

Adverse Weather Guidance

1. Introduction

Greater Glasgow Health Board (NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde) aims to provide safe & effective levels of healthcare all year round, at all times of day & night and in all types of weather conditions.

This policy sets out the context in which NHSGGC employees can contribute to continuity of healthcare services to the population in a way which recognizes the particular challenges faced if there are major transport issues and school closures.

This policy affords managers a degree of discretion to operate within the broad parameters set out below.

2. Scope

These arrangements apply to all NHSGGC employees including bank staff.

Adverse weather is a term which describes weather events which are particularly severe and challenge models of normal service delivery. Adverse weather can include heavy snowfall, flooding from heavy rain, very high winds, very cold temperatures and also exceptionally high temperatures (this list is not exhaustive). Adverse weather is associated with RED or AMBER weather warnings from the Met. Office. The net effect of adverse weather can be to disrupt public services such as nurseries, schools, colleges and public transport systems. Adverse weather frequently causes high levels of activity for emergency services and can put pressure on the healthcare system.

3. Information Updates

When police advice is not to make any unnecessary journeys, this generally refers to journeys not involving workers who help maintain essential public services and generally refers to journeys for leisure purposes or those which could be done when conditions improve e.g. shopping. An employee should listen to media advice and assess the risk of making a journey to work.

On this page can be found links to weather updates, local authority updates, emergency services information and road and travel updates. Employees are advised to use this site to keep abreast of any developments concerning the effects of the weather. For employees who do not have ready access to PCs, managers are advised to keep workers up-to-date about weather/transport issues.

4. Staff Reporting Late for Duty

Traveling difficulties caused by the location of an employee's home in relation to their place of work are primarily the responsibility of the employee and it is the duty of every employee to report on time to their place of work.

Employees who experience difficulties in reaching their place of work (or an alternative base) on time due to adverse weather conditions must contact their line manager as soon as possible to explain their situation. Where the line manager is satisfied that the employee is experiencing genuine logistical difficulties and that all reasonable efforts are being made to report for duty on time, they may regard the employee as having completed their contracted hours for that day/shift (i.e. the employee does not have to make up time or lose payment).

In assessing the reasonableness of the employee's attempts to report on time, consideration should be given to the distance and method of transport normally used, together with weather warnings, road reports, police advice, timing of school closure reports and accessibility of alternative methods of transport. Also taken into account should be any arrangements made by the employee to vary their normal departure time and the ability, or otherwise, of other staff from the same area to report for duty on time.

If the line manager does not consider that the employee has made a reasonable attempt to arrive on time, this should be explained to the employee and the time lost will be required to be made up by the employee or payment may be restricted to hours worked only.

5. Difficulties Reaching Normal Place of Work - Alternative Base

In challenging weather conditions, it is expected that employees will make every reasonable effort to get to their normal place of work, if necessary using alternative forms of transport, including walking to a base. Where an employee feels they are simply not able to get to their usual place of work, they should make contact with their line manager at the earliest opportunity and agree to attend the nearest appropriate, accessible, alternative NHS facility. It is recognized that employees living in rural areas may find it more difficult to attend their nearest NHS establishment. In turning up at another Health Board's facility, NHSGGC employees should present a current NHSGGC Identity Badge or alternative means of identification.

Where an employee does report to an alternative base they should be allocated work, if available, appropriate to their skill set and grade. Managers or supervisors will need to check on staff credentials. This is best done directly with the manager from their usual place of work. Managers will need to accurately record all hours worked.

If a manager is concerned about an individual turning up for work without prior notification and claiming to be an NHSGGC employee, then they should contact the relevant HR staff who will arrange for further checks to be carried out (where possible & depending upon time of day). Checks may also be made with professional registration bodies if a line manager seeks additional reassurance.

Managers will also need to be prepared to accept staff who report to NHSGGC premises but who work for other NHS Boards e.g. NHS Lanarkshire, Highlands, Ayrshire & Arran or Forth Valley. Where employees from other Boards turn up for duty at NHSGGC sites and vice versa, sufficient reasonable checks must be carried out between the 2 employers to confer confidence in the arrangement. This is likely to involve phone calls between managers and/or local HR representatives (available data may be limited).

An employee from another organization may be used to different practices and their competence will be an unknown commodity, therefore an employee from another Board should be closely supervised at all times, where circumstances allow. NHSGGC awaits additional guidance on this matter from the West of Scotland Regional Planning Group. This will be appended to this document

once formally issued to the service. Where NHSGGC employees work out of Local Authority buildings and these are closed, they should attend their nearest NHS base.

6. Staff Unable to Report for Duty

Employees who are unable to report for duty due to adverse weather must contact their line manager as soon as possible to explain their predicament. Where the line manager is satisfied that the employee does have insurmountable travel difficulties or must stay at home to respond to a domestic emergency (e.g. flood or significant damage to their property) that make it unreasonable to expect the employee to attend their usual work place or an alternative NHSGGC site, then an appropriate period of annual leave or unpaid leave may be granted.

Where schools, nurseries and day centres are closed due to adverse weather and an employee has no other alternative than to stay at home to care for their dependents, short-notice annual leave or unpaid leave will usually be granted in the first instance. In instances where the employee has run out of annual leave, consideration can also be given to use of parental or special leave. In assessing the reasonableness of the employee's inability to attend an NHSGGC work place (or alternative NHS site), consideration should be given to the availability of public transport, together with weather warnings, police advice, road reports and school closure reports.

7. Home Working

For a small number of staff, home working may be an appropriate alternative to reporting for work if they are unable to reach their normal place of work or an alternative base.

If an employee is already identified as a home worker or authorized to work from home and they can make the case that home working is their best, safest & most viable option that day, then that should be agreed with their manager.

If an employee is not an established, authorized home worker but is able to use remote access and has sufficient work tasks which can be completed at home, then employees may ask to utilize this option on the day they are unable to get to work. The decision on this will be made by the line manager and will be dependant on the staffing levels required to provide safe services on site. Usual governance arrangements would apply in terms of management of employee productivity.

8. Patient Non Attendance

If a whole or substantial part of a service is without patients or unable to access patients, it is expected that managers and team leaders will attempt to redeploy employees who have reported for work to areas which are still operational. Employees would not be expected to return home in these circumstances as they may be able to help maintain key clinical or support services elsewhere. Similarly office and support functions employees could be asked to make an important contribution to frontline services, for example, health records and reception services, ensuring that we are able to meet the needs of service users. Every effort will be made to maintain service continuity across the Board area.

9. Facility Closures

It is highly unlikely that any NHS premises will close unless there are particularly extreme issues such as a fire or flood. In the event of services being closed, employees from that service may be redeployed to other areas which have a need for additional staff.

10. Early Release of Employees

In some circumstances, line managers - while balancing the needs of the service - should consider the early release of employees, or respond to employee requests to leave work early, due to adverse conditions (if, for example, they have a great distance to travel or if there has been notification that bus/train services are being curtailed or cancelled or in response to police advice).

Where a decision is taken to send staff home early, or advise them to leave early, then the manager is at liberty to grant payment to the end of the normal shift period.

Patients needs are an obvious priority and NHSGGC will require to ensure the needs of patients can be met before any staff can be released.

11. Record Keeping

Leave should be recorded on the appropriate record card for future reference and to enable monitoring of its fair application throughout NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde. It must also be notified to Payroll to ensure appropriate payment and recording.

Equally where employees have worked additional (e.g. excess or overtime) hours to help service areas operate safely, accurate records should be maintained and payment will be made once services revert to normal.

Where employees perform work away from their usual base, managers must keep accurate records of names, dates and times.

12. Leadership

It is particularly important that wherever possible managers and supervisors are able to get to their place of work to offer visible leadership and to record/co-ordinate staff availability. Clearly in extreme circumstances, this may not prove possible (managers too, may need to attend a local NHS establishment) but managers/supervisors are invited to set a good example to their employees.

13. Employer Support

There may be occasions where employees remain at work (e.g. stay overnight) during periods of adverse weather in order to ensure safe provision of services to patients that day and the next. In such circumstances NHSGGC shall provide employees with somewhere appropriate to sleep and shall provide food and drink arrangements once patients' needs have been attended to. Where possible, assistance will also be offered to any employee who incurs transport problems and any extraordinary costs. Local Site Managers may be in a position to assist employees.