

Attendance and Wellbeing at Work Policy

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Human Resources

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1. Purpose Statement

1.1

The purpose of this policy is to set out how BCP Council will review and manage absence across the organisation and the measures that will be put in place to support colleagues when they are absent from work with an illness. It aims to provide a fair and consistent approach, whilst at the same time being flexible enough to adapt to individual circumstances.

1.2

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Council may amend it at any time.

- 1.3 The focus is to support the Health and Wellbeing (H & WB) of colleagues and to encourage them to adopt and pursue healthy lifestyle options that can contribute to their overall wellbeing, preventing issues arising that have an adverse effect on attendance at work, minimising the potential impact on council services.

2. Who the policy applies to

- 2.1 The policy applies to all colleagues and includes anyone on a permanent or fixed term contract after they have successfully completed their probationary period. Colleagues on probation will be monitored during their probationary period and issues will be addressed within that process. [View probationary policy.](#)

3. This policy replaces

- 3.1 This policy replaces previous Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole absence policies and procedures.

4. Approval process

- 4.1 The terms of this policy have been agreed in conjunction with the trade unions and approved by the Directors Strategy Group

5. Links to Council Strategies

- 5.1 This policy supports the People Strategy. During the preparation of this policy document due consideration has been given to the following Key Council Strategies:
- Corporate Plan
 - People Strategy
 - Workforce Strategy
 - Health & Wellbeing Strategy (currently being drafted)
 - Equality & Diversity

6. The Policy

- 6.1. **Principles** BCP Council understands there will be times when colleagues can't come to work – whether because they are ill or something unexpected has happened. The council wants to support colleagues' return to work as soon as possible and to help them manage their health and wellbeing. However, the council also needs to review and manage absence, preventing issues arising that may have an adverse effect on attendance and service delivery.

This policy sets out the approach to managing absence and supporting H & WB. There is also a [Frequent Sickness Absence Procedure](#) which outlines the steps the council will follow to manage and support short-term absence, and where a colleague is off sick for a prolonged period (four weeks or

more) the steps the council will take to support and manage this are set out in the [Long Term Sickness Absence Procedure](#).

All colleagues are contractually required to attend work as per their contract of employment and BCP Council reviews attendance data to monitor this. Should attendance fall below the standards expected, Attendance Review Meetings ([frequent absence](#) or [long term](#)) will take place, where the manager will meet with the colleague to discuss concerns and discuss what support may be appropriate to assist the colleague achieve a satisfactory level of attendance.

When attendance does not, or cannot improve, and management has made a significant effort to support the colleague this policy will be used to determine if the colleague's employment should continue. Please be assured that all alternative options will be explored and discussed prior to this stage.

Colleagues' engagement with this policy will reduce the need for formal management. It is important to be aware that if there is a concern that absence may not be related to sickness, as claimed, other appropriate procedures will be followed. In these circumstances managers should seek advice from HR.

6.2 Key Points:

6.2.1 Absence reporting procedure

Colleagues have a contractual obligation to follow the correct Absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may affect eligibility to sick pay and could result in disciplinary action. Where a Service area has its own reporting procedures colleagues should be made aware of them.

DAY 1	DAY 4	DAY 8
Initial Contact	Keeping in Contact	Provide a Fit Note

Further details of the [absence reporting procedures](#) can be found on the BCP Intranet.

Colleagues are required to contact their manager regarding their absence, however, should a manager not hear from a colleague during the absence, they will try to contact the colleague by phone, or by making a home visit.

If the manager is unable to contact the colleague and the colleague has failed to make contact the disciplinary procedure may be initiated.

A colleague who receives paid sickness absence and is subsequently found not to have been ill, may be subject to disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Procedure which may result in dismissal.

6.2.2 Sick pay

Details of [Sick Pay Entitlement](#) and [Sick Pay Conditions](#) can be found on the BCP intranet.

6.2.3 Occupational health

Colleagues may be invited to attend an appointment with Occupational Health to identify support required to facilitate a return to work and reasonable adjustments for consideration.

There is more information about [reasonable adjustments](#) and the Occupational Health Service on the intranet: see [Managing Absence](#).

6.2.4 Wellbeing support

Colleagues are encouraged to utilise the wellbeing support available and can access Health Assured, our Employee Assistance Programme and other wellbeing support that is available. For full details of the support available see the [Wellbeing](#) pages on the intranet.

Managers should remember that employees who are away from work may not have access to the Intranet, and so should check to make sure employees are aware of and able to access the support including Health Assured, our Employee Assistance Programme.

[Manager guidance on the EAP](#) includes “Active Care” which is a one day intervention to support colleagues absent with any stress related illness, where managers can refer colleagues straight away, with their consent, to the EAP for a consultation and to receive recommendations.

Managers can also refer colleagues, with their consent, to the EAP who will then contact the colleague to explain support options, gain further information and implement and applicable support.

[Referrals](#) can also be made to the [Here For Each Other wellbeing service](#) which includes wellbeing physiotherapy, access to psychological therapists, clinical psychologists and rapid referral pathways to other services, such as Steps 2 Wellbeing.

6.2.5 Phased return

Colleagues returning to work after an extended absence may on medical advice need a phased return to re-assimilate to the workplace. Please refer to the [Phased Return to Work Policy](#), [Phased Return to Work Procedure](#) and [Phased Return to Work Guidance](#) on the intranet.

6.2.6 Disability-related absence

Information regarding absence related to a Disability and reasonable adjustments is available on the BCP Intranet. Occupational Health will assist by advising on reasonable adjustments. Consideration will be given to increasing the absence level targets / triggers as a reasonable adjustment where the absences relate directly to the disability. For additional information please see [Managing Absence](#).

6.2.7 Return to work (RtW) discussion

Colleagues will be required to attend a [Return to Work meeting](#) with their manager on their first day back after a period of absence. Depending on the circumstances and length of absence a plan may be developed and will include any adjustments that may be needed and agreed to help support the return to work.

6.2.8 Absence Levels / Triggers

Absence level triggers are used to manage absence fairly and consistently. For details of these triggers, see [Sickness Triggers](#) on the intranet.

Triggers are related to each role/job held by a colleague and will be considered separately across each role.

6.2.9 Attendance Review Meetings

The council manages absence through a series of informal and formal conversations called Attendance Review Meetings ([frequent absence](#) or [long term](#)) between colleagues and their manager, both during and following a period of absence. This is to understand the nature of the absence and to agree how best to provide advice and support.

Sickness absence levels are reviewed on a rolling basis and a series of more formal meetings with colleagues may be required. Details about the process that will be followed in the [Frequent Sickness Absence Procedure](#) and the [Long Term Sickness Absence Procedure](#). Colleagues have the [right to be accompanied by a companion](#) at attendance review meetings.

6.2.10 Medical Re-deployment

Medical Re-deployment may be necessary should a colleague be unable to fulfil their contractual role but will only take place after a thorough investigation and with guidance from medical specialists of Occupational Health. The colleague will be placed on the re-deployment register and the manager with assistance from HR, will support the colleague in identifying a suitable alternative role. The colleague will be expected to be fully engaged in this process as being on the

redeployment register is a temporary situation and subject to review. For further details, see [Redeployment due to ill health](#).

6.2.11 Dismissal

Should it be concluded that there is nothing further that can be done to support a colleague back to work, dismissal on the grounds of medical incapacity due to continued poor health will be considered as a last resort.

Where a colleague has a record of significant absence levels that make the colleague's employment unsustainable meaning that their poor attendance is disruptive and has a detrimental impact on their colleagues and /or on the service of the department, the colleague may be dismissed for 'Some Other Substantial Reason' (SOSR) from their employment with BCP.

Colleagues dismissed under this clause will receive payment for any outstanding annual leave they have accrued. Such dismissal will only take place after the management of absence procedure has been followed. Further details about the process that will be followed and procedure at meetings can be found [here](#).

6.2.12 Appeals

Colleagues have the right to appeal against any improvement notice (warning) or any decision to dismiss, within TEN working days of receipt of an outcome in writing. More information about appeals may be found in the [appeals section](#) on the intranet.

6.2.13 Ill-health retirement (Pension scheme members ONLY)

This is a complex matter and the process is detailed on the Intranet under [Ill Health Retirement](#). To qualify a colleague must be a member of a pension scheme (LGPS/STSS), be below normal retirement age of the scheme, and be advised by Occupational Health that they are permanently unfit to carry out the duties of their post.

6.3 Miscellaneous

There are additional matters that relate to sickness and / or absence but are very specific and these are dealt with under separate cover on the Council's intranet. These include:

- Sickness and Annual Leave.
- Using Annual Leave to enhance sick pay.
- Carrying forward Annual Leave due to sickness absence
- Wellbeing & Work-life Balance Support
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Medical appointments

7. How to use this policy

- 7.1** In conjunction with the [Frequent Absence Procedure](#) and the [Long Term Sickness Absence Procedure](#).

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 Managers are expected to:

- Promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all colleagues, including the use of risk assessments to identify and manage hazards impacting on both physical and mental health in the workplace.
- Ensure colleagues are aware of their responsibilities, and the consequences of not complying.
- Monitor levels of sickness absence for individuals and teams, applying triggers where necessary.
- Fairly and consistently apply procedures to support and manage absences, whilst dealing with unauthorised and/or high levels of sickness absence.

- Maintain a positive and preventive approach, being sensitive and supportive to those suffering the effects of ill health
- Maintain regular communication with colleagues who are absent on long term sick leave.
- Ensure that all recording of sickness absence is maintained with respect for confidentiality, and that relevant certificates are entered on the Employee First system and saved confidentially to enable the payment of Sickness Allowance and Statutory Sick Pay.
- Be aware of how the disability provisions of the Equality Act could impact on managing sickness absence.
- Seek specialist advice from Occupational Health or HR as appropriate

8.2 Colleagues are expected to:

- Take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing utilising the variety of support available.
- Maintain a high level of attendance in accordance with their contractual obligations.
- When absent, follow the correct procedures for notification and certification
- Co-operate with attendance management procedures such as attending meetings, providing information and referral to Occupational Health.

8.3 Human Resources will:

- Provide support and guidance to managers as necessary to implement the managing attendance and health process in dealing with sickness absence and ill health.
- Provide support at formal meetings and throughout the process, as required

8.4 Trade Unions will be:

- Available for members of recognised trade unions: Support colleagues through the managing attendance and health process as requested.

9. Enforcement and sanctions

- 9.1 Managers will be held accountable to manage sickness absence in a fair and consistent manner in accordance with this policy.

10. Further information and links to related policies