

Team Briefing: New Sickness Absence & Ill health Capability Policy

Manager information to support team discussions

What's changing and why?

From week commencing **4th May 2026**, we are introducing a new **Sickness Absence and Ill Health Capability Policy** for **all sickness absences from 1st April 2026**. The aim of the new policy is to ensure sickness absence is managed **consistently, fairly and supportively** across the organisation.

The new policy has strengthened our approach on how to manage short-term and intermittent sickness absence which account for a significant proportion of overall sickness in the council. The policy has been simplified and is supported by **fact sheets**, setting out expectations clearly for managers and colleagues.

The updated policy aims to help us to provide **earlier support** for colleagues and ensure that there is a **consistent approach to managing sickness** across all teams.

What are the key changes?

New policy name

- The policy is now called the **Sickness Absence and Ill Health Capability Policy**, to make the scope a lot clearer.

New sickness absence triggers

- A review will be triggered if a colleague has either:
 - **4 instances of sickness absence** in a rolling **12-month period**, or
 - **10 working days' sickness absence** in a rolling **12-month period**. (this is pro-rata to 2 week's worth of sickness for part time employees)
- Managers will need to review the SAP sickness absence trigger reports and invite any colleagues meeting a trigger from 1 April 2026 to a **Stage 1 review meeting**.

Consistent application & Clearer review periods

- Review meetings must take place when triggers are reached at least every 3 months. The 3-monthly review meetings may be brought forward if your sickness absence meets one of the sickness absence triggers outlined above at any point during the 3-month review period.
- During the 3-month review period your manager may meet with you to discuss progress or new information such as an Occupational Health report which has been received and developments with the agreed actions.
- Should you have further sickness absence which meets one of the triggers, during the 3-month review period at stage 1, your manager will progress you to stage 2 of the process and further 3-month review period will be applied.
- If you do not have further sickness absence during the 3-month review period, your absence will be monitored until you have had a 6-months period of continuous attendance at work without meeting one of the sickness absence triggers. Should

the triggers not have been met for 6 months and there be no further cause for concern the monitoring period will end.

- Should you have further sickness absence during the stage 2 review period which meets one of the triggers your manager may advise you that they are progressing you to a stage 3 Ill Health Capability meeting.

Clear outcomes at Stage 3

- Possible outcomes include:
 - Extending the Stage 2 review period (with triggers continuing to apply), or
 - Dismissal with contractual notice, where appropriate and after mitigation is considered.

What is staying the same?

- **Colleagues already in a sickness process will continue under the existing arrangements until the process is concluded**
- The **three-stage process** and right of appeal against dismissal decisions
- Support for and management of **long-term sickness absence**, which is covered by a fit note
- Legal duties under the **Equality Act 2010**, including consideration of reasonable adjustments
- Access to **Occupational Health** and the wider wellbeing offer
- Ongoing **HR Advice and Support** for managers

What do we need from managers?

- When the policy is shared familiarise yourself with the **new policy, fact sheets and SAP reporting**
- Use this guidance to start talking to your team about the changes
- Build sickness absence discussions into **1:1s and PDRs**
- Apply the policy **consistently and with compassion**
- For further detail you can complete the updated **mandatory eLearning** on managing sickness absence

Support available

- **HR Advice & Support Team:**
CST.HRManagerAdviceandSupport@derbyshire.gov.uk
- Occupational Health and wellbeing services
- SAP Fiori reporting guidance
- Further resources and updates via *Leading the Way* and *Our Derbyshire*