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Inverclyde Council Attendance During Severe Weather



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DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Contents

DOCUMENT CONTROL	2
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 GENERAL GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES	1
3 APPLICATION	3
3.6 Employee Arrives late/Leaves early	4
3.10 Employees Prevented from going home	5
3.11 Employees with Carer/Parental Responsibilities	5
3.12 Essential/ Critical Employees	5
3.13 Employees with a Disability/Pregnant Employees	6
3.14 Alternative Places of Work	6
3.15 Home Working	7
3.16 Red Alert Status/ Closure of Buildings	7
4 COUNCIL EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERS	7
4.2 Volunteer Snow Wardens	7
4.4 Adverse Weather Volunteer Force	8
5 COUNCIL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	8
6 WORKING IN HOT WEATHER	9
7 MISCELLANEOUS	9
8 REVIEW OF POLICY	9

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Inverclyde Council is a Public Body providing essential services that people depend on. It is therefore important to ensure that these essential public services are provided in spite of adverse weather conditions.
- 1.2 This document outlines arrangements for dealing with situations where, as a result of severe weather conditions, employees are significantly delayed in getting to work, cannot attend work or have to leave work early.
- 1.3 This policy is designed to assist in maintaining continuity of service delivery during periods of severe weather and to ensure that a fair and reasonable process is adopted, which will provide employees with a range of options where adverse weather conditions prevent them from fulfilling their contractual obligation to attend work or comply fully with normal working arrangements.
- 1.4 Severe weather can include any kind of extreme weather, usually snow or ice, which might create hazardous driving or travelling conditions or significantly impair normal operations. This policy may also be implemented in situations where a work place becomes uninhabitable due to breakdowns of heating, floods etc.
- 1.5 The arrangements will apply to all employees of the Council (L.G.E, Teachers (see also para 1.6 below) and associated professionals; Chief Officers). Every effort should be made to ensure the Policy is applied in a consistent and equitable manner.
- 1.6 In respect of Teaching Staff there are additional relevant teacher's circulars which apply. These are listed at para 7.1

2 General Guidelines and Principles

- 2.1 The Chief Executive will invoke the terms of this policy according to the severity of the prevailing weather conditions; the impact on service delivery and normal working arrangements, and taking into account advice from Health & Safety.
- 2.2 During periods of severe weather the council's priorities are to:
 - ensure that essential council services are maintained, and
 - ensure the safety and wellbeing of employees, service users or those affected by the work we do by assessing risks and putting in place appropriate control measures, considering elimination of risk through to provision of personal protection equipment.
- 2.3 Employees have a contractual responsibility for ensuring their attendance at work and as such should not assume that they will automatically receive pay if

they have been unable to attend work and should have appropriate contingency plans in place

- 2.4 Service Managers or equivalent should ensure they have in place adequate contingency plans to ensure continuity of service delivery during periods of severe weather. This includes ensuring that employees are aware of designated contacts and reporting arrangements.
- 2.5 Contingency plans should also extend to agreeing arrangements with Service Managers (or equivalent) to work from a different council location or from home (where such options are feasible) in cases where employees may have to walk a reasonable distance to their place of work or to the nearest available means of transport.
- 2.6 Whilst employees should not take unnecessary risks in attempting to get to work, they are expected to make every reasonable effort to report to their normal place of work at their normal start time. Police and motoring organisations issue warnings and these should be taken into consideration when deciding to travel, in conjunction with where employees live, the route they take and their mode of transport. Individual circumstances must also be taken into consideration e.g. employees with caring responsibilities or mobility difficulties. However Employees should not interpret these or other external agency announcements that only essential journeys should be made as approval to remain at home, where there are safe options locally to be able to get to work.
- 2.7 In any adverse weather or emergency situation contact must be made with the relevant Service Manager or other designated contact person to discuss the most appropriate course of action in the circumstances and/or agree to activate any pre-planned contingency arrangement.
- 2.8 The Council Resilience Management Team will determine based on the event circumstance a list of essential posts/employees for which it will be particularly important to remain at work in order to ensure continuity of service provision. A list of core essential employees will also be developed in conjunction with services
- 2.9 Employees who are unable to attend their workplace but are required to provide an essential service must make themselves available for collection by the Council or its contractors, if requested. As part of the 'planning process', employees identified as key to provide the service will be identified and arrangements put in place, where possible, to ensure that they are able to reach their normal workplace, and to get home.

3 Application

- 3.1 If despite all reasonable efforts, an employee is unable to attend their normal work location due to severe weather, he/she should contact their line manager, or if that manager is unavailable, the alternative designated contact person.
- 3.2 Contact must be made within one hour of an employee's normal start time (in the case of teaching staff, contact should be made prior to the start of the school day). Failure to notify the appropriate manager or designated contact without good reason will normally result in the absence being classed as unauthorised. A Head of Service may accept late notification/approve absence retrospectively where it is accepted that mitigating or extenuating circumstances applied. Such notification should thereafter be made on a daily basis if the situation continues. As part of the process, it is critical that Managers who are contacted by employees should keep a record of the conversation with the employee, recording their name, time of call and details of their plans or any specific arrangements made.
- 3.3 Employees who fail to notify their manager that they are unable to attend work should be regarded as being on unauthorised absence and managers should arrange a deduction from the salaries/wages of such employees. On return to work managers should meet with employees as soon as possible to discuss non-notification. Managers should then take appropriate action depending on the reason for non- notification.
- 3.4 Weather conditions can change throughout the day and employees should continue to make efforts to attend work if the weather and/or transport conditions improve.
- 3.5 Where an employee is prevented from attending their normal place of work due to a day of severe weather, he or she may request to;
 - Take annual leave (Employees who have utilised their annual leave entitlement for that year, may request to bring forward a period of annual leave from the following year's entitlement)
 - Take flexi leave (for those employees who participate in the council's Flexible Working Hours Scheme). Employees who have insufficient flexi credit, may request flexi – leave to cover their absence on the condition that the time is worked back at a later date over a period agreed with their line manager).
 - Make up the lost hours.
 - Work at an alternative work location, undertaking alternative or own duties, or work from home. Where practical, these options should already form part of contingency planning arrangements agreed in advance between the employee and Service Manager.
 - Take unpaid leave

3.6 Employee Arrives late/Leaves early

If an employee arrives at work late due to severe weather – they can utilise flexi time if they are on the flexi system. Employees not on flexitime can make up lost time over a reasonable period agreed by manager

If an employee chooses to leave work prior to any decision taken to vacate offices, then no reimbursement of time will be made, even if a decision is subsequently made.

In respect of employees covered by the Flexible Working Hours Scheme the following will apply: -

- During periods of adverse weather conditions, management may waive the application of the stipulated core times for staff attendance.
- Any employee who incurs debit hours as a result of non-attendance or attending for truncated days will be allowed to exceed the maximum debit provision and will normally be required to make up the time over the next two accounting periods
- Credited time will **not** be afforded in respect of periods of non-attendance unless weather conditions are so bad that the Chief Executive sanctions the early closure of establishments in the locality. In that event, those employees at work will be credited to the normal end of the working day. Any employees not at work will not be affected by such a decision (see also 3.16).

3.7 Where adverse weather conditions arise during the working day employees may be released only when there is evidence, that they will personally encounter difficulty in reaching their own home, at a reasonable time. This necessarily means that those employees, who will not encounter difficulties, should make every effort to remain at work until normal finishing time in order to maintain services.

Essential staff who require to remain at work until normal finishing time will be supported to do so.

3.8 In applying this guidance Service Managers (or equivalent) should take into consideration:

- The availability of public transport or alternative means of transport;
- The distance from the employee's home to their contractual workplace;
- Did the employee make contact at the earliest opportunity;
- Health conditions or disabilities employees may have

3.9 Where an employee has pre-arranged to take annual leave this will not be cancelled, even though had they not been on annual leave they would have been prevented from attending for work because of adverse weather conditions. Employees absent as a result of sickness leave will remain as such over this period.

3.10 Employees Prevented from going home

Employees who are prevented from going home due to severe weather will be credited with their standard daily hours. If they are required to spend the night (but not working) sheltering at their work location, this will not be counted as part of the working day in line with the Working Time Regulations. In circumstances where they may be asked to be available for work if required sleepover rates may apply. Should they be utilised on a voluntary basis due to shortage of essential staff this would be counted as working time.

Employees in this category will receive subsistence allowances in accordance with the Council's agreed rates (Evening meal allowance and/or Breakfast allowance, as appropriate).

Consideration should be given to adjustment of staff rotas for those employees who have sheltered overnight in their work location, to avoid where possible an employee going straight into a long working shift.

3.11 Employees with Carer/Parental Responsibilities

The Council recognises, in its Family Friendly & Work-life Balance Policy, that, on occasion, employees with "caring" responsibilities may require leave of absence. This may include responding to situations arising from the effects of severe weather, for example, where a school has closed due to severe weather and normal child care arrangements break down, or where care arrangements for dependent relatives are affected by severe weather.

In these situations, the provisions in the Policy will apply and, in all events, the Line Manager and employee should discuss openly and resolve any problems in a mutually acceptable manner. As soon as alternative care arrangements are in place, the employee is expected to attend work.

3.12 Essential/ Critical Employees

During periods of severe weather essential employees may be requested to remain at work in order to ensure continuity of service provision.

In cases where other employees in the same offices have been given the opportunity to go home due to severe weather where they will personally encounter difficulty in reaching their own home at a reasonable time, and essential employees in the same circumstances have not been given this option, then essential employees may, in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Chief Executive, be given appropriate time off in lieu to compensate

In the event that, due to severe weather conditions, essential employees are unable to return home reasonable; accommodation; expenses, and any other allowances, deemed appropriate will be authorised by the Head of Service, in consultation with the Head of OD, Policy & Communications.

3.13 Employees with a Disability/Pregnant Employees

Special consideration should be given to the position of disabled employees for whom undertaking journeys to and from work in adverse weather may present particular risks. Examples of such risks are: Those with mobility problems who may have particular difficulties travelling; disabled employees who may not have access to medication or the means of managing their condition; disabled employees who may have difficulty attending an alternative workplace as they may be unable to access it and function within it.

Consideration should also be given to pregnant employees who may have difficulty walking in adverse weather. In the case of disabled and pregnant employees, their particular circumstances and potential mobility problems should be factored in when applying this guidance.

3.14 Alternative Places of Work

Where it is impossible for an employee to attend their designated work place it may be possible to work from an alternative Council office. This does not necessarily mean the premises closest to home and employees should liaise with their manager to identify suitable alternative premises for attendance.

It is the Service Manager's (or equivalent) responsibility for ensuring the employee is able to attend the alternative location by liaising with the senior (or nominated) officer at that location. These arrangements must be made in advance, and employees should not 'routinely' attend other Council premises unless directed to do so by management. If employees are directed to work elsewhere, then they will be expected to undertake their normal work or if this is not possible to offer to undertake work for the service manager on-site. Any work should be appropriate and not exceed the responsibilities relevant to the employees grade.

Teachers who cannot reach their own school, unless directed otherwise, should report to the nearest school, which is open and accessible, to help out other schools e.g. one school may be open but short of teachers whereas another school may have been closed. In circumstances where this is not possible teachers will be expected to undertake work from home and class this as part of their planning and preparation time from the Working time agreement.

All tasks which do not require the teacher to be on the school premises can be carried out at a time and place of the teacher's choosing: teachers will notify the appropriate manager of their intention in this respect in accordance with SNCT Part 2, 3.10.

3.15 Home Working

In some circumstances, dependent on the role and the type of work carried out, the employee may be able to perform their duties from home. Indeed it may be more productive than needlessly spending time attempting to reach the workplace. This is likely only to be an option if the adverse weather has been forecast and preparations for home working can be made in advance.

Where home working has been approved then the employee will agree with their manager the specific work related items to be undertaken at home and this will be monitored as per standard work and management practice.

3.16 Red Alert Status/ Closure of Buildings

In the event of an Employee's work location being closed, other working arrangements as outlined earlier in this section must be explored for employees in this position before a decision is made to credit time.

Credited time will normally be afforded to employees where a decision is taken to close council buildings where they are based – this decision will be made by the Chief Executive and/or the Council Resilience Management Team (the decision to close outlying buildings may also be made by the Senior Manager in charge of the building in consultation with the Chief Executive or CRMT). These decisions will take into account meteorological warnings, advice from H&S, and the Alert status in Inverclyde and neighbouring authorities.

4 Council Employee Volunteers

- 4.1 All Council premises will have carried out a winter gritting/snow clearance plan and risk assessment at the start of the winter season. This will identify key gritting routes and snow clearance for the premises. In establishments covered by facilities management this will generally be carried out by janitorial staff. Where there is no Janitorial support, lead officers in buildings are required to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities and make arrangements in relation to gritting of the premises.

4.2 Volunteer Snow Wardens

In extreme adverse conditions and/ or where there is a need to establish clear routes to premises etc.the normal routine of snow clearance may not be possible due to staff not being able to get to work or the volume of snow having fallen. Snow Wardens will be selected from Council Volunteers (i.e. employees redirected from normal duties) to spread grit, clear snow at Council premises or establishments where there are vulnerable members of the community

- 4.3 Volunteers will be provided with appropriate equipment e.g. a shovel, high visibility clothing, snow grips, grit etc. These will be available at the premises for use by the volunteers.

An elearning course of snow clearance is available on the Councils elearning platform <http://tracking.brightwave.co.uk/> and should be completed by any employees working in snowy conditions or clearing snow.

4.4 Adverse Weather Volunteer Force

Where there are difficulties due to staff absence in maintaining essential services Staff Volunteers from across the council will be requested. They will be required to make contact with people who need essential provisions or prescriptions picked up etc. If this service is activated information will be communicated via various Council Communication channels including the council's social media websites.

Volunteers will have been through safe recruitment checks in order to work with vulnerable adults and children.

- 4.5 Volunteer employees who own or have access to a 4 x 4 vehicle may be requested to provide reliable transport in times of severe weather or emergencies. This can be to transport essential employees or supplies to areas that would be hard or impossible to reach in normal vehicles and/or in support of other critical Council services, to assist Police Scotland and Transport Scotland by taking food and water to motorists stranded by the snowfall.
- 4.6 Designated drivers of Council 4 x 4 vehicles will be requested to take the vehicles home with them and make themselves available for other duties in the event of extreme weather.
- 4.7 A Liaison Officer from existing staff resources will coordinate and manage the Snow Warden Scheme and Council Volunteers
- 4.8 Snow Wardens/Volunteers will be paid for reasonable additional expenses incurred during response to an incident.

N.B. See also separate guidance document relating to H&S training and other administrative requirements and Guidance documents in respect of Snow Wardens/Adverse Weather Volunteers

5 Council Communication Strategy

- 5.1 During periods of adverse weather, the Council's Corporate Communications Team, in partnership with the Council Resilience Management Team and ICT, will work around-the-clock to ensure the latest public information is available via the media, the Inverclyde Council Web site or twitter/ facebook pages:

- www.inverclyde.gov.uk

- <https://twitter.com/inverclyde>
- <https://www.facebook.com/InverclydeRiversideLiving>

6 Working in Hot Weather

- 6.1 In the UK there is no maximum temperature that a workplace is allowed to be, rather advice from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) states "during working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable". What is reasonable depends on the type of work being done (manual, office, etc) and the type of workplace (kitchen, air conditioned office, etc).

We also have to consider our employees who work outdoors; sunshine and heat will bring additional risks which must be considered within the risk assessments for the work. Some of the control measures advised by HSE to reduce risk include: The HSE advise the following control measures to reduce risk: reschedule work to cooler times of the day; provide more frequent rest breaks and introduce shading to rest areas; provide free access to cool drinking water; introduce shading in areas where individuals are working; encourage the removal of personal protective equipment when resting to help encourage heat loss; educate workers about recognising the early symptoms of heat stress.

If a significant number of employees are complaining about thermal discomfort, managers should carry out a risk assessment, and act on the results of that assessment.

Further guidance can be obtained in Information Sheet No. 76 on ICON please: [click here](#).

7 Miscellaneous

7.1 Teachers Circulars

- Paragraph 1.4 – Standard Circular 2.12 Appendix A
- Paragraphs 2.5 and 3.14 – SNCT Part 2, para 3.10

- 7.2 Inverclyde Council recognises the importance of Managers and Trade Unions working together in partnership for the benefit of the Council and the Policy will be applied in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Inverclyde Trade Union Pledge.

8 Review of Policy

- 8.1 This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years

Administrative Note

Each Head of Service should determine the appropriate level of management for taking decisions in relation to the terms of this guidance.