

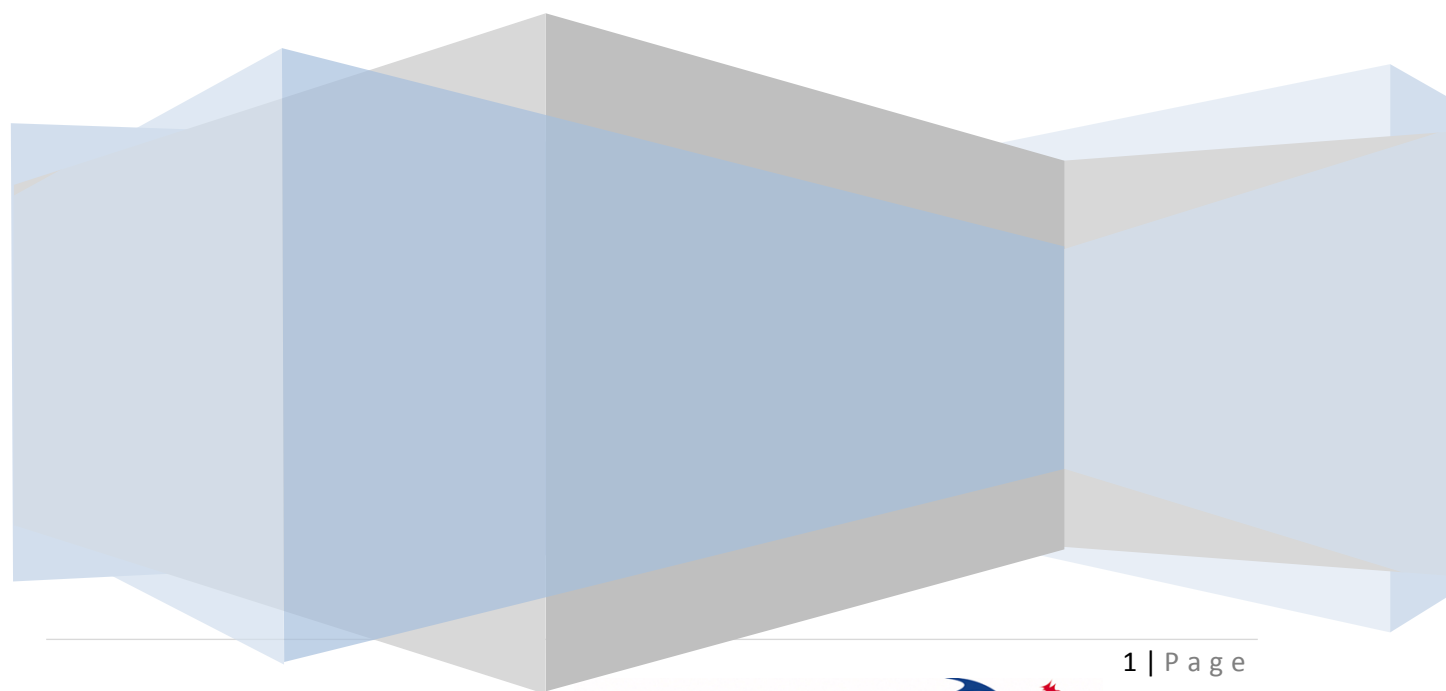
Carmarthenshire County Council



SCHOOLS' STAFF ABSENCE SCHEME

1 April 2017 – 31st March 2019

15 November 2016



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Background Information

Many schools currently source their own insurance policies through a range of providers to cover the replacement costs of teaching and learning support staff absent from school. The cover provided by these insurance policies varies greatly, as do the costs and the benefits.

105 schools are currently covered by insurance policies with premiums costing in excess of £1m for primary and secondary schools.

In order to ensure value for money, the People Management and Finance Divisions have undertaken a review of the external insurance provision. This has been done in collaboration with the Department of Education & Children and in consultation with schools within the County to develop this Schools Staff Absence Scheme. Our research has shown that a Schools Staff Absence Scheme provides financial and operational benefit to schools and the local authority where similar schemes have been introduced.

This scheme has been designed to operate on the principles of partnership with the purpose of raising funds from its membership (collectively called its *members*), which can then be used to provide common shared benefits to all members of the scheme.

Current insurance premiums and absence patterns within Carmarthenshire schools have been considered in developing the scheme. This has enabled the Authority to be assured that a well administered and managed Schools Staff Absence Scheme can operate successfully. This will enable any surplus contributions made by members, net of claims and administration costs, to be saved for the benefit of members of the scheme instead of paying insurance premiums annually to external providers.

The scheme will require initial commitment from schools for a minimum of 2 years. The balance between premiums received and claims paid will accumulate in an earmarked reserve to fund any future year variations in costs.

Scope

The Schools Staff Absence Scheme administered by Carmarthenshire County Council will provide Carmarthenshire schools scheme members with defined financial contribution towards the replacement costs of teaching and learning support staff, i.e. those employees requiring registration with the Education Workforce Council, as a result of specific types of absences from work. All Carmarthenshire schools will be eligible to join, although for administrative purposes Primary schools will be targeted in the first year.

Duration of the Scheme

The Schools Staff Absence Scheme will operate initially for two financial years from 1st April 2017 until 31st March 2019 and will operate as a non-profit making scheme for the benefit of participating members. Schools wishing to become members are advised that initial membership will be for the full two year period with the exception of schools whose current insurance policy expires part way through the first year of the scheme (See Joining the Scheme). The scheme will be reviewed at the end of the first financial year to ensure ongoing financial viability

It is anticipated that the scheme will continue beyond 31st March 2019 but this will depend on future membership levels and continued financial viability.

If the scheme ceases to operate at any point any surplus net of claim expenditure and administrative costs will be refunded proportionately to members in the scheme when it ceases based on the premium for the last financial year.

Joining the Scheme

Schools can join the Schools Staff Absence Scheme on the first day following the expiry of an existing insurance policy or can join the fund on a mutually agreed date where no current insurance is in place.

During the initial two years of the Schools Staff Absence Scheme a member's contribution will be determined by reference to the annual premium and type of insurance policy purchased by the member for the financial year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017 less 5%, or on application for schools that do not have an insurance policy in place.

The majority of schools have existing cover commencing from day 1, day 3 or day 5 of the absence. The scheme reflects these requirements.

In the few circumstances where a school's current insurance policy commences from Day 2, Day, 4 or Day 6 the following options are available to schools:

Current cover	Fund Cover Option 1	Fund Cover Option 2
Day 2	Move to Day 3 cover with 5% discount off premium	Move to Day 1 cover with 5% increase to current premium
Day 4	Move to Day 5 cover with 5% discount off premium	Move to Day 3 cover with 5% increase to current premium
Day 6	Not applicable	Move to Day 5 cover

Where a member's insurance policy expires part way through the first financial year of the Schools Staff Absence Scheme, e.g. 30th June 2017, the member's premium

will be calculated by reference to the 2016-17 premium pro rata to the remaining period of the first financial year of the scheme, i.e. 1st July 2017 to 31st March 2018. For year 2 and going forward all schemes will have an annual commencement date in April.

Where a new member has no previous insurance policy on which to base the member contribution, this will be calculated by reference to the average premium for schools of a similar size based on pupil and/or staffing numbers, as appropriate.

The annual contribution made by members will be pooled into the Schools Staff Absence Scheme to contribute towards the replacement cost of supply cover for schools who are members, following receipt of a claim and submission of appropriate supporting evidence.

It will be beneficial for members to pro-actively manage attendance in a timely manner in line with the Authority's Model school policies to support a reduction in the level of absence and subsequent level of claims from the scheme.

School Staff Attendance Scheme Cover

The Schools Staff Absence Scheme will provide:

- A set contribution towards the replacement cost of absence cover for teaching and learning support staff (pro rata part time), i.e. those requiring registration with the Education Workforce Council, employed locally by a school as defined within **Appendix A and B**;
- Administration of quotations and management of the claims process on behalf of schools;
- Access to a range of support services for staff to support regular attendance.
- Cover for Administrative and other non teaching support staff within the school where it is part of their existing policy.

The Schools Staff Absence Scheme will **not** cover:

- Absence where a school does not comply with the Authority's Model School Attendance Policies and/or the advice provided by the Authority's Human Resources (HR) Team and Occupational Health Centre (OHC), as appropriate;

Levels of School Staff Absence Scheme Cover

The Schools Staff Absence Scheme provides three levels of cover for the absence elements listed within **Appendix A**:

- Gold cover - Day 1
- Silver Cover - Day 3
- Bronze Cover - Day 5

The first 2 years' premium is based on your current cover as explained in 'Joining the Scheme'.

Exclusions from the Schools Staff Attendance Scheme as listed within **Appendix A**.

The option to change the level of cover purchased will be available in future years. The objective of the scheme is to maximise efficiency for schools and therefore the simplicity of the scheme is paramount.

Carmarthenshire County can expect:

- Each school to seek professional advice from the Authority's HR Team and OHC as may be required in order to proactively manage employee attendance;
- Each Governing Body will consider the adoption of the Authority's Model School's Sickness Absence / Attendance Policies and other associated guidance, as appropriate;
- Each school will manage absence in line with the Authority's Model School's Sickness Absence/Attendance policies and/or the advice provided by the Authority's HR Team and OHC;
- Each School will submit an Attendance Return to Payroll by the 4th of each month to enable the employee's absence record to be updated. Nil returns are required to ensure the employee receives normal salary. It is a requirement of the Scheme that reasons for absence are stated on absence returns to Payroll (and not just "sickness"). The Resourcelink HR/Payroll 'My View' self service function being rolled out to schools will enable timely accurate returns without the need for paperwork;
- In addition to the sickness absence return, each school will submit a separate claim form for each period of employee absence that a claim is being made for.

Schools can expect:

- Professional HR and OHC advice in line with the standards detailed within the Schools SLA to support positive attendance in line with the Authority's Model School Sickness/Attendance policies;
- Efficient administration of claims once received by the Schools Staff Absence Scheme Team;

- Resolution of queries relating to the attendance of individual employees in conjunction with the school to support a reduction in absence levels and reliance on supply cover;
- To be allowed 30 days after the end of the month in which absence occurs for the claim to be notified to the scheme administrators. (However, sickness must reported before the 4th of each month to payroll as detailed above);
- The end of year procedure will be circulated in advance to ensure end of year deadlines are met in accordance with the closure of accounts.

Administration fee

It is anticipated from the level of interest from schools wishing to join the Schools Staff Absence Scheme that up to two FTE administrative staff will be required to deal with the queries, claim quotations, administration and liaison with HR and finance teams. The aim is to establish smart processes to minimise administration costs and these will be reviewed regularly. The administrative costs are covered by member contributions including any pre-scheme launch administration.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us.

The Authority aims to provide a professional service and your customer feedback is valuable. Please do not hesitate to contact the Schools Staff Absence Scheme Team if:

- You wish to make a suggestion to improve the service;
- You wish to compliment the service you have been receiving;
- You are not satisfied with the service you are receiving.

Contact details

New contact details for the School Staff Absence Team will be circulated once confirmed.

In the interim, please contact:

Scheme/HR related queries - Ann Clarke on 01267 246167

Email: ALClarke@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Heidi Font on 01267 246060

Email: HFont@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Premium costs queries -

LMS Team on 01267 246710/246709/246711

Email: lms@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Appendix A

Schools Staff Absence Scheme

Summary of Cover

April 2017 to March 2019

This is a guide to the cover afforded to schools by the Schools Staff Absence Scheme: Providing the Authority's Model School's Sickness Absence /Attendance policies and/or the advice provided by the Authority's HR Team and Occupational Health Centre is followed.

Sickness Absence: This includes sickness absence as a result of:

- **Stress, Mental Health and Fatigue:** Including work and home related stress, anxiety, depression and chronic fatigue, where it is evident that professional support is in place either from occupational health services and/or registered professional service e.g. community mental health services, counselling via the GP.
- **Medical Suspensions:** Covered where Authority's HR & Occupational Health advice has been followed prior to making the decision to suspend, up to a maximum period of two calendar weeks (pro rata part time) or the suspension review date, whichever is the soonest, beyond which it would be discretionary on the part of the Authority.
- **Pregnancy Related Illness:** Covered with the exception of illness during the four weeks prior to the expected date of confinement as stated on the MAT B1 as this triggers maternity leave.
- **Phased Returns to Work:** Covered provided it is agreed in line with the Model School Sickness Absence Policy up to a maximum of 4 calendar weeks (pro rata part time)
- **Absences arising from accidents, injury or assault at work:**
 - **Teachers:** In line with STPCD, Teachers are paid full pay for a period up to 6 months from the day of the incident regardless of their continuous service (for absence as a result of injuries sustained whilst undertaking occupational duties).
 - **For all other staff:** In line with NJC Pay and Conditions of Service absence arising out of or in the course of employment is treated separately to other periods of absence for purposes of calculating entitlement under the sick pay scheme.
 - For both category of staff occupational absence is covered at the fund's agreed daily rate provided all incidents are recorded on the Authority's Corporate Accident/Incident system, a referral made to the Authority's Occupational Health Centre and an accident investigation undertaken.

Chronic and recurrent conditions: Covered provided the Authority's Model School's Sickness Absence /Attendance policies and/or the advice provided by the Authority's HR Team and Occupational Health Centre is followed.

Compassionate Leave:

- a) **Bereavement leave:** Granted at the discretion of the Head Teacher up to 5 days (family member) or up to a maximum of 10 days (immediate family only) (pro rata part time) in line with the Authority's School's Model Time Off policy.
- b) **Critical Injury/Critical Illness:** Granted at the discretion of the Head Teacher for critical illness/injury of a family member up to 5 days in line with the advice contained within Authority's Model Time Off policy.

Time Off for Trade Union Duties: 1 day per term per recognised Trade Union Representative in line with advice contained within the Authority's School's Model Time Off Policy

Maternity/Adoption & Surrogacy Leave: It is evident from research into existing insurance policies that maternity cover is widely purchased and will therefore be covered by the scheme as a set lump sum as set out in **Appendix B for the first 2 years of the scheme**. Depending on the length of maternity leave and the grade of the substantive post holder, schools may not be in a negative financial position once maternity pay and supply cover costs are paid so this cover is sometimes surplus to requirements. However, as it is unknown at the start of maternity leave the length of time an employee may take it has been agreed to include maternity cover for the first years of the scheme on a trial basis. For future years maternity cover will be reviewed and may be based on an analysis of actual maternity claims against the scheme compared to staffing budget available to members.

This is a guide to what is not covered by the Authority's Schools Staff Absence Scheme:

- Any period of absence that occurred prior to the school joining the scheme (this should be claimed via previous insurance policy, where applicable). Continuing absence from the commencement date with the scheme will be covered, provided the Authority's School Model Sickness Absence/Attendance policies and/or Authority's HR/OH advice is followed from the date of joining the scheme;
- Any absence from the date of joining the scheme that is not being managed in line with the Authority's School Model Sickness Absence/Attendance policies and/or where the Authority's HR and OH advice is not being followed;
- Pregnancy related illness is excluded beginning the 4th week before the expected date of confinement as stated on the MAT B1 certificate as the employee starts maternity leave in this situation;

- Period of notice paid in lieu;
- Cover for staff centrally employed by the Authority, e.g. Catering & Cleaning Service;
- Cover for the absence of temporary/supply staff employed to cover the absence of a substantive member of staff;
- Cover for the absence of a Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team unless the post holder undertakes timetabled teaching requiring supply cover during the period of absence or where supply cover is required for a teacher that is acting up into the leadership role;
- The cost of any rehabilitation scheme agreed by a school e.g. extended phased return to work, which falls outside the scope of the Authority's School Model Sickness Absence/Attendance policies;
- Any other exemptions with a member's existing insurance policy prior to joining the Schools Attendance Fund (subject to review after the first year);
- Uncertified and/or unauthorised absence;
- Absence claims as a result of school closure;
- Jury service (Please refer to the Authority's School's Model Time Off policy)
- Absence for planned cosmetic surgery (not recommended by a medical practitioner (Please refer to the Authority's School's Sickness Absence policy).
- Absence due to industrial action.
- All other absences not specified within the fund specification.

Appendix B

Schools Staff Absence Scheme

Level of Cover

April 2017 to March 2019

Level of cover:

The Schools Staff Absence Scheme offers 3 levels of cover in line with the majority of current insurance policies:

- **Gold Cover – Cover commences from the 1st day of absence**
- **Silver cover – Cover commences from the 3rd day of absence**
- **Bronze cover – Cover commences from the 5th day of absence**

Daily Rate Payable (except Maternity/Adoption & Surrogacy leave):

Teachers

£120 FT (pro rata part time*)

Learning Support Staff (Teaching Assistants/Higher Level Teaching Assistants)

£50 FT (pro rata part time*)

Other Support Staff (Where included in existing insurance premium)

£50 FT (pro rata part time*)

When the absent employee moves to half pay, half of the supply cover rate will be reimbursed by the Scheme. When the absent member of staff moves to a no-pay situation members can no longer claim from the Scheme.

**For part time employees, eligible absence under this scheme will be paid pro rata in accordance with the employees contracted working pattern.*

For example:

If a teacher who works Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday is absent on a Monday, £120 will be the payment.

If a teacher works mornings 5 days a week and is off for a day with eligible absence, £60 will be the payment.

Maternity/Adoption & Surrogacy Leave

Teachers

£3,000 lump sum FT (pro rata part time) for the maternity, no daily amount can be claimed

Learning Support Staff (Teaching Assistants/Higher Level Teaching Assistants)

£1,500 lump sum FT (pro rata part time) for the maternity, no daily amount can be claimed

Other Support Staff (Where included in existing insurance premium)

£1,500 lump sum FT (pro rata part time) for the maternity, no daily amount can be claimed

Appendix C

Schools Staff Absence Scheme

Support Services for Staff

April 2017 to March 2019

NHS Stress Control Training – Free 6 week course

- Learn to face your fears
- Learn ways to help you sleep
- Learn how to manage your mood
- Learn how to relax
- Learn how to control panic
- Learn how to reduce your stress

To register for a course call: 07816 064644/3, alternatively email: Stress.Control-Registrations@wales.nhs.uk

Support Agencies

- **NHS Direct:** Search for various emotional support services in your local area (0845 46 47)
- **Education Support Partnership:** Specific support for everyone working in education (08000 562 561)
- **CALL:** Community Advice and Listening line (0800 132 737)
- **MIND:** Mental health support charity (029 2039 5123)
- **Mental health crisis teams:** For information on assessments and how to access services and support:
 - Carmarthen: 01267 236017
 - Dinefwr: 01269 595473
 - Llanelli: 01554 772768
- **Live Life Fear Free:** Domestic abuse and sexual violence support 0808 8010 800 and/or refer to CCC Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

Should you find that this information is not enough and you're concerned about a member of staff's symptoms of stress or low mood, then please advise the individual to contact his/her GP or refer to the stress management programme at the Occupational Health Centre.