

Attendance & Absence Management Policy

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Scottish Social Housing Charter Relevant Standard Outcomes

STANDARD
N/A

Scottish Housing Regulator – Relevant Standards of Governance and Financial Management and Guidance

STANDARD	
1	The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users. Relevant standard 1.3
4	The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose. Relevant standard 4.3
5	The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity. Relevant standard 5.2

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES

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ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association recognises that, on occasions, it may be necessary for employees to be absent from work. However, the Association also has a duty to provide a reliable service to tenants and other customers and we need to ensure that we help staff maintain the highest possible level of attendance.
- 1.2 This policy is designed to help all employees achieve good attendance, and to ensure that a consistent and fair approach in managing attendance is adopted throughout the Association.
- 1.3 This policy and the guidelines it contains work in conjunction with but is not limited to other policies such as discipline & grievance, dignity at work, health & safety and managing stress.
- 1.4 This policy outlines reasonable processes for the usage of all accrued annual leave and the expected application of the procedure

2. AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To manage attendance in a way that reflects genuine concern for staff and to develop a positive attitude towards attendance.
- To set clear expectations for standards of attendance that we require from our employees.
- To separate the processes: attendance and absence management and provide guidelines for employees and managers in how to manage these.
- To identify the causes of absence and, where possible, develop a programme of supportive and preventive measures.
- To ensure training and support is available to both managers and employees.
- To ensure that all colleagues are supported in using their annual leave allowance appropriately, whilst considering the wider team and operational impact.

3. PRINCIPLES

The Association requires good attendance from all employees to meet its objectives.

- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory you will be informed what improvement is required and possible consequences of failure to do so (which may include disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal).
- The attendance management process is not concerned with reasons for absence but with number of periods of absence/ days absent (excluding underlying health conditions protected under the Equality Act 2010).
- If you have an underlying health condition causing absence(s), then we will consider reasonable adjustments.
- Managers will conduct "return to work" interviews on the colleagues first day back to work after every period of unplanned sickness
- All staff should adhere strictly to absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and organisation sick pay being withheld.
- Managers will maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff to manage absence effectively.

4. ANNUAL LEAVE

- 4.1 Each colleague is entitled to a set amount of annual leave, pro rata dependant on contracted hours of work. It is important that colleagues use this annual leave throughout the year to take a break from work and have time to rest. Leave should be taken with consideration of the immediate as well as wider team, and with operational impact in mind as not to leave colleagues with seriously limited capacity that would jeopardise the service.
- 4.2 Unless exceptional circumstances arise, teams should not be left with minimal cover particularly during peak times of year or where there are major projects that require additional resources due to annual leave and this should be managed appropriately by the departmental line manager.
- 4.3 Annual leave should be accurately recorded well ahead of time and with timely planning of any specific or immediate tasks to be undertaken. This should be organised by the colleague with support from management if needed
- 4.4 Managers reserve the right to decline annual leave requests if the operational impact would be detrimental to the organisation, team or customers. All requests should be treated on a first come first served basis unless arrangements are made within the team to mitigate this.

5. ABSENCE MONITORING

- 5.1 A fundamental feature of good attendance management is the accurate and timely recording of all absences. This is essential for processing the requirements of Statutory and Occupational Sick Pay arrangements and the process of managing attendance and absence. Good information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health

conditions. The sooner these issues are identified and acted upon, the more likely a successful conclusion for staff member and employer alike can be achieved.

- 5.2 Accurate recording is also an essential element in satisfying potential concerns over the fairness of any actions taken by Line Managers. The Association maintains electronic records for the usage of all types of leave, which record attendance and absences as well as the documents provided by employees relating to sickness or other absences.
- 5.3 Having maintained attendance records, the SMT will be expected to discuss aggregated statistics at Management Team meetings and at departmental meetings with staff. Quarterly aggregated statistics are provided to the Board Meetings. Individual cases will not be discussed as they form part of the employee's confidential personal record.
- 5.4 Absences triggers will be reached if a colleague has more than 3 periods of sickness within 6 months, or more than 5 periods within 12 months. This trigger will constitute an absence review meeting in which, Line Managers will ensure that appropriate support is offered, and reasonable adjustments made where needed.

6. ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURES

6.1 Reporting

- 6.1.1 If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or other reason, you must contact your line manager (or if not available, another manager) as soon as is reasonably possible. You should do this before you are due to start your shift and if not possible, within one hour of your starting time. You must fill in a self-certification form on Sage, whether or not you are entitled to sickness allowances and whatever the length or reason for absence.

6.2 Fit Notes

- 6.2.1 If you are off due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note as soon as possible to your line manager.
- 6.2.2 If the Doctor ticks the 'may be fit for work' box your line manager will arrange a meeting with you to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although we are not obliged to follow the doctor's advice, we will do our best to help you return to work and maintain a good attendance record. However, if we cannot agree reasonable adjustments you will remain off sick. If this situation arises please contact us for specific advice.
- 6.2.3 If we agree a phased return to work, the days you are still off sick within the agreed period will count as one period of absence.

- 6.2.4 An employee can come back to work at any time, even if this is before their fit note expires. They do not need to go back to their doctor first to be signed 'fit for work'. If you come back to work before the expiry of your fit note, we will seek professional advice.

6.3 Keeping in Touch

- 6.3.1 You are responsible for contacting your line manager to let them know the reasons for any absence and when you expect to return to work. If, in the event of an emergency you cannot make contact on day one of your absence, you should make sure that someone else does on your behalf such as your personal emergency contact. After this, you should contact your line manager as soon as you can and maintain regular contact daily during the first week of your absence (unless otherwise agreed with your line manager) and weekly thereafter.
- 6.3.2 If you fail to keep in contact as outlined above, we will initiate and maintain contact with you.
- 6.3.3 We expect that you let us know the following information: the reason for your absence, when you expect to return to work and contact details which can be used to maintain contact during your absence. (If this information is not provided we will contact you to find out this information).

7. FAILURE TO COMPLY

- 7.1 Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold company sick pay. If you are unable to comply with the expected procedures, we will attempt to investigate why and offer support to help you. Where there is persistent failure to comply and no justifiable reason can be found to explain non-compliance, it may lead to disciplinary action against you in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Similarly, if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will take disciplinary action against you. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

8. RETURN TO WORK

- 8.1 A thorough return to work meeting will be carried out after every period of unplanned sickness absence. The purpose of a return to work interview is to establish if you are fit to return to work. This will be done by your line manager (or another manager if they are not available) on the first day of your return to work at the start of your shift. Completed forms will be kept in your personnel file. The return to work interview forms contain confidential information and may only be viewed by authorised personnel, normally your line manager or any other manager who deals with the case.

9. STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP)

- 9.1 If eligible to SSP this is irrespective to your entitlement to company sick pay. The scale of entitlement to SSP is reviewed by the government, normally at the beginning of each tax year. It is not paid for the first three days of absence and runs for 28 weeks after that.
- 9.2 If you are no longer entitled to SSP, you may be entitled to an incapacity benefit. You can enquire about this at your local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We will tell you if you are not entitled to SSP and send you the appropriate government form but it is then your responsibility to claim any other State Benefit which you may be entitled to.

10. COMPANY SICK PAY

- 10.1 In any one rolling period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with the EVH Terms and Conditions of Employment.

11. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of attendance, with no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition.
- 11.2 We will aim to assist you in maintaining a good attendance record. This will involve maintaining good records, ensuring return to work meetings are completed and helping investigate and address any identified underlying causes of absence.
- 11.3 Where this fails to secure a required improvement, we will invoke the terms of the disciplinary procedure. Unsatisfactory attendance reviews can result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- 11.4 If at any stage during this process it becomes apparent that an underlying health condition is involved, medical information will be sought, and further discussion will take place prior to deciding on any appropriate action, if any.
- 11.5 Absence periods related to pregnancy or underlying health conditions classed as a disability under the [Equality Act 2010](#) will not be considered for the purpose of attendance management process.

12. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 The Association and its managers will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term illness and/or underlying health condition. If you find yourself in such a position you should be confident that your manager will react in a supportive fashion when approached.

12.2 The following points will always be considered in relation to long-term absence:

- The nature of the illness and any contributing factors;
- The likely duration and/or frequency of the employee's absence(s);
- The actions that can be taken by the employee;
- Any reasonable adjustments that the Association could make;
- Any possible redeployment opportunities;
- The nature of the employee's duties in relation to their health conditions;
- The business needs of the Association and the impact that the employee's absence is having upon these;
- The employee's entitlement to Statutory and Company Sick Pay.

12.3 If a medical professional makes suggestions for any reasonable adjustments, these will be discussed prior to your return to work to determine if these can be accommodated, along with any suggestions you or we may also have made. Although we are not bound by the doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to accommodate your prompt return and good attendance. If we agree, any reasonable adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews to assess if they are still required and suitable.

12.4 When managing a long-term absence, a termination of employment for the reason of ill health capability may be considered where all other options have been exhausted, and the organisation can no longer sustain the absence.

12.5 If this outcome is being considered we will seek professional advice from an Occupational Therapist or other suitably qualified person.

13. DISHONEST ABSENCE

13.1 If you are found to falsify or exaggerate your absence, this will be treated as gross misconduct. An investigation will be carried out in accordance with our disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action may be instigated, including dismissal or future withdrawal of the company sick pay benefit.

14. OTHER PROVISIONS

14.1 Absence and holidays

14.1.1 If the employee is on annual leave and falls sick or has an accident, we will discuss this with the employee and agree how the leave will be processed.

14.1.2 If the employee is on sick leave and goes on holiday they should contact their Line Manager to seek authorisation and to let them know how long they will be away for and to ensure communication resumes upon their return.

14.2 Doctor/hospital/dental appointments

- 14.2.1 Doctor, hospital and dental appointments should be arranged outwith working hours. If it is not possible, then employees should request time off from their Line Manager. Arrangements could include using annual leave, TOIL/flexi or unpaid time off. In some circumstances Managers could also use their discretion and consider giving paid time off.

14.3 Conduct whilst off sick

- 14.3.1 When on sick leave, employees are still bound by their contract of employment with the Association and all our policies including Code of Conduct and their duty of fidelity. The Association also expects that the employee does not to participate in activities that would be at odds with their reason of absence. Any breach in respect of this will be dealt with under the Association's disciplinary procedure. This includes conduct on social networking sites and any other publicly made remarks regarding our customers, work colleagues, partners and anyone else who is connected with the Association.

14.4 Cosmetic procedures

- 14.4.1 Absence due to cosmetic procedures (whether carried out in the UK or abroad) will not fall under sick leave or pay unless it is recommended by health professionals. Employees should therefore request time off and agree with their Line Manager how the absence will be processed, e.g. annual leave or unpaid leave.

14.5 IVF treatment

- 14.5.1 Absences resulting to IVF treatment will not be processed as sick leave or pay. The same relates to a partner of a person that is undergoing such treatment. Instead, employees should discuss with their Line Manager how time off for the treatment could be accommodated, e.g. annual leave, flexi time or unpaid leave. Absences relating to IVF treatment will also not be treated as relating to pregnancy unless the employee actually falls pregnant.

14.6 Stress management

- 14.6.1 Stress can be a symptom of an existing illness or long-term health condition (diagnosed or not), or it can be triggered independently which can lead to other illnesses. [Stress is defined](#) as experiencing feelings of being under pressure or overwhelmed that can have physical and emotional manifestations. If an employee goes off sick with stress, the Manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that an appropriate support and signposting to specialist services can be offered. Line Managers should sensitively and empathetically enquire whether conditions at work cause, exacerbate or contribute to stress and what interventions could be made to reduce or mitigate the risks for the individual concerned and the wider team. Asking the employee what action could assist their return to work will help to determine if the cause of stress is

wholly related to their work or work environment or if there are other underlying causes of stress that require a different approach. If the absence is certified by a doctor, the fit note may provide further details as well on the underlying causes which can help the Line Manager to consider reasonable adjustments or offer appropriate support.

15. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

- 15.1 The Association will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own policies and procedures.
- 15.2 Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in the Association's Privacy Policy.

16. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 16.1 An Equality impact assessment has been carried out in preparation of this policy. No impact or barriers were identified; therefore, activity will proceed.

17. REVIEW

- 17.1 This document will be reviewed by the Board or Sub-Committee set up for that purpose in accordance with the requirements of the Association's Register of Policies and Procedures.
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SCHEDULE OF REVISIONS		
DATE	REVISION No.	DETAILS
18/11/2024	2.1	ADDED Section 4 – ANNUAL LEAVE. UPDATED to include reference to Annual Leave throughout; Section 4.4 UPDATED to include Absence Triggers; Section 5.3 UPDATED “phone” to “contact”; Section 13.6 UPDATED section on Stress Management
18/11/2024	2.1	ADDED: New section 16 – Equality Impact Assessment. (REVIEW section re-numbered to section 17)