



Sickness Management Policy

Long Term Sickness

Human Resources

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The council is committed to dealing fairly and sympathetically with employees who are absent from work for long periods because of ill health and aim to assist them with their rehabilitation and eventual return to work.

By implementing this policy, we aim to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of our operational needs and the genuine needs of employees to take time off work because of ill health.

This policy covers long-term sickness absence, which is defined as an absence lasting at least 28 calendar days or more (irrespective of work pattern). We operate a separate short term sickness policy which is defined as an absence lasting one to 27 calendar days. Where an employee is on long-term sickness absence, but returns to work for short periods, we reserve the right to continue to manage their sickness absence under this policy. This is to prevent us switching between this policy and our separate short term sickness policy solely on the basis that an employee has returned to work for a short period.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to employees employed by us. It does not apply to workers, contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

1.3 Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Period of sickness absence" or "instance of sickness absence" means any continuous period of sickness absence, of whatever length, during which the employee does not work.

"Short-term sickness absence" means any period of sickness lasting between one and 27 calendar days.

"Long-term sickness absence" means any period of sickness lasting 28 calendar days or more.

"Formal review period" means a defined period during which an employee is required to show an improvement in their sickness absence levels under the council's Sickness Absence Management procedure.

1.4 Wellbeing Support

The council offers wellbeing support to all its employees. We have an Employee Assistance Programme which can offer support in a number of ways and is available 24 hours a day. This is completely confidential. Further information can be found at section 8.

We can consider reasonable adjustments that may be required depending on individual circumstances, and we have available the HSE stress questionnaire which can help inform any decisions that we take to support you.

We always encourage open communication between employees and managers to try and address issues at the earliest opportunity.

1.5 Misconduct

This policy is formulated on the assumption that, if the council suspects there to be misconduct, its separate disciplinary procedure will apply. For example, the council may take disciplinary action if there is evidence that:

- absence is not genuine or not for the reason provided.
- the employee is undertaking inappropriate activities while off sick, such as carrying out work for another council; or another business including self-employment, or
- the correct sickness absence notification and evidence procedure has not been followed.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Your Responsibilities

As an employee, you are responsible for ensuring that you:

- attend work unless unfit to do so.
- if you are unable to attend work because of ill health, or a workplace accident, you notify your manager by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before you are due to start work and, in any event, no later than one hour after you are due to begin work;
- provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days (with sickness of seven calendar days or less being self-certified);
- continue to notify and keep in touch with your line manager/supervisor while unable to attend work;
- be honest with your manager about the reason (ie the nature of the illness or injury) why you cannot attend work and how long you think the absence will last;
- do what is possible to enable a return to work, for example by following medical guidance, taking steps recommended by healthcare professionals during rehabilitation and not undertaking any activities while on sick leave that could exacerbate your health problem;
- tell your line manager of any extenuating circumstances, for example personal or family problems or an unmanageable workload;
- bear in mind that we may seek a medical report, for example from your doctor or our occupational health advisers;
- cooperate with the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, particularly those suggested by a healthcare professional; and
- attend a return-to-work meeting when returning to work following long-term sickness absence.

2.2 Guidelines for Managers

As a line manager, you are responsible for ensuring that you:

- manage attendance and absence in accordance with this policy.
- maintain a proper record of each employee's sickness absences by recording the absence correctly on the Council's HR System.
- require the employee to provide medical evidence (normally a Dr's certificate) for sickness of more than seven calendar days.
- conduct a return-to-work meeting when the employee returns from a period of sickness absence.
- stay in touch with the employee at regular intervals.
- speak to the employee about the absence and the reason for it in a fair and factual way.
- be supportive towards the employee and, where appropriate, seek to identify ways in which to assist the employee to improve their attendance in the future.
- be particularly sensitive when absences are caused by personal or family problems.

- show a reasonable degree of tolerance and sympathy towards the employee's sickness absence, while at the same time making clear that the aim is to support them to enable their to return to work.
- check whether the employee's absences are in any way work related, for example because of workplace stress.
- bear in mind that the council may seek a medical report on an employee, for example from the employee's doctor or the council's occupational health advisers.
- keep confidential records of all absences, including discussions and medical certificates, and make sure that the records clearly identify the reasons for the employee's various absences.
- be aware of the potential for discrimination when managing absence, particularly where the employee's ill health is related to pregnancy or disability.
- keep in mind the council's duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people when managing absence; and
- consult with Human Resources if unsure about anything or special circumstances arise, for example if it appears that the employee may have a disability.

2.3 Notification and Evidence of sickness absence

Reporting absence

On the first day of sickness absence, you must inform your manager as soon as reasonably practicable that you will not be working because of illness or injury. You should notify your manager of non-attendance by telephone, (unless an alternative method has been previously agreed with your manager) before you are due to start work and, in any event, no later than one hour after you are due to begin work. If your manager is unavailable, you should contact the next most appropriate person within the department. Managers may agree in advance different reporting requirements however this must take into account the requirements of the business and ensure that service to our customers is maintained.

You should provide a clear reason (ie the nature of the illness or injury) why you cannot attend work and estimate how long you think the absence will last. You should also be prepared to briefly discuss any consequences of your absence, for example if customer appointments need to be cancelled or any essential work needs to be covered.

Notification of sickness absence must be via telephone, rather than text message, email, or social media platforms, unless your manager has agreed previously agreed to an alternative method of notification. In exceptional circumstances where you are unable to telephone (for example, because of hospitalisation), another person such as a friend or relative can contact the council on your behalf.

Your manager will discuss with you the frequency of staying in touch – see 2.4.

Statement of fitness for work (fit note)

If you are absent for eight consecutive days or more (including weekends), you must provide your line manager with a fit note (statement of fitness for work) as soon as possible. If your absence persists beyond the end of the first fit note, you must continue to submit further fit notes to cover the whole period of your absence.

Fit notes can be issued by doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists as long as they have conducted an assessment of your fitness for work.

A fit note may state that:

- you are "not fit for work", in which case you should remain off work; or
- you "may be fit for work", if the healthcare professional's recommendations are followed (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, or workplace adaptations).

While there is no legal obligation to follow the recommendations in the fit note, your line manager will take the recommendations seriously and give fair consideration, in consultation with you and Human Resources, as to whether any of the changes recommended can be accommodated.

2.4 Keeping in touch

It is important that we maintain regular contact with you while you are absent to:

- see how you are progressing in terms of your health;
- support you and actively maintain your engagement with us;
- provide information to you so that you may make informed decisions (for example, in relation to health-related benefits);
- provide practical support including from our occupational health advisers;
- encourage a return to work as early as possible;
- facilitate a phased return to work if required, by making appropriate temporary or permanent adjustments; and
- ensure that you are kept up to date about events in the workplace.

You and your line manager are both jointly responsible for maintaining contact with each other. When you are ill it is your responsibility to notify your manager. You can agree between you how often you will make contact in the first month. Once you are absent on sick leave for 28 continuous days, your line manager will contact you to agree the method and frequency of contact. Contact will be on a regular basis and at least monthly.

2.5 Home visits

In some circumstances, contact may be maintained via home visits. A home visit will take place only with your prior consent and at mutually agreed times. A home visit would be made only where you were physically unable to attend a Council office, and all other alternatives had been exhausted for example video conference.

Home visits will be conducted by your line manager and a representative from HR may also be present depending on the reason for the visit.

Our preference will be to attend a Council office to meet, therefore we will explore all options with you, this may be another location near your home (such as an Information Office), that may be mutually agreed.

3. Sick pay

3.1 Eligibility

Eligible employees are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) if you follow the council's usual notification and evidence requirements.

Statutory sick pay is payable for up to 28 weeks in any one period of sickness absence, at a weekly rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year.

3.1.1 Contractual sick pay scheme

The council operates a contractual sick pay scheme that is more generous than statutory sick pay (SSP).

Details of the council's sick pay scheme are indicated in your contract of employment. The Council's occupational Sick Pay Scheme is:

during 1st year of service	During first 3 months - No sickness payments After 3 months- One week full pay After 6 months- Additional two weeks half pay
during 2nd year of service	2 months' full pay + 2 months half pay
during 3rd year of service	4 months' full pay + 4 months half pay
during 4th & 5th year of service	5 months' full pay + 5 months half pay
after 5 years' service	6 months' full pay + 6 months half pay

The allowance shown above is reduced by the total of paid sick leave in the 12 months immediately preceding the first day of sickness. All employees both full-time and part-time shall have 7 qualifying days in each week for statutory sick pay purposes (irrespective of work pattern).

If you have exhausted your contractual sick pay and have any SSP remaining, you will move to SSP until this has also been exhausted.

Sick pay under the council's scheme is subject to the usual deductions for PAYE, national insurance, pension contributions, etc.

Payments under the council's scheme will be calculated by reference to your basic salary including any market supplement only and any payments made under the council's scheme are inclusive of any entitlement to SSP for the same period of absence.

3.1.2 Absence because of an Accident involving a Third Party

All employees who are absent because of an accident shall not be entitled to an allowance if damages may be receivable from a third party in respect of that accident. In this event, the Council will normally advance to the employee a sum not exceeding the sickness allowance set out above, provided the employee undertakes to refund to the Council the total amount of such allowance or the proportion of it which is represented in the amount of damages that are eventually received. Payroll will be happy to provide sufficient information to enable you to make your claim.

Any period of absence in such a case where a refund of the money advanced is made in full, shall not be recorded for the purposes of the Occupational Sick Pay scheme. If, however, the refund only represents part of the money advanced the Council will, at its discretion, decide to what extent the period of absence will be recorded.

3.1.3 Other employment or work whilst in receipt of sick pay

If you are in receipt of Sick Pay (including SSP) you are not allowed to undertake any form of paid alternative employment, self-employment, or voluntary work. Any breach of this rule would be regarded as gross misconduct which could result in dismissal.

3.1.4 Sickness due to sporting activity

The Council encourages all staff to look after their health and wellbeing however, if your sickness absence occurs as a result of active participation in sport as a profession, or in cases where the absence is as a result of your own misconduct then the sickness allowance is not payable.

3.1.5 Industrial Disease, Accident or Assault

Absence in respect of normal sickness is entirely separate from absence through industrial disease, accident or assault arising out of or in the course of employment with a local authority. Periods of absence in respect of one shall not be set off against the other for the purpose of calculating entitlements under the scheme.

3.1.6 Withholding or suspending sick pay

We reserve the right to withhold or suspend sick pay under our contractual sick pay scheme at our discretion. Circumstances in which contractual sick pay may be withheld include where:

- you have failed to comply with the organisation's sickness absence notification and evidence requirements;
- you refuse to attend a medical examination at the reasonable request of the organisation;
- your incapacity has been caused by participation in dangerous sports or activities or any other occupation that you have;

- you make or produce any misleading or untrue statement or document concerning your fitness to work;
- you have given or received notice to terminate your employment; and
- disciplinary proceedings are pending against you.

You will normally be entitled to receive SSP when contractual sick pay is withheld or suspended, although we can withhold or suspend SSP if we are not satisfied that you are ill, and no evidence of sickness is provided.

You will be given written notice if your SSP or contractual sick pay is being withheld or suspended.

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4. Holiday during sick leave

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement during any period of sick leave.

If you are unable to take your full holiday entitlement due to sickness absence, or if you are still absent at the end of the holiday year, you may carry over any unused holiday to the next holiday year with the agreement of your Senior Manager.

Any holiday that is carried over under this provision is limited to the four weeks' annual leave that you are entitled to under EU legislation, and must be taken within 18 months of the end of the holiday year in which it was accrued.

Alternatively, you may book a period of holiday while on sick leave to receive holiday pay for that period, provided that you give your manager as much notice as possible of your proposed holiday dates.

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5. Medical reports

At various stages of managing your sickness absence, we may need to obtain a medical report on you to:

- determine your fitness for carrying out your role;
- determine whether you are fit to return to work after a period of sickness absence, or when you might return to work;
- determine your entitlement to health-related benefits (eg sick pay);
- assess the need to make reasonable adjustments to your working environment; and/or
- comply with other legal obligations.

Depending on the circumstances, we might instruct your own doctor/consultant, occupational health, and/or an independent medical adviser. When deciding which medical practitioner to instruct, we will consider the purpose of the report and factors such as the need for objectivity, specialist expertise, and knowledge about your medical history and the requirements of your role.

If we decide that a medical report is necessary, we will write to you confirming why we intend to obtain a medical report and from whom the medical report will be obtained. In addition, you will be fully informed of your rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Where we decide to obtain a medical report directly from your own doctor/ consultant, the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 applies. Therefore, when we write to you, we will also ask you to confirm whether you provide your consent for us to approach your doctor/consultant by requesting that you complete and return our consent form. You will be notified of all your rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1998, including the right to see the medical report before it is supplied to us.

Where we decide to obtain a medical report from occupational health, or any other independent medical adviser who has not been responsible for your clinical care, the Access to Medical Reports Act 1998 does not apply. However even though you do not have the right to access the medical report before it is supplied to us, we will ask that you are given the right to see it before we are given it.

Once we have received the report, we will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the contents and identify the appropriate next steps.

You should be aware that if you refuse to attend a medical examination, or you withhold your consent to a medical report being disclosed to us, we may need to make decisions affecting your employment without the benefit of medical input, which could be to your detriment.

6. Return-to-work meetings

We understand that returning back to work after a long period of absence can be difficult. When you return to work, your line manager will arrange to meet with you to conduct a return-to-work meeting to ensure that you are given adequate support. This will be in addition to any meeting under the sickness absence management procedure.

Meetings will have taken place with you prior to your return to work to discuss what support the council can offer you. Ideally on your first day back at work you will have a return-to-work meeting with your manager / supervisor. If it is not possible on your first day back then it will be held as soon as practicable.

The purpose of the return-to-work meeting is to discuss:

- the arrangements for your return to work, including any adjustments that are being made or have been made;
- what work you will be doing on your return to work, including an outline of work during your first week back;
- any medical issues of which the employer is not already aware, such as any updated guidance from a healthcare professional;
- what arrangements will be put in place to monitor your progress, including a timescale for the next follow-up meeting; and
- to whom you should report if you have any difficulties with the arrangements.

All discussions between you and your line manager will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

7. Other Considerations

7.1 Pregnancy-related absences

If you are pregnant and are absent from work for a pregnancy-related illness, your sickness will not be included when checking to see if the need for formal action under the sickness absence management procedure has been triggered.

7.2 Disability

If you have a disability, you do not have to tell us. However, we would encourage you to let us know so that we can support you, for example by making reasonable adjustments to our premises, aspects of your role, our working practices, and/or our sickness absence management procedure.

If your sickness absence is due to a disability, we will discuss potential reasonable adjustments that may help you return to work or support you after you have returned to work. We may also need to discuss your needs with you and your medical adviser or occupational health to help us get the right support in place.

7.3 Ill-health retirement

Retirement on the ground of ill health will be considered where:

- it appears unlikely from the medical advice that you will be able to return to your role; and
- you are entitled to a pension/lump sum under your pension scheme.

If ill-health retirement is raised as an option, your line manager will advise you in the first instance to contact the HR team for you to find out if you qualify for, and the financial implications of accepting, ill-health retirement.

7.4 Terminal illness

If you are suffering from a terminal illness, we will endeavour as far as possible to accommodate your wishes. This includes discussion of the possibility of ill-health retirement.

While we will support employees who wish to continue working, if you have been diagnosed with a terminal illness, you should bear in mind that there may come a time when you will be unable to continue working. In this case, your line manager will discuss the options with you under stage 3 of the sickness absence management procedure.

If you have a terminal illness and choose to continue working, you should bear in mind that while there is no obligation to inform the organisation or any colleagues about your illness, it is normally better to do so to ensure that you receive adequate support.

8. Employee assistance programme

Help and support is available through our employee assistance programme (EAP). You can use our EAP to speak to an independent adviser on a confidential basis about any issue that is troubling you.

To Access your EAP

Online: www.my-eap.com Login: newforestwell

Tel: 0800 1116 387

From Abroad: +44 845 330 5132

For Manager Support: 0800 1116 385 (9am - 6pm Mon- Fri)

9. Unauthorised absence

If you fail to attend work without permission, or you do not comply with the sickness absence reporting procedure or the evidential requirements set out in this policy, this will be treated as a disciplinary offence and dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

10. Data protection

When implementing this policy, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. In particular, we will record only the personal information required and keep the information only for as long as necessary.

Sickness absence management procedure

The following sickness absence management procedure applies to employees who are absent on sick leave for 28 continuous days or more.

The stages set out in this policy are guidelines only. There are limited circumstances in which it will be appropriate for an employee to skip straight to a stage 3 final formal review meeting (see below). For example, this could be the case where the medical advice is that you will never be able to return to work. When applying the trigger points for each stage of the procedure, the special rules that apply to pregnancy and disability (see below) will be taken into account. There are also special considerations when ill-health retirement is a possibility or if you have been diagnosed with a terminal illness (see below).

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting or hearing under this procedure, we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that you and your representative have access to the necessary technology for participating. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

If you are able to return to work and that means we are able to end the procedure, you will be made aware that any further absence that hits the trigger within 12 months will mean that you would be put back on the formal process at the step it ended at.

Stage 1

Stage 1 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a stage 1 formal review meeting is:

- 28 calendar days sickness absence; or
- as soon as we have received confirmation that you will be absent for at least 28 calendar days or more (for example, a fit note has signed you off for that period).

Stage 1 - Invitation to formal review meeting

If you reach a stage 1 trigger point, you will be invited in writing to a stage 1 formal review meeting. You will usually be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting, to allow you to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany you.

You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with you. If your chosen companion is not a fellow employee, we reserve the right to check their credentials as an accredited trade union representative.

We will give you a copy of all documents relevant to your case in advance of the formal review meeting, and you will be invited to submit any further evidence that you consider to be relevant.

Stage 1 - The formal review meeting

The stage 1 formal review meeting will be conducted by your line manager. HR is not normally present at this stage. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss:

- how you are doing and the likely length of your ongoing absence, bearing in mind the advice in your fit note and/or any other medical report;
- whether further medical advice is necessary;
- whether there is anything that we can do to facilitate your return to work (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, or workplace adaptations) and any medical advice that you have received about this;
- your sick pay entitlement (and, if applicable, the possibility of making a claim under a permanent health insurance scheme, or similar insurance scheme); and
- the timescale for a follow-up review meeting.

At the meeting, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the issues.

Stage 1 - The outcome

The outcome will be confirmed to you in writing as soon as possible and usually within seven working days after the formal review meeting.

The letter will include details of any next steps that have been agreed to help you return to work, as well as any support that we will offer you and the timescale for a follow-up review meeting under this process.

Stage 2

Stage 2 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a stage 2 formal review meeting is:

- three months sickness absence; or
- as soon as we have received confirmation that you will be absent for three months or more (for example, a fit note has signed you off for that period).

A formal review will take place under Stage 2 every at least every three months as a minimum, but depending on circumstances, the Council may choose to set more regular or earlier review dates. For example, it may be appropriate to hold a stage 2 meeting earlier if it is to discuss immediate follow-up from the stage 1 meeting, or following any further medical appointments that you have had.

Only by exception would we hold a Step 2 meeting without first having either a formal Step 1 meeting or other review meetings with you to understand your absence.

Stage 2 - Invitation to formal review meeting

If you reach a stage 2 trigger point, you will be invited in writing to a stage 2 formal review meeting. You will usually be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting, to allow you to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany you.

You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with you. If your chosen companion is not a fellow employee, we reserve the right to check their credentials as an accredited trade union representative.

We will give you a copy of all documents relevant to your case in advance of the formal review meeting, and you will be invited to submit any further evidence that you consider to be relevant.

Stage 2 - The formal review meeting

The stage 2 formal review meeting will be conducted by your line manager and a HR representative will also be present. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss:

- how you are doing and the likely length of your ongoing absence, bearing in mind the advice in your fit note and/or any other medical report;
- whether further medical advice is necessary;
- whether there is anything further that we can do to facilitate your return to work (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, workplace adaptations, temporary redeployment) and any medical advice that you have received about this;
- the possibility of permanent redeployment or dismissal [including ill-health retirement] if it appears that you will be unable to remain in your role;
- your sick pay entitlement (and, if applicable, the possibility of making a claim under a permanent health insurance scheme, or similar insurance scheme); and
- the timescale for a follow-up review meeting.

At the meeting, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the issues.

Stage 2 - The outcome

The outcome will be confirmed to you in writing as soon as possible and usually within seven working days after the formal review meeting.

The letter will include details of any next steps that have been agreed to help you return to work, as well as any support that we will offer and the timescale for a follow-up review meeting under this process.

Stage 3

Stage 3 - Trigger point

The trigger point for a stage 3 final formal review meeting is:

- 6 continuous months sickness absence;
- as soon as we have received confirmation that you will be absent for at least 6 continuous months or more (for example, a fit note has signed you off for that period);
- it is clear from medical advice that you are unable to return to your role in the foreseeable future; or
- all reasonable steps to assist you in returning to work (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, workplace adaptations, temporary redeployment) have been exhausted.

Stage 3 - Invitation to final formal review meeting

If you reach a stage 3 trigger point, you will be invited in writing to a stage 3 final formal review meeting. You will usually be given at least ten days' notice of the meeting, to allow you to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany you.

You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official. The responsibility for finding a companion rests with you. If your chosen companion is not a fellow employee, we reserve the right to check their credentials as an accredited trade union representative.

We will give you a copy of all documents relevant to your case in advance of the formal review meeting, and you will be invited to submit any further evidence that you consider to be relevant.

Only by exception would we hold a Stage 3 meeting with you without having followed Stage 1 and 2 of the formal process.

Stage 3 - The formal review meeting

The stage 3 final formal review meeting will be conducted by a Service Manager or above who has not previously been involved in the case, accompanied by an HR Advisor. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union official.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss:

- matters considered at the first and second stage of the process;
- the length of your absence and the likely length of your future absence;
- current medical advice on your condition;
- if applicable, the possibility of ill-health retirement or making a claim under a permanent health insurance scheme, or similar insurance scheme;
- any further reasonable adjustments that could be made to enable you to return to work within a reasonable timeframe;

- the effect of your continued absence on your colleagues and department; and
- the possibility of you being dismissed by reason of capability.

At the meeting, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the issues and any proposal to dismiss you.

Stage 3 - The outcome

The outcome will be confirmed to you in writing as soon as possible and usually within seven working days after the formal review meeting.

The outcome of the meeting may be a decision:

- for you to remain on sick leave until you have recovered (typically where an approximate return-to-work date can be identified);
- to make adjustments to your job;
- to redeploy you with your agreement;
- to issue you with a warning that your continued absence is unsatisfactory; or
- to dismiss you.

Appeal

If you are given a sanction or are dismissed under this procedure you have the right of appeal. The appeal should be sent in writing to the Service Manager HR and set out the grounds on which you believe that the decision was flawed or unfair.

You should lodge your appeal within five working days of receiving written confirmation of the sanction imposed on you by the council.

An appeal hearing will be convened at least 10 working days, and within a reasonable period, after the appeal is lodged. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay.

You are entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official.

If the appeal is against a sanction other than dismissal then the appeal may be heard by another Service Manager, accompanied by a member of the HR Advisory team.

If the appeal is against your dismissal, then the appeal hearing will be chaired by a Strategic Director who is not responsible for the area that you worked within, who will be accompanied by a member of the HR Advisory Team. Notes of the meeting must be taken.

At the hearing, the decision to impose the sanction will be reviewed and you will be entitled to make representations about the appropriateness of that decision.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to you in writing, within 5 working days, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

If the result of the appeal is that a decision to dismiss you is overturned, you will be reinstated with immediate effect. You will be reimbursed in full for any wages lost since your dismissal.

Unauthorised Absence

If you fail to attend work without permission, or you do not comply with the sickness absence reporting procedure or the evidential requirement set out in this policy, this will be treated as a disciplinary offence and dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure.

In this situation your pay will be suspended, and this will be recorded as Absent without Permission on the HR System.