational Health or attending a scheduled appointment without good reason.
- where there is reasonable grounds to believe the employee is doing activities (other work, sports, hobbies, etc.) that may delay recovery or make the condition worse.
- undergoing elective cosmetic surgery, in which case the line manager will usually authorise annual leave to cover the absence.

The employee will usually be entitled to receive SSP when contractual sick pay is withheld or suspended, although the Council can withhold or suspend SSP if it is not satisfied that the employee is ill and no evidence of sickness is provided when required (e.g. a fit note). Employees will be given written notice if their SSP or contractual sick pay is being withheld or suspended.

6.0 Supporting an employee's return to work

Following a period of long term sick, the manager will usually meet with the employee prior to their return date to discuss and agree arrangements, taking into account any professional advice (e.g. from Occupational Health). Where necessary this may include a phased return to work or other adjustments. Subsequent meetings may take place following the employee's return to review the effectiveness of any support mechanisms.

For phased return to works, the first month of any agreed plan will be paid at full contracted salary. Phased returns will not normally continue beyond one month but where this is agreed, salary will be reduced on a temporary basis or alternatively annual leave/flexi time may be used to make up the shortfall in contracted hours.

A typical return to work plan is usually working the first 2 weeks at 50% of hours and build up to normal contracted hours by end of 4 weeks.

6.1 Return to Work Meeting

Return to work meetings are held with employees after any absence. These are usually held with the employee's line manager and they are a good opportunity to discuss the absence and whether there is any support or adjustments required. The manager will also update on any important information that the individual may have missed during their absence.

7.0 Formal Procedure

The formal process may be appropriate where support mechanisms have been unsuccessful in improving attendance, there is a continued pattern of absence and/or the absence management triggers indicate this is required.

7.1 Absence Triggers

Using absence triggers is an important way of managing attendance. The Council has a set of absence triggers to help us identify attendance records that give us cause for concern. These are:

- three or more absences in a rolling 6-month period.
- four periods of absence in a rolling 12-month period
- any period of absence of four weeks or more
- any pattern of absence that gives cause for concern

Where one or more of the above applies, an employee will be invited to an attendance review meeting. 3 working days' notice will be given prior to the meeting.

There are four types of attendance review meetings:

- Informal
- Formal stage 1
- Formal stage 2
- Formal stage 3 - consideration of dismissal

7.2 Informal Attendance Review Meeting

These informal meetings can take place at any time when a manager is concerned about an individual's attendance. Employees can also request an informal attendance review if they feel it would be beneficial to discuss something that may affect their attendance at work.

The meeting is a two-way discussion which may cover any concerns about absence levels as well what could help support the employee maintain attendance levels.

7.3 Formal Attendance Review Meetings

Formal attendance review meetings are a two-way discussion between the manager and employee to explore the reasons for absence in more detail, the impact it has on service delivery, identify any underlying issues and to discuss support in bringing attendance up to the required levels.

Employees may be accompanied by a work colleague or Union Representative to any formal attendance review meeting. A notetaker may also be in attendance. If agreed by all parties, an audio recording of the meeting may be taken.

The employee will receive confirmation in writing of the outcome to a formal attendance review.

The outcome could be:

	Trigger	Possible outcomes
Formal stage 1	One or more of the following has occurred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • three or more absences in a rolling 6-month period. • four periods of absence in a rolling 12-month period • any period of absence of four weeks or more • any pattern of absence that gives cause for concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not issued • Issued - First written warning live on record for 6 months
Formal stage 2	Stage 1 has been issued and a further absence has occurred within the live period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not issued • Final written warning live on record for 52 weeks
Formal stage 3 – consideration of dismissal	Stage 2 has been issued and a further absence has occurred within the live period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not issued • Dismissal (with notice pay in lieu of notice) • Dismissal (working notice)

Pregnancy related illnesses will usually be excluded when calculating absence triggers.

Where absences are specifically related to a disability, a reasonable adjustment may include revised triggers.

7.4 Appeal

Employees have the right to appeal against any formal stage of the absence procedure.

Appeals should be submitted in writing (including via email) to the manager who issued the warning within 5 calendar days of receiving the outcome.

Appeals against a warning issued at stage 1 of the procedure will be paper-based. A manager not already involved in the case will review the appeal and communicate their outcome in a letter.

At stages 2 and 3, the second line manager or another manager at the equivalent level will invite the employee to a hearing. The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or Union Representative at the appeal meeting.

Following the appeal hearing, the manager will send the outcome in writing. The outcome of the appeal is final.

8.0 Accident/Incident at Work

If a sick absence is linked to an accident/incident at work, it will be investigated in line with the Corporate Health and Safety policy.

9.0 Sickness and holidays

If an employee is off sick and has pre-booked holiday that they are too unwell to take, they can ask for the holiday to be cancelled so they can take it another time. If an employee is already on holiday and becomes so unwell that they wouldn't have been able to attend work and this seriously disrupts the holiday, they can ask for these holidays to be cancelled. In this case, the employee would need to follow the absence reporting procedure and get a Fit Note from their doctor covering the period of holiday in which they were unwell (including within the first seven calendar days).

Individuals that are on sick leave and want to go on holiday need to let their manager know. The manager may want to refer to Occupational Health to ensure going on holiday will not be detrimental to recovery. Where an absence is broken by a period of annual leave the sickness before and directly after the period of annual leave will be treated as a single absence.

When on sick leave, employees continue to accrue annual leave. They will not accrue bank holiday leave unless this would take the individual below your statutory leave entitlement of 5.6 weeks per year.

9.1 Sickness During Unpaid Leave

Employees who are sick during a period of authorised unpaid leave won't receive sick pay, for example, on career break.

10.0 Medical Suspension

If by being at work we believe an employee poses a risk to themselves or others, we may suspend on medical grounds. This is to allow the Council to obtain medical advice to confirm if an individual is fit to be at work. This is not a sanction against an employee, it is a precautionary measure on full pay.

11.0 Changes to Duties

The Council may also temporarily restrict or make reasonable changes to duties if we consider these necessary for the safety of an employee or others. This will be done in consultation with the individual and where relevant in accordance with occupational health advice.

12.0 Redeployment

If an employee is unable to return to their role for reasons associated with ill-health, the Council will scope redeployment. This may be related to both short and longer term sickness absence and may be for a temporary period.

When redeployment is being considered, individuals will be consulted with to discuss the possible options for alternative employment and any training needs. Where necessary, Occupational Health will be consulted with to determine suitability of proposed redeployment.

If a reasonable redeployment option is refused, the Council reserves the right to consider the termination of employment on health grounds.

13.0 Leaving with Ill Health

An employee may have to leave the Council on the grounds of ill health when:

- Medical advice suggests they are unlikely to return from long-term sick absence
- They meet the criteria for ill health under the relevant pension scheme.

If an employee is unable to return to work and undertake their duties, after all options have been explored and following consultation with the employee and Occupational Health, consideration will be given to terminating employment on the grounds of incapability due to ill health.

In such cases, a 'Leaving with Ill Health' meeting will be held with you. Employees will have the right to have representation at the meeting by a work colleague or union representative. They will also have the right of appeal against any decision to terminate employment.

Where an employee is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme and subject to confirmation of permanent incapacity, this will be determined by an independent registered medical practitioner. A contributing employee of the Local Government Pension Scheme will be paid benefits in accordance with the ill-health provisions of those regulations.

Although the decision to terminate an individual's employment is a decision for the Council, the payment of benefits under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008 requires confirmation of permanent incapacity from the Council's Occupational Health Provider an Independent Registered Medical Practitioner and the granting of benefits is not therefore automatic.

14.0 Medical Appointments

Where possible employees should arrange routine doctor and dentist trips outside of working hours. Where this is not possible, employees should discuss arrangements with their line manager which could include using flexi-time to cover the appointment or unpaid leave.

Reasonable paid time will be allowed for emergency treatment and hospital appointments.

15.0 Other Absence

Absence related to other people (for example illness, injury or death of a family member) should not be recorded as a sick absence unless covered by a fit note. Such absences are covered under the Special Leave policy.

16.0 Personal Conduct Matters

In some cases, the Disciplinary Policy may apply rather than, or as well as, the Sickness Absence Policy. Such conduct matters include, but are not limited to:

- Not following the absence reporting procedure.
- Not following the Keeping In Touch procedure.
- Reasonable grounds to believe that the sickness absence isn't genuine.
- Giving inaccurate or misleading information about a sickness absence.
- Reasonable grounds to believe an employee is doing activities (other work, sports, hobbies, etc.) that may delay their recovery or make your condition worse.
- Undertaking any other employment, whether paid or unpaid without prior consent.

17.0 Employee Assistance Programme

The Council understands that being unwell can be very difficult. The Employee Assistance Programme (or EAP) is a 24/7 helpline that offers both telephone and face to face support. This is a confidential service and more information can be found on the HR Hub.

For further information about this policy, please contact the HR Team at hr@southkesteven.gov.uk.

- This policy applies to all employees within South Kesteven District Council unless stated otherwise within the policy.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment.
- The Council reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.