



Policy on Adverse Conditions (excluding weather)

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The provisions of this policy, which was developed by a partnership group on behalf of Grampian Area Partnership Forum, apply equally to all employees of NHS Grampian except where specific exclusions have been identified.

NHS Grampian
Policy on Attendance at Work – Adverse Conditions

This document is also available in large print and other formats and languages, upon request. Please call NHS Grampian Corporate Communications on Aberdeen (01224) 551116 or (01224) 552245.

This Policy has undergone Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment.

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Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	4
2 Inability to attend work – General	4
3 Inability to attend work – Specific	6
3.1 Community Staff	6
3.2 Clinical Staff	6
4 Arriving late/leaving early	7
5 Staff who work extra hours	7
6 Execution of the Policy	7

NHS Grampian

Policy on Adverse Conditions (excluding weather)

Please Note: For issues arising from problems due either directly or indirectly, to adverse weather conditions, please refer to the Interim National Arrangements for Adverse Weather Policy which is available on the NHS Grampian intranet. Also read this policy in conjunction with the Policy for Management of the Workforce during and after Major Incidents Including Pandemic Flu.

1. Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide managers and staff with a reference framework to follow in the event of adverse conditions and/or disruptions (excluding weather) which prevent members of staff from making normal journeys to and from their place of work e.g., transport network issues, fuel blockades, volcanic ash disruption etc. In such circumstances, staff are required to inform their manager at the earliest possible opportunity and to keep them advised of the ongoing situation.

The main priority of this policy is to:

- a) enable staff to take due regard with their own health and safety during adverse conditions;
- b) ensure that fair and equitable procedures are applied.

The implementation of this policy will be delegated, as appropriate, to all with line management responsibility for staff.

Depending on an individual's role/function, there is scope in such circumstances for their work to be undertaken at home, or a location nearer their home, for a temporary period. It is accepted, however, that these arrangements will not be an option for all staff.

Where an employee's failure to attend work during adverse conditions is for reasons other than those related to transport network issues, this should be dealt with under a more appropriate policy e.g. issues associated with Adverse Weather are covered in the Interim National Arrangements for Adverse Weather Policy. For short term caring responsibilities, please refer to the Special Leave Policy.

2. Inability to attend work – General

2.1 The basic principle is that NHS Grampian only pays staff for being at work. A range of options exists for those who are unable to attend - see below. The choice of option should be agreed between the member of staff and their manager:

- a) agreement for the employee to work time in lieu of hours lost;

- b) agreement to work from home;
- c) agreement to work from an alternative base, where reasonably practical;
- d) agreement for the employee to take the time as part of their study leave arrangements, for those who have such arrangements in place;
- e) discretionary paid special leave – see Section 2.3.;
- f) discuss the use of other forms of leave, e.g. annual leave, if extended period of leave required and discretionary paid special leave entitlements are exhausted;
- g) Public holidays due, or time back for work already undertaken – including Flexitime, for those who participate in such a scheme;
- h) allocation of authorised unpaid leave;
- i) a combination of any of the above.

2.2 Managers should consider individual situations and not penalise staff that spend time attempting to get to work, but ultimately fail and have to return home. In these circumstances, payment would be allowed, or flexitime credited, for the time spent attempting travel. Overall consideration should also encompass any significant time spent on the telephone when making alternative arrangements and in discussion with their line manager or colleagues.

2.3 In exceptional circumstances, managers have the discretion to grant special paid leave, when adverse conditions or disruptions make it impossible for the member of staff to attend work. For any prolonged periods of adverse conditions, staff should make all reasonable efforts to make alternative arrangements, where possible, to attend work.

2.4 It is a requirement for staff to notify their manager as early as possible on a daily basis of any difficulty in attending work or covering their on-call duties.

2.5 Absences must be recorded appropriately for all staff.

2.6 Should a disagreement arise, the manager should seek advice on resolving the matter from the HR hub (extn 52888). If necessary the individual has the right to raise a formal grievance and may wish to seek guidance on this from their Trade Union or Professional Organisation Representative or the HR hub. However, employees and managers are encouraged to resolve issues informally before resorting to a formal procedure.

3. Inability to attend work – Specific

It is recognised that particular circumstances exist regarding patient care for community and clinical staff. Where such circumstances arise, it is understood and expected that, while it is important for staff to have due regard for their own health and safety, they will make every reasonable effort to attend work. The following framework, consistent with the spirit of that given above, should be followed.

3.1 Community Staff

This section refers to staff who work in a community setting and undertake travel as part of their work and delivery of patient services.

Community staff should prioritise their workload by assessing whether travel is essential and discussion should take place with neighbouring teams regarding the sharing of community workload. The member of staff, in conjunction with their manager and supporting teams should make the decision of whether travel is essential based on:

- (a) the purpose of the visit;
- (b) the clinical urgency;
- (c) the patient;
- (d) the likely duration of adverse conditions and continued disruptions;
- (e) their on call duties.

If, given all of the above, they decide that travel is not essential and can be deferred, they should inform their patient(s) and, where possible, offer a new appointment/ date taking into account future adverse conditions. Where appropriate, staff should also notify their manager of the decision taken and clinical impact to the patient. A record should be kept of all decisions made.

A similar decision making process should be adopted by staff who have to travel to hospital sites, outpatient clinics and community resources.

3.2 Clinical Staff

This section refers to staff who have clinical responsibilities as part of their role and are unable to attend the workplace in which clinical work is undertaken.

Where adverse conditions lead to non-attendance at the workplace, the Clinician is expected to inform both their Manager and appropriate colleagues.

The Clinician is also expected to discuss and, where appropriate, facilitate, arrangements being made to cover their clinical responsibilities which may include:

- (a) re-scheduling patient appointments;
- (b) discussing urgent clinical matters with a colleague who has the required skills and has been identified as able to help;
- (c) direct telephone contact between the Clinician, the GP, the patient etc., to assess the urgency of clinical intervention;
- (d) on call duties.

It is expected that the Clinician will remain available for further consultation. The exception to this will be where, by mutual agreement between the Clinician and their Manager, a decision has been reached for the Clinician to take the remainder of the time as leave e.g. annual or study leave. In such circumstances, the Clinician would no longer be required for any further consultation.

In the event there are communication difficulties and staff have been unable to reach the workplace, Clinicians are expected to use a combination of professional knowledge and balanced judgement to reach a decision on how best to deal with the situation and to remain available, bearing in mind their duty of care to patients.

4. Arriving late/leaving early

During periods of adverse conditions which are out with the staff members control, it is accepted that this may lead to them arriving late at work. Similarly, taking into account updated transport reports, further disruptions, public transport status and travelling distance managers and staff should consider whether it is possible to let members of staff leave work early. Under both these circumstances payment of salary will not be affected.

5. Staff who work extra hours

Before asking those staff present to remain on the ward/in the department, managers should risk assess the situation and decide if it is possible to work with less staff. If staff have been requested to undertake extra hours, agreement should be reached between the manager and staff member as to how they will be compensated i.e. "time in lieu" or, paid in accordance with the employee's terms and conditions. When additional hours have been worked, the working time regulations should also be taken into account to allow for appropriate rest periods.

6. Execution of the Policy

In order to apply this policy in a fair and consistent manner, managers are expected to use their discretion and take a common sense approach on an individual basis.