Human Resources

Supporting Attendance Policy



Human Resources Service

2026: VERSION 1

Dumfries and Galloway Council

1. Policy Statement

1.1. Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to supporting the health, wellbeing and consistent attendance of our workforce by managing all sickness absence fairly, sensitively and confidentially. The policy aims to both protect employee wellbeing and maintain effective service delivery, recognising that supporting employees is the most effective way to reduce avoidable absence. It promotes a preventative, trauma-informed approach, focusing on early and proactive support to help employees stay well, remain at work or return as soon as they are able.

1.2. This Policy and Procedure recognises that ill health can be distressing and ensures employees are treated with dignity and involved in discussions about their attendance and wellbeing at work. It also provides a consistent and fair framework for managing both short- and long-term absence, meeting statutory requirements while balancing operational needs with employee wellbeing.

1.3. For the management of Short-Term absence, Attendance Support Points are defined points that prompt a supportive management discussion with the employee regarding their attendance. These are defined as below:

- 3 occasions of absence within a 12-month period.
- 10 or more cumulative days of sickness within a 12-month period.
- Pattern of absence

1.4. For the management of Long-Term absence, regular contact will be maintained with the employee. Formal review meetings will normally take place at defined stages of absence; 3 months, 6 months and 9 months, to review the employee's circumstances, consider appropriate support and reasonable adjustments and determine any further actions required.

1.5. Where there is no improvement in either short-term or long-term absence levels, a Capability Assessment Meeting will be convened to determine whether the employee is able to fulfil the requirements of their role effectively, identify any further support or reasonable adjustments that may be required, and determine appropriate actions to assist the employee in achieving the expected standard. Where it is determined that the employee is unable to meet the requirements of their role, consideration may be given to termination of employment on the grounds of capability.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 The Supporting Attendance Policy and Procedure applies to all Council employees, including teachers.

2.2 Employees covered by SNCT Conditions should also refer to Part 2 Section 6 of the SNCT Handbook.

2.3 Where employees have transferred under TUPE, attendance is managed under this policy unless protected terms provide otherwise. HR will advise in those cases.

3. Principles

3.1 Wellbeing, Fairness and Supportive Culture

- Every absence is treated as genuine. Asking how an employee is, discussing wellbeing, or seeking Occupational Health advice is part of that support, not a sign the absence is doubted.
- The Council prioritises employee wellbeing and a supportive working environment.
- The policy is applied fairly and consistently, with clear, honest communication at every stage.
- Health information is treated as confidential and handled with care (see Section 7).
- Comprehensive guidance, advice and support will be available to support the Supporting Attendance Policy and Procedure.

3.2 Early Intervention and Clear Responsibilities

- Managers act promptly when attendance concerns arise, using early, supportive conversations and regular employee check-ins.
- Employees report absence in line with the notification procedure and maintain reasonable contact.
- The frequency and method of contact during absence is normally agreed with the employee so far as is reasonable, so it remains supportive rather than intrusive.
- Open communication is a shared responsibility between manager and employee.

3.3 Return to Work and Attendance Management

- A return-to-work conversation will normally take place after an absence to check wellbeing and agree any help needed. It is a wellbeing discussion, not a disciplinary step, and its form is kept proportionate, for example in some cases a lighter, agreed approach may be appropriate.
- Attendance Support Points identify when a supportive review should take place. Reaching a point prompts discussion. It is not a sanction; the points are set out in the procedure.
- Work-place stress is addressed promptly through the Workplace Stress Process.

3.4 Adjustments, Occupational Health and Alternative Options

- Reasonable adjustments are considered for employees with a disability or long-term health condition. This duty does not depend on an employee using the term 'disabled': it applies where the Council knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that adjustments may be needed.
- Occupational Health advises on fitness for work and helpful adjustments. Employees are told why they are being referred and should tell their manager if attending an appointment is difficult so that help can be arranged.
- Phased returns, redeployment and ill-health retirement are considered where appropriate.

3.5 Conduct, Representation and Sensitive Circumstances

- The Council extends trust to every employee. Where there is evidence that an absence has been misused or misrepresented, the matter may require further investigation under the Disciplinary Policy.
- Employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at formal meetings and may request support at other meetings.
- Sensitive circumstances, including bereavement, pregnancy loss, serious diagnoses, trauma, and the effects of domestic abuse are handled with sensitivity, dignity and respect. Confidential support and, where needed, special leave can be arranged; speak to a manager or HR.
- Terminal and life-limiting illness will be guided by the employee's wishes wherever possible and will prioritise dignity, wellbeing and support over procedural requirements.

4. Related Policies, Procedures and Toolkits

4.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with related Human Resource Policies, Procedures and Resources including:

Policies and Procedures	
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Supporting our People
Menopause	Scheme of Leave of Absence
Workplace Stress Procedure	Smarter / Home Working
Redeployment	Equality and Diversity
Ill-Health Retirement (Guidance)	Purchase of Annual Leave
Carers	Substance Misuse

4.2 Additional documentation such as factsheets, forms, template letters and reports is available in the Resource Pack.

4.3 Manager development includes case reviews, E-Learning modules, toolbox talks, bite-sized sessions and HR guidance.

5. Additional Provisions

5.1 Confidentiality and personal information. Health information is special-category personal data. It is recorded accurately on iTrent, shared only with those who need it to support the employee, and kept secure in line with data protection law.

5.2 Tell it once. With the employee's consent, sensitive circumstances are recorded once and carried forward, so an employee is not asked to repeat distressing information at successive meetings or when moving team.

5.3 Equality in how absence is counted. Pregnancy-related absence is not counted towards Attendance Support Points or used in attendance management. Absence related to a protected characteristic is considered fairly and, where appropriate, treated as a reasonable adjustment.

5.4 Sick pay. Pay during sickness absence is governed by the Council's occupational sick pay arrangements and statutory entitlements.

5.5 A range of support is available to employees, including the Wellbeing Champions, Domestic Abuse support, mental health first aiders, Occupational Health, and the wellbeing policies listed in Section 5. Many of these can be accessed directly, and employees are encouraged to seek help early.

5.6 Most absence is resolved through support. Where, despite appropriate support, interventions and all reasonable adjustments, an employee is unable to sustain the attendance or fulfil the requirements of their role, the matter may be considered under the capability assessment process set out in the procedure. The focus remains on supporting employees to remain in or return to work wherever possible; however, in some circumstances the process may result in dismissal on capability grounds following consideration of all reasonable options.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 This is a Council policy, developed in consultation and partnership with the recognised joint trade unions.

6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the Fairer Scotland Duty considered, with findings reflected in the policy.

6.3 The policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if the law or practice changes.

Document History

Policy

Version	Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
1			
2			
3			
4			

Committee Approval

Version	Committee	Committee Date
1	Enabling and Customer Services	15th September 2026
2		
3		
4		

Distribution

The approved version of this document is distributed to:

Name	Version	Date
Assistant Director Governance and Human Resources	1	November 2026
HR Manager		
Joint Trade Unions		
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