

KEY EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION BRIEFING SCRIPT

ISSUE 24: JANUARY 2019



NEW POLICY



POLICY REVIEW



REGULAR REMINDER

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

POLICY OVERVIEW

A revised Severe Weather Policy was approved by the Council Executive on 18 December 2018. The revisions to the previous policy were introduced following the unprecedented disruption caused by the exceptionally severe weather experienced across the country in early 2018 resulting in a Red Weather Warning being issued.

The policy covers all council employees and its provisions will be invoked on the instruction of the Chief Executive according to the severity of the prevailing weather conditions and the impact on service delivery and normal working arrangements.

KEY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

- It is your responsibility to attend work and you should not assume that you will automatically receive pay if you are unable to attend work.
- Whilst not taking unnecessary risks, you are expected to make every reasonable effort to report to your normal place of work at your normal start time. Radio or television announcements that *'only essential journeys should be made'* should not be interpreted as approval to remain home.
- In the event of severe weather you should make contact with your line manager or other designated contact person to discuss the most appropriate course of action and/or agree to activate any pre-planned contingency arrangement.
- Contingency plans may include:
 - Alternative arrangements for travelling to work (eg car sharing, public transport or walking where that is a reasonable and safe option taking into account individual personal circumstances and distance to travel).
 - Agreed arrangements to work from a different council location or from home where such options are feasible.
- If despite all reasonable efforts, you are unable to attend work, you must make contact with your line manager or other designated contact person within one hour of your normal starting time (in the case of teaching staff, contact should be made prior to the start of the school day).
- You should continue to make efforts to attend work if the weather and/or transport conditions improve throughout the day.
- Where you are prevented from attending or are delayed in arriving at your normal place of work, or alternative place of work as agreed with your line manager, you may request to:
 - take annual leave;
 - take flexi leave;
 - take unpaid leave;
 - make up the lost hours

- Only where the options above and any alternative contingency arrangements are not feasible will an application to the relevant Depute Chief Executive for special paid leave be considered.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Chief Executive may decide that a council service or building should be closed. It may however be necessary for employees designated as essential workers to remain at work due to the essential nature of the service they deliver.
- **You will be advised if you have been designated as an 'Essential Worker' and whether you will be required to attend work/remain at work or another designated location in the event of severe weather.**
- School closures may in certain circumstances only affect pupils. Teaching and other staff may be required to attend work.
- It is your responsibility to check the council website for information on building closures. During severe weather, staff messages will be displayed at: www.westlothian.gov.uk/winter
The council's Facebook page will also be used to post information for staff about building closures and disruption to normal working arrangements. Groupcall messaging will be used to communicate with Education staff in schools.
- Where normal care arrangements are disrupted as a result of severe weather (eg. school closure), the following arrangements will apply:
 - Employees may apply for special leave for the first day of disruption to care arrangements to allow for alternative arrangements to be made;
 - Employees may request annual leave, flexi-leave or unpaid leave for any additional time required to care for dependents; or
 - Employees may request to work the 'lost' hours at an alternative time.

In the event of a **Red Weather Warning**, the Chief Executive will:

- issue guidance to all staff and the trade unions outlining the contingency plans that will be invoked to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and continuity of essential service delivery. This may include staff being advised to attend their normal place of work, to attend an alternative place of work or to remain at home.
- have discretion to over-ride the normal policy provisions which may include authorising the general application of special leave or crediting staff who are able to attend work with their normal working hours/pay during the period that the warning is in force.

ROLL OUT ARRANGEMENTS

- Services should ensure that records are kept of the date that employee briefings were conducted and the employees who attended. Those records may be subject to internal audit at any given time to ensure that council employment policies are being properly disseminated throughout services.
- Employees should be encouraged to read the full Severe Weather Policy available at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2200/Policies-Procedures-and-Guidance> and accessible from work or home.