



Dear Colleague

**POLICY ON MANAGEMENT OF SICKNESS ABSENCE  
(PROMOTING ATTENDANCE)**

1. As part of the three year Agenda for Change pay deal agreed in 2018, NHS Scotland Employers and Staff Side also agreed to review and refresh the guidance around Policy on Management of Sickness Absence (Promoting Attendance) in NHS Scotland.
2. This work has been taken forward in partnership by a Working Group created under the aegis of the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC).
3. The Group undertook a comprehensive review of the existing sickness absence section of the Agenda for Change (AfC) Handbook and considered policies and practices in place across NHS Scotland. The key outcomes are set out in Annex A to this circular. A form to be used across NHS Scotland by staff wishing to appeal against the outcome of a first formal stage discussion in relation to sickness absence is attached at Annex B.
4. The provisions set out in this circular should be adopted by the service from 1 April 2019. The wider recommendations of the Working Group will be absorbed within the work which the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance Committee (SWAG) is currently doing to review all Partnership Information Network (PIN) policies on a "Once for Scotland" basis.
5. In order to make it easier for Boards to adopt these provisions, a Word version of Annex B will be made available along with this circular on the "Circulars and Guidance" section of the STAC website:

[www.stac.scot.nhs.uk/circulars](http://www.stac.scot.nhs.uk/circulars)

22 March 2019

**Addressees**

For action

Chief Executives,  
Directors of Finance,  
Directors of Human Resources:  
NHS Boards and Special Health  
Boards, NHS National Services  
Scotland (Common Services  
Agency) and Healthcare  
Improvement Scotland

For information

Members, Scottish Partnership  
Forum  
Members, Scottish Terms and  
Conditions Committee  
Members, Scottish Workforce and  
Governance Committee

**Enquiries to:**

Colin Cowie  
Scottish Government Health  
Directorates  
Health Workforce  
Ground Floor Rear  
St Andrew's House  
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG

Tel: 0131-244 3778  
Fax: 0131-244 2837

E-mail:  
colin.cowie@gov.scot

## **Cabinet Secretary Approval**

6. The provisions of this circular have been approved by Scottish Ministers under Regulations 2 and 3 of the National Health Service (Remuneration and Conditions of Service) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 (SI 1991 No 537). A copy of the formal approval is attached.

### **Action**

7. NHS Boards and Special Health Boards should follow the procedures, advice and timescales set out in the guidance.

### **Enquiries**

8. Employees should direct their personal enquiries to their employing NHS Board or Special Health Board.

9. Employers should make their own arrangements for obtaining additional copies of this circular, which can be viewed at:

[www.publications.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.publications.scot.nhs.uk) as well as [www.stac.scot.nhs.uk/circulars](http://www.stac.scot.nhs.uk/circulars).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

### **SHIRLEY ROGERS**

NHS Scotland Chief People Officer &

Director of Workforce, Leadership, Reform and EU Withdrawal Preparation



**NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE  
APPROVAL OF REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

In accordance with regulations 2 and 3 of the National Health Service (Remuneration and Conditions of Service) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 (S.I. 1991/537) the remuneration and conditions of service set out in the attached Scottish Government Health Workforce Directorate circular of 22 March 2019 – PCS(AFC)2019/2 – in respect of Policy on Management of Sickness Absence (Promoting Attendance) are hereby approved for the purposes of the said Regulations.

**SHIRLEY ROGERS**

NHS Scotland Chief People Officer &  
Director of Workforce, Leadership, Reform and  
EU Withdrawal Preparation  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
EDINBURGH  
EH1 3DG  
22 March 2019

## STATEMENT ON PROMOTING ATTENDANCE IN NHS SCOTLAND

1. The STAC Promoting Attendance Working Group determined that there is no need to reform the current AfC Handbook, but have instead concluded that a robust and effective process relating to health, wellbeing and managing sickness absence is required.
2. The Group have developed guidance for staff and for managers, as well as an absence management checklist, a template for return to work discussions and a form for paper-based appeals at stage one. In addition, they have made recommendations covering areas such as training and local and national arrangements for measuring compliance. The new documentation and recommendations will inform the work to develop the Promoting Attendance Policy on a Once for Scotland basis.
3. In advance of this, NHS Scotland should take note of the following key recommendations for application from 1 April:
  - NHS Scotland should work towards reducing sickness absence by 0.5% per annum over 3 years, beginning on 1 April 2019 and with the aim of achieving an overall NHS Scotland average of less than 4%.
  - Common NHS Scotland trigger points should be adopted to prompt and inform the first formal discussions in relation to sickness absence. The Working Group have agreed that these should be either 4 separate episodes of absence, or short term absences totalling 8 or more working days within a rolling 12 month period.
  - The right to appeal on the basis of process not being followed exists at all formal stages. However, an appeal at the first formal stage will be paper-based and should not involve attendance at a hearing. The service should adopt the form devised by the Working Group for this (available at Annex B of this circular).

**SICKNESS ABSENCE - STAGE ONE PAPER-BASED APPEAL**

This form is to be completed by an employee wishing to appeal against the outcome of a first formal stage discussion in relation to sickness absence.

**Employee to complete**

Full Name:	
Job title:	
Workplace and Department:	
Date of Sickness Absence Discussion (Please attach copy of correspondence received following your sickness absence discussion)	
Please detail why you are appealing (you can continue on a separate sheet)	
What is the outcome you seek?	
Signature of employee:	
Contact email or telephone number:	
Date:	

Once you have submitted this to your line manager, you will receive written confirmation of receipt within five working days.

**Manager to complete**

Received on	
Acknowledged on:	
Signature of Manager	
Date	