

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

6 February 2025

Absence Management Policy and Procedure (Human Resources)

**Report of: Adele Taylor, Interim Executive Director Resources and
S151 Officer**

Report Reference No: CPC/49/24-25

**Ward(s) Affected: Not applicable
For Decision**

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to outline and seek approval of the Council's Absence Management Policy and Procedure.

Executive Summary

- 2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Absence Management Policy and Procedure, in line with Chapter 2, Part 5, paragraph 2.3 of the Council's Constitution requiring the approval of the Corporate Policy Committee for the adoption of HR Policies.
- 3 The amended Absence Management Policy and Procedure aims to provide an understanding of what will happen when someone is too ill to work, by setting out the Council's approach to reporting and managing sickness absence.
- 4 Key updates and new elements of the policies listed above are outlined in section 7 of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the changes to the Absence Management Policy and Procedure.

Background

- 5 This is an existing policy which has been amended. The policy aims to provide an understanding of what will happen when an employee is too ill to work, by setting out the Council's approach to reporting and managing sickness absence. In implementing this policy and procedure the Council aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of our operational needs with a persons need to take time off work due to ill health.
- 6 Changes have been made to the Absence Management Policy and Procedure, in particular, the procedures for managing short and long-term absence have been combined. This will make the process more flexible, easier to follow, and will better support those suffering from ill health.
- 7 Another significant change is that specific reference to written 'Improvement Notices' throughout the procedure has been removed in favour of a more supportive explanation has been included at each stage.
- 8 All the main changes to the Absence Management Policy and Procedure are set out below.
 - a) Linked to the updated Leave and Time Off Policy in relation to health-related appointments and time off for surgery.
 - b) Expanded the section on 'special cases' to include time off in relation to transitioning procedures or treatment.
 - c) Updated section on sickness and annual leave in line with latest legal advice.
 - d) Added that where a meeting/hearing needs to be rearranged, less notice may be given, but employees will usually be given at least 3 working days' notice of a formal absence review meeting and at least 5 working days' notice for an absence hearing.
 - e) Combined the layout of the procedure for managing short and long-term sickness absence, so that the process is easier to follow and understand, and to better support employees who are experiencing ill health.
 - f) Removed specific reference to written 'Improvement Notices' throughout the procedure – instead, an explanation has been included at each stage.
 - g) Included a detailed section on the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Consultation and Engagement

- 9 CLT and the Council's recognised trade unions and relevant internal stakeholders have been consulted in relation to the updated policy and procedure on managing absence.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 10 The changes made to the Absence Management Policy and Procedure will help to clarify the procedure for managing short and long-term absence due to ill health.

Other Options Considered

- 11 The Absence Management Policy and Procedure could have retained separate processes for short and long-term absence. Best practice and legal advice led to combining both processes to make the process easier to follow, which may help the council to manage absence rates.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 12 Under the Council's Constitution, Chapter 2, Part 5, the Corporate Policy Committee has responsibility for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Health and Safety matters affecting the Council; including adopting HR policies and practices and assurance in relation to staffing related matters.
- 13 The amended Absence Management Policy and Procedure has been updated in line with best practice and provides a clear and supportive process for employees and management to follow. This policy also seeks to ensure that the Council adheres to the relevant legislation and national pay and conditions in dealing with sickness absence; The Employment Rights Act 1996, national agreements on pay and conditions (NJC and JNC) for local government workers, and the Equality Act 2010, particularly concerning disabilities.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 14 There are no direct financial implications associated with approving the updated Absence Management Policy and Procedure, and there is no impact on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Policy

- 15 Any decisions relating to absence management should comply with the policies in place at the time.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 16 There are no direct equality implications associated with approving the Absence Management Policy and Procedure.

Human Resources

- 17 Associated policies and guidance documents will be reviewed and updated accordingly to ensure that they complement the Absence Management Policy and Procedure.
- 18 The Absence Management Policy and Procedure will help to clarify the Council's expectations on staff and in turn what they can expect from the Council as their employer.

Risk Management

- 19 The Absence Management Policy and Procedure had been amended in line with the current legislation and best practice. This provides support for employees who are absent from work and for their subsequent return as it clarifies the Council's expectations on staff and in turn what they can expect from the Council as their employer.
- 20 It also helps to protect the council from potential legal challenge in the management of employee sickness absence.

Rural Communities

- 21 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 22 There are no direct implications for children and young people.

Public Health

- 23 There are no direct implications for public health.

Climate Change

- 24 There are no direct implications on climate change.

Access to Information

Contact Officer:	Sara Duncalf, Head of HR Email: sara.duncalf@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Draft Absence Management Policy and Procedure
Background Papers:	None

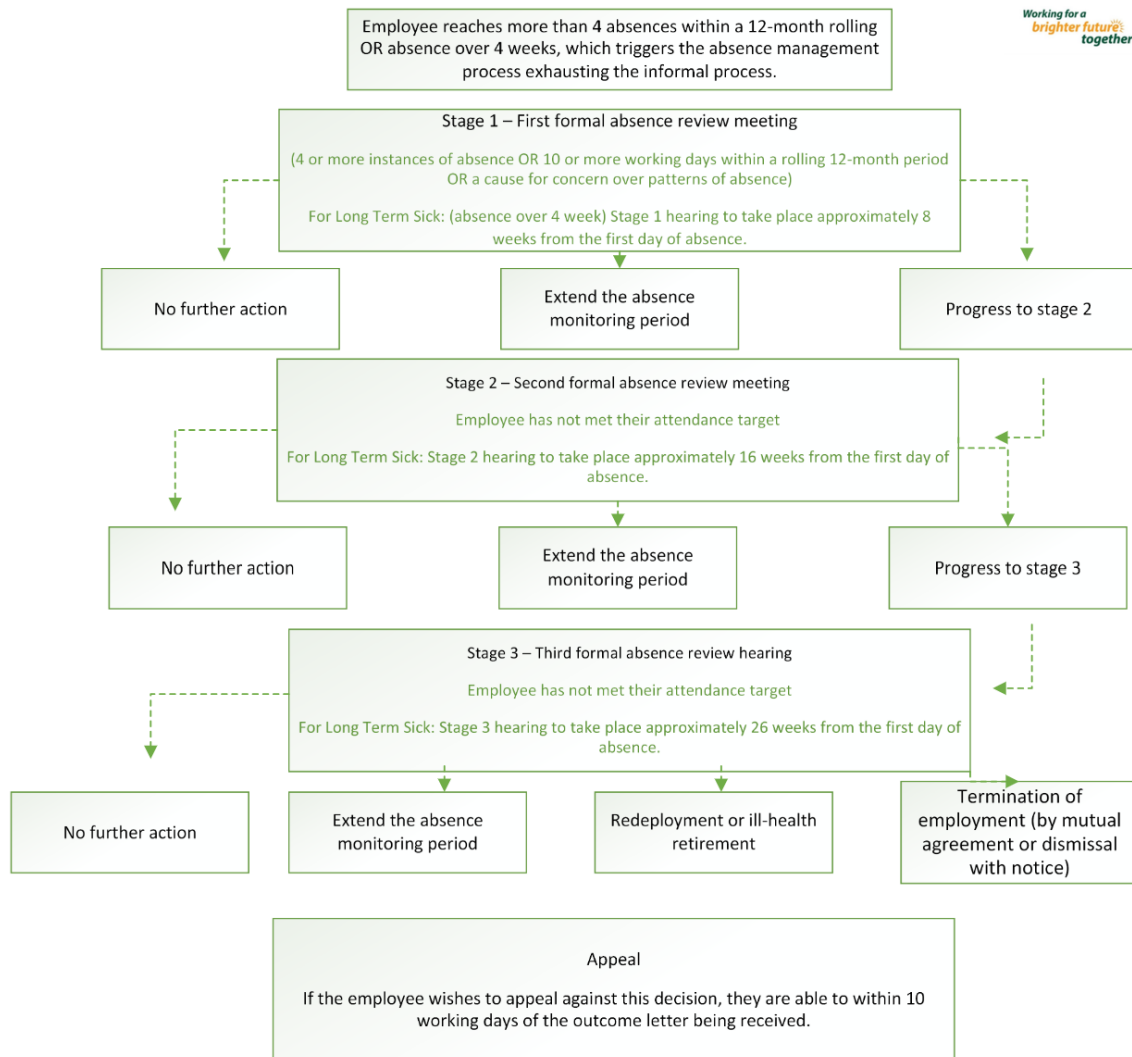
Absence Management Policy and Procedure

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Absence management flow chart



Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all employees of Cheshire East Borough Council except school/academy-based employees. There are separate policies and procedures for school and academy employees. It does not apply to agency workers, self-employed contractors or volunteers.

This policy and procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

Policy statement

Our aim is to create, support and sustain a healthy workplace for all our employees. We understand that there will be times when you are unable to work due to illness and we are committed to treating you fairly and sympathetically. Where you are not able to work, we will support you in improving your attendance levels and assist with your rehabilitation and, if appropriate, your eventual return to work. This policy helps you to understand what will happen when you are too ill to work by setting out our approach in reporting and managing sickness absence.

This policy also seeks to ensure that we adhere to the relevant legislation and national pay and conditions in dealing with sickness absence, so it is important that you follow this procedure. The Employment Rights Act 1996 and national agreements on pay and conditions (NJC and JNC) for local government workers primarily govern this in relation to sick pay, while the Equality Act 2010 requires employers to avoid discrimination, particularly concerning disabilities. We must also comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, ensuring that the workplace does not contribute to employee illness.

Reporting sickness absence

If you are too ill to work, you need to call your manager – or another designated manager – no later than your normal start time. It is important that you make the call yourself where possible, and you will need to let us know:

- why you are absent and how long you expect to be off work;
- what action you are taking, for example, an appointment to see the GP; and
- if appropriate, details of any urgent or outstanding work that needs to be picked up during your absence.

Contact with your manager should be made by a telephone call or MS Teams call. Texts, emails, messages on social media and messages from another person are not acceptable means of notification. There may be circumstances where you are unable to make the call yourself, for example, being admitted to hospital, so your manager should be contacted by a family member on your behalf.

If you become unwell during a period of annual leave and would otherwise be reporting as unfit to work, you should still comply with the absence reporting procedures.

Stress or stress-related mental health issues

If you report that the reason for absence is stress or a stress-related mental health issue or this reason is stated on your fit note, it is important for your health and wellbeing that contact is established with your manager as soon as possible so your manager can make the necessary referral to occupational health to consider what support and/or adjustments can be provided (see section on [occupational health referral and medical examinations](#)).

A stress risk assessment will also be arranged and undertaken in accordance with the Health and Safety Stress Guidance: [Stress management \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#) for when you are well enough to participate and, if applicable, before you return to work.

Recording sickness absence

Your manager will arrange for any sickness absence to be recorded into the council's electronic pay system (Unit4). Guidance is available on Centranet: [Record a sickness absence and return to work \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#).

If your absence relates to an accident or incident that occurred during the course of your work, the accident or incident must also be recorded using the council's electronic accident reporting system (PRIME) and within 4 days of it occurring. Guidance is available on Centranet: [Prime: accident reporting system \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#).

Unauthorised absence will also be noted by your manager, examples of which include:

- non-compliance with the relevant absence reporting procedure;
- leaving the workplace without permission and/or not working during agreed working hours (for example, logged off whilst 'working' from home);
- sickness absence lasting more than 7 calendar days for which no medical evidence has been provided within 10 working days of the absence; and
- failure to attend work after permission for time off has been refused, for example, unauthorised holidays.

Cases of unauthorised absence will be dealt with under the council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure: [Disciplinary \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#).

Evidence of sickness absence

Self-certification

If you are absent for 7 calendar days or less, you can self-certify your absence. This means informing your manager that you are not well enough to work as outlined previously (see [reporting sickness absence](#)). You are also required to declare that

you are unfit for work by signing a self-certification form. This should be completed as part of your return-to-work interview with your manager.

Statement of fitness for work (fit note)

If you are absent for more than 7 calendar days (including non-working days and weekends), you must provide your manager with a fit note (statement of fitness for work) as soon as possible.

The fit note can state either that you "may be fit for work" or that you are "not fit for work". On the fit note, the healthcare professional may also suggest a phased return to work, altered hours, amended duties or workplace adaptations. Your manager will take the recommendations in the fit note seriously and give fair consideration, in consultation with you and Human Resources, as to whether any of the suggestions can be accommodated.

More guidance on fit notes is available on Centranet: [Take time off for sickness \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk).

Sick pay scheme

The council operates a contractual sick pay scheme that is more generous than statutory sick pay (SSP). Your entitlement to contractual sick pay is set out in the Sick Pay Scheme: [Sick pay and entitlements \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk).

Where the scheme is being abused, for example, failing to report absences, not providing fit notes, dishonesty about working elsewhere whilst in receipt of sick pay or failing to engage with the absence management process, including unreasonable refusal to attend occupational health appointments, it may lead to the loss or suspension of sick pay or disciplinary action under the council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (available on [Centranet](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk)).

Health-related appointments, time off for surgery and fertility treatment

The council's [Leave and Time Off Policy](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk) allows 3 hours to be credited to your flexi/time recording for fixed/non-routine appointments such as hospital appointments or NHS physiotherapy. If the appointment lasts longer than the 3 hours allowance, the time off will be recorded as sick leave in accordance with this policy.

No time will be credited for routine medical appointments, such as GP, dentist and optician appointments. These appointments should be arranged outside of your normal working hours or at times that will cause minimum disruption. However, there are some exceptions, for example, ante-natal care, cervical smear tests, mammograms and prostate gland tests. Any exceptions or if further advice is needed, your line manager should seek advice from Human Resources.

For full and up-to-date details about time off for health-related appointments, including surgery (emergency, elective and cosmetic) and fertility treatment, please refer to the Leave and Time Off Policy: [Leave and time off \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk).

Return to work interview

If you have been absent on sick leave, your manager will arrange to meet with you to conduct a return-to-work interview – usually within two days of your return to work. The purpose of the interview is primarily to provide you with an opportunity to discuss the reason for your absence and whether you need any support.

Your manager may also inform you about any concerns regarding your absence record and if the need for formal action under the absence management procedure is required.

More information about the return-to-work interview is available on Centranet: [Record a sickness absence and return to work \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk).

Keeping in contact during sickness absence

Your manager will be in touch with you and maintain reasonable contact with you during your sickness absence – whether short or long-term – to discuss your health and wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and, if appropriate, any of your work-related matters. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and support and should include referral to occupational health where a referral has not already been arranged.

During longer-term absences, your manager will agree with you the method and frequency of contact. However, if you have any concerns, you should contact your manager at any point during your sickness absence.

Special cases

Pregnancy-related absences

If you are pregnant and are absent from work for a pregnancy-related illness, your sickness absence will not be included in the triggers for formal action under the sickness absence management procedure.

Disability

If you have a disability, you do not have to tell us. However, we would encourage you to let us know so that your manager can support you, for example, by making reasonable adjustments to your workplace, aspects of your role, working practices and/or our sickness absence management procedure. If your sickness absence is due to a disability, please contact your manager to discuss potential reasonable adjustments that may help you return to work or support you after you have returned to work. We may need to discuss your needs with you and your medical adviser/occupational health to help us get the right support in place.

Transitioning

If you require time off for transitioning procedures or treatment, your absence will be treated as sickness absence in accordance with this policy and procedure. However, the sickness absence related solely to the transition, i.e. time off for procedures or treatment, should be discounted from the triggers and the monitoring of sickness absence.

If you are seeking to take time off for transitioning procedures or treatment, we may ask you to provide evidence of this. Suitable evidence may include a letter, email or appointment card from the treatment provider. More information and support about transitioning is available on Centranet: [Transitioning at work](#).

Sickness and annual leave

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement during any period of long-term sickness absence. In these circumstances, if you are not able to take your full entitlement due to taking sick leave, you are entitled to carry over up to 4 weeks of untaken statutory leave. Any holiday that is carried over as a result of sick leave must be taken within 18 months from the end of the holiday year in which it was originally accrued.

If employment is terminated, any remaining annual leave entitlement (including bank holidays occurring and untaken during the holiday year in which your employment ends) will be paid in your final salary payment.

More guidance on how to manage sickness and annual leave is available on Centranet: [Absence management \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#).

Occupational health referrals and medical examinations

We will usually require you to attend a medical examination by our occupational health provider and/or a doctor nominated by us (at our expense) to obtain advice on your fitness for work and any potential reasonable adjustments to support you at work. Your manager should discuss the reasons for the referral with you and gain your consent to the referral.

You will be asked to agree that any report produced in connection with any such examination may be disclosed to us and that we may discuss the contents of the report with Human Resources and the relevant doctor. If you do not agree to a referral to occupational health, fail to attend occupational health/medical appointments and/or you object to medical reports being disclosed, your manager may inform you that a decision relating to your employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

More information about the council's occupational health provider, including a toolkit on referrals for managers, is available on Centranet: [Make an Occupational Health referral \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#).

Absence management procedure

Informal stage

As soon as your manager is aware that you are having persistent, short-term absences or you are absent from work on a long-term basis (absent for more than four weeks), your manager should hold an informal discussion with you. This should take place in advance of formal proceedings to discuss your absence/s that are causing concern, and to allow your manager to explain the formal process of managing your absence. Your manager should also continue to conduct informal meetings after every period of absence (see section on [Return to Work Interview](#))

and at least every month for long-term continuous absence cases (see section on [Keeping in Contact during Sickness Absence](#)).

Formal absence review meetings and hearing

Absence review meetings will usually be conducted by your line manager, who will act as the 'Review Manager'. The Review Manager will put in writing any concerns about your absence and why a formal absence review meeting or hearing is required.

Following initial informal discussions with you about your sickness absence, the formal process will consist of the following meetings:

- A first formal absence review meeting (Stage 1)
- A second formal absence review meeting (Stage 2)
- A formal hearing (Stage 3)

The absence hearing will be chaired by a senior manager with the necessary delegated authority (to dismiss).

You will usually be given at least 5 working days written notice of a formal absence review meeting and at least 10 working days' notice for an absence hearing to allow you to prepare and to arrange for a companion to accompany you if required.

If you are unable to attend a meeting, you should inform the Review Manager immediately, and an alternative time will usually be arranged. Where a meeting or hearing needs to be rearranged, less notice may be given than outlined above, but you will usually be given at least 3 working days' notice of a formal absence review meeting and at least 5 working days' notice for an absence hearing. Where you fail to attend meetings without good reason, your occupational sick pay may be withheld, and a review meeting may be held in your absence.

Confirmation of any decision made at the meeting, the reasons for it, and the right of appeal, where relevant, will be given to you in writing usually within 10 working days of the meeting.

Right to be accompanied

You have the right to be accompanied to formal meetings or appeals. Your companion may be a Cheshire East Council work colleague, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union. Their details must be given to the manager conducting the meeting, and in good time before the meeting takes place. If your companion is unavailable to attend any meeting or hearing at the time scheduled and will not be available for more than 5 working days, we may ask you to choose an alternative companion.

Stage 1 – First formal absence review meeting

If you meet any of the following absence triggers or in cases of long-term sickness absence over 4 weeks, a formal absence review meeting will be arranged with you:

- 4 or more instances of absence, regardless of length, in a rolling 12-month period;
- 10 or more working days in a rolling 12-month period (pro rata for part time employees – see guidance available on [Centranet](#)); or
- cause for concern over patterns of absence, for example, repeated absence on a particular day of the week or periods of absence prior to and/or immediately following periods of annual leave.

In the case of continuous long-term sickness absence, this formal meeting will usually take place from approximately 8 weeks from your first day of absence. However, in certain circumstances, the meeting may take place at an earlier or later time following a discussion with you and/or occupational health as the timing of the meeting may depend on your medical condition/circumstances.

The purpose of this meeting – whether short or long-term absence – is to discuss your absence/s that have given cause for concern, establish what, if any, adjustments and/or support we can put in place to improve your attendance levels or to facilitate a return to work. For long-term absences, the meeting will also seek to determine how long the absence is likely to last. The meeting will be conducted in line with the arrangements set out previously in [absence review meetings](#) and the [right to be accompanied at meetings](#).

Following the meeting, the Review Manager will set out in writing what has been discussed and agreed, including what further action needs to be taken. The letter will also reiterate that your attendance has fallen below the required standards, and you may progress to the next stage of the procedure.

In the case of short-term absence, it may include setting an absence monitoring period explaining the nature of the improvement that is required in your attendance, i.e. the minimum level of attendance that will be required to avoid triggering the next stage of the procedure, and the timescale for making these improvements. After this monitoring period (or sooner if it becomes clear that the targets for improvement cannot be reached during the monitoring period), the Review Manager will inform you of the outcome, and this will also be confirmed in writing. Possible outcomes may include:

- no further action at this point;
- extending the absence monitoring period; or
- informing you that you have not met the attendance target set during the monitoring period and inviting you to a stage 2 absence review meeting.

Stage 2 – Second formal absence review meeting

Depending on the matters discussed at the first stage of this procedure, a second formal absence review meeting may be necessary where:

- you have not met the attendance target set or it becomes clear that the target for improvement cannot be reached during the monitoring period;

- your period of long-term sickness absence continues; or
- you have had previous long-term sickness absence and have not been able to remain in work.

In the case of continuous long-term sickness absence, this formal meeting will usually take place from approximately 16 weeks from your first day of absence. However, in certain circumstances, the meeting may take place at an earlier or later time following a discussion with you and/or occupational health as the timing of the meeting may depend on your medical condition/circumstances.

The purpose of this meeting – whether short or long-term absence – is to discuss your absence/s that are continuing to give cause for concern, review what, if any, adjustments and/or support is in place to improve your attendance levels or to facilitate a return to work, including reviewing occupational health report/s, if applicable. The meeting will be conducted in line with the arrangements set out previously in [absence review meetings](#) and the [right to be accompanied at meetings](#).

Following the meeting, the Review Manager will set out in writing what has been discussed and agreed, including what further action needs to be taken. The letter will also reiterate that your attendance has fallen below the required standards, and may, depending on steps we have already taken, include warning you that you are at risk of dismissal.

In the case of short-term absence, it may include setting another absence monitoring period explaining the nature of the improvement that is required in your attendance, i.e. the minimum level of attendance that will be required to avoid triggering the next stage of the procedure, and the timescale for making these improvements. After this monitoring period (or sooner if it becomes clear that the targets for improvement cannot be reached during the monitoring period), the Review Manager will inform you of the outcome, and this will also be confirmed in writing. Possible outcomes at this stage may include:

- no further action at this point;
- extending the absence monitoring period; or
- informing you that you have not met the attendance target set during the monitoring period and inviting you to a stage 3 absence hearing where an outcome of this could be terminating your employment.

Stage 3 – Absence hearing

Where you have been warned that you are at risk of dismissal following previous formal absence review meetings, an absence hearing may be necessary where:

- you have not met the improvements target set or it becomes clear that the target for improvement cannot be reached during the monitoring period;
- it is clear from medical advice that you are not fit to return to your role in the foreseeable future or within an acceptable timescale, and all reasonable steps to assist you in returning to work have been exhausted;

- your absence levels have failed to adequately improve during earlier stages of this procedure, and this can no longer be sustained by the council/service; or
- you have had previous long-term sickness absence and have not been able to remain in work.

In the case of a continuous long-term sickness absence, the hearing should normally take place from approximately 26 weeks from your first day of absence. However, in certain circumstances, the hearing may take place at an earlier or later time as it may depend on your medical condition/circumstances. The Review Manager will continue to support you, and to seek guidance from Human Resources and occupational health as appropriate.

The purpose of the hearing is to review the actions taken to date, discuss why those have not worked, reasonable adjustments, consider updated medical evidence/advice, and consider any further matters you wish to raise. Where you remain on long-term sickness absence, whether there have been any changes since the last meeting, including whether there is a reasonable prospect of a return to work. The hearing will be conducted in line with the arrangements set out previously in [absence review meetings](#) and the [right to be accompanied at meetings](#).

The following are potential outcomes of the hearing:

- no further action at this point;
- extending the absence monitoring period;
- redeployment or ill-health retirement; or
- terminating your employment (by mutual agreement or dismissal with notice).

Where a decision is made to terminate your employment, you will be provided with reasons for dismissal in writing, including the date on which your employment will terminate and right of appeal.

Managing episodes of short and long-term absences

Where an episode of poor attendance is under review and is being managed but the absence/s changes from being a short-term to a long-term absence or vice versa, the Review Manager should seek advice from Human Resources to consider what is appropriate and reasonable, and how best to proceed through the stages within the process.

Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of any decision to progress your absence management to the next stage of the procedure (i.e. a decision to move to Stage 2 or Stage 3 or the termination of your employment), you have a right of appeal. You should appeal in writing within 10 working days of receipt of an outcome letter. Your appeal should be returned to the Review Manager, or the Executive Director when appealing against dismissal. Your appeal should set out the grounds on which you

believe that the decision was flawed or unfair. If your grounds of appeal are unclear, we may ask you to clarify these before we hold an appeal hearing.

Following receipt of your appeal, an appeal hearing will take place no less than 30 working days following the receipt of your appeal. However, any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting if further investigation is required.

Your Head of Service will nominate a manager who has not been previously involved in the case to act as the Appeal Manager. Depending on the circumstances, an appeal hearing may be a complete rehearing of the matter or a review of the original decision.

Appeals against dismissal will be dealt with impartially and heard by the Staffing Appeals Sub-Committee (three Councillors, established on an ad hoc basis in consultation with the Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee, in accordance with Council Constitution). The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to you in writing, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached.

The decision by the Appeal Manager or Staffing Appeals Sub-Committee (as appropriate) will be final. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Help and support is available through our employee assistance programme (EAP). You can use our EAP to speak to an independent adviser about any issue that is troubling you. The service is confidential and completely free to use. You can access the EAP as follows:

- By phone: 0800 111 6387 (free 24/7 helpline)
- Online: www.my-eap.com/access and log-in using organisation code 'Cheshirewell'
- Live webchat support: Monday – Friday 8-6.30pm and Saturday 8-5pm
www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/corporate-health-services/webchat/

More information is also available about the EAP on Centranet: [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\) \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](http://cheshireeast.gov.uk/EmployeeAssistanceProgramme(EAP)).

Data protection

The council processes personal data, including information about your health, lawfully and in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. We recognise that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner. Inappropriate access or disclosure of your data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the council's Data Breach Procedure immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure.

Any information provided to the council's occupational health provider and the EAP provider is treated in the strictest confidence and specific details about your condition will not be made available to the council unless you provide your informed consent.

Equality

The council is committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment. You (and any job applicants) will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or caring responsibility. This means that the application of the policy and procedure may need to be adjusted to cater for the specific needs of an individual including the provision of information in alternative formats where necessary.

Monitoring and review

The council will monitor this policy and procedure to ensure that it is operating fairly, consistently and effectively. The policy and procedure will also be reviewed in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation.

Prepared by: HR Operations

Date: June 2019

Revised: December 2019

Revised: February 2024

Last reviewed: January 2025

Revisions:

- (1) Linked to the updated Leave and Time Off Policy in relation to health-related appointments and time off for surgery.
- (2) Expanded the section on 'special cases' to include time off in relation to transitioning procedures or treatment.
- (3) Updated section on sickness and annual leave in line with latest legal advice.
- (4) Added that where a meeting/hearing needs to be rearranged, less notice may be given, but employees will usually be given at least 3 working days' notice of a formal absence review meeting and at least 5 working days' notice for an absence hearing.
- (5) Combined the layout of the procedure for managing short and long-term sickness absence, so that the process is easier to follow and understand, and to better support employees who are experiencing ill health.
- (6) Removed specific reference to written 'Improvement Notices' throughout the procedure – instead, an explanation has been included at each stage.
- (7) Included a detailed section on the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).