

# Attendance & Absence Management Policy

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**Scottish Social Housing Charter Relevant Standard Outcomes**

<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>
N/A	

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

STANDARD	GUIDANCE
<p><b>1</b> The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.</p>	<p><b>1.3</b> The governing body ensures the RSL complies with its constitution and its legal obligations. Its constitution adheres to these Standards and the constitutional requirements set out below.</p>
<p><b>4</b> The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.</p>	<p><b>4.3</b> The governing body identifies risks that might prevent it from achieving the RSL's purpose and has effective strategies and systems for risk management and mitigation, internal control and audit.</p>
<p><b>5</b> The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.</p>	<p><b>5.2</b> The RSL upholds and promotes the standards of behaviour and conduct it expects of governing body members and staff through an appropriate code of conduct. It manages governing body members' performance, ensures compliance and has a robust system to deal with any breach of the code.</p>

# **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.

## **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 two 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.

## **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 for every period of sickness absence within the spirit of this policy.
- You need to adhere strictly to our 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. ABSENCE MONITORING**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 time sheets which record attendance and absences as well as the documents provided by employees relating to sickness or other absences.
- 4.3 Having maintained attendance records, the Chief Executive will be expected to provide and discuss monthly aggregated statistics at Management Team meetings and at departmental meetings with staff. Quarterly aggregated statistics are provided to the Audit, Finance and Performance Sub-Committee Meetings. Individual cases will not be discussed as they form part of the employee's confidential personal record.

#### **5. ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURES**

##### **5.1 Reporting**

- 5.1.1 If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, you must phone 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, whether or not you are entitled to sickness allowances and whatever the length or reason for absence.

##### **5.2 Fit Notes**

- 5.2.1 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.

- 5.2.2 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.
- 5.2.3 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.
- 5.2.4 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.

### **5.3 Keeping in Touch**

- 5.3.1 You are responsible for phoning 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 get to a phone on day one of your absence, you should make sure that someone else calls on your behalf. After this, you should contact your line manager as soon as you can and maintain regular contact by calling daily during the first week of your absence (unless otherwise agreed with your line manager) and weekly thereafter.
- 5.3.2 If you fail to keep in contact as outlined above, we will initiate and maintain contact with you.
- 5.3.3 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).

## **6. FAILURE TO COMPLY**

- 6.1 Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold company sick pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also 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.

## **7. RETURN TO WORK**

- 7.1 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 he/she is 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.

## **8. STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP)**

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.

## **9. COMPANY SICK PAY**

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

## **10. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT**

- 10.1 This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of attendance, with no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 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.



## 11. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

11.1 The Association and its managers will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term 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.

11.2 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 his/her 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.

11.3 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.

11.4 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.

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

## 12. DISHONEST ABSENCE

12.1 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.

## 13. OTHER PROVISIONS

### 13.1 Absence and holidays

13.1.1 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.

13.1.2 If the employee is on sick leave and go 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.

### 13.2 Doctor/hospital/dental appointments

13.2.1 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.

### 13.3 Conduct whilst off sick

13.3.1 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 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.

### 13.4 Cosmetic procedures

13.4.1 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.

### 13.5 IVF treatment

13.5.1 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.

### 13.6 Stress management

13.6.1 Stress can result from an illness or lead to one but it is not an illness itself. The same relates to "nervous debility" or any other diagnosis of that type. If an employee goes off sick with stress, the Manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that an appropriate action can be taken (if any) and, in particular, to determine whether conditions at work cause or contribute to stress and whether something could be done to help the situation. It can be determined whether conditions at work cause or contribute to the condition, and whether action can be taken to assist in a return to work. If the absence is certified by a doctor, the Manager may ask the employee's doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress.

14. **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS**

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

15. **REVIEW**

- 15.1 This document will be reviewed by the Management Committee 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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