



ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. **OVERVIEW**

All employees are covered by our policy for reporting and managing absences and sick pay.

We reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

As documented in the staff handbook, from your first day of absence a self-certification will need to be completed on your return, if greater than 7 days you will require a statement of Fitness for Work from your G.P. All period of prolonged absence must be covered by a Doctor's note which must be forwarded to the Parish Clerk.

The Parish Council should be kept regularly informed by the member of staff who is absent and to inform of an anticipated return to work.

Sick pay entitlement will be made on a sliding scale depending on length of continuous service and sickness period as per the staff handbook.

2. **LONG-TERM, OR PERSISTENT ABSENT**

- Formal steps may be taken if there is concern about the number of days taken off for sickness or injury.
- What action is taken will depend on reasons and pattern for absence. Informal talks may be held and medical evidence may be sought to better understand the situation.
- Review meetings may also be necessary to explore whether reasonable adjustments can be made to help either return to work or work for longer periods.
- The council shall have the right at any time to require you to submit to examination by an independent medical practitioner selected by the council, to obtain a confidential report on your condition from such practitioner and to discuss with such practitioner the findings of his/her examination and his/her prognosis of your likely recovery and or fitness to resume work and recommended treatment
- If medical evidence is required we will usually ask for examination by a doctor, an occupational health therapist or another specialist of our choice. The Parish Council will pay for this and all reports will be kept confidential. Consent from the employee will be sought to have full access to medical reports and to discuss the contents with the relevant medical practitioner. The Employee does not have to consent, but if they do not, decisions will be made based on existing medical and other information. Reasonable adjustments to the role and/or work space will be made if the employee is found to have a disability
- The Parish Council understand that this process is difficult and upsetting if the employee suffers from a serious health condition and they might feel as if the council is pressurising the employee into returning to work before they are ready. The Parish Council does not want them to feel that way but no business can continue employing people indefinitely if they are not able to work. It is better that all employees are fully aware of the thought process and intentions than the alternative, which is lack of communication and eventually deciding to dismiss without advance notice of what the consequences of continued absence would be.

- The Parish Council will write to the employee before any formal meeting and explain when, where, and why it is taking place. If this date is not acceptable a mutually convenient alternative date will be arranged.
- At the meeting, the discussion will be why the employee is off work, how long they expect to remain off work, and whether they are likely to be off work for the same reason in the future. There will also be a review of any medical evidence, and explore whether further reports are needed and if there is anything the Parish Council can do to help to improve their health and/or make it easier for them to attend work. If they have been off work long term the Parish Council may suggest a return-to-work program; if there is persistently absence, they may set targets to improve the attendance against a deadline. The employee should also expect to be warned that they may face dismissal if the attendance does not improve.
- Should the employee be unable to return to work, or fails to meet the deadline set for improved attendance, they will be asked to attend another meeting. The aim at this meeting will be to find out if the situation is expected to change, and the Parish Council may have to give notice of dismissal if it becomes clear they are either unlikely to return to work or their attendance will not improve in the short term. Before issuing a notice of dismissal, options will be explored whether redeployment within the Parish Council could be made which would address the attendance issues and consideration will be given to any other issues that may want discussing.
- If the Parish Council concludes that the employee is not off work for a medical condition and they are unable to offer any other satisfactory explanation the employee may face action under the Parish Councils disciplinary procedure. This may lead to dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct.

3. RIGHT OF APPEAL

- An employee has the right to appeal if the Parish Council dismisses them on the grounds of their long-term absence. A response must be lodged within a week of being told they have been dismissed by writing directly to the Parish Clerk. In the response to that letter there must be an explanation of exactly what is being appealed.
- Wherever possible, the appeal hearing meeting will not be led by the Parish Clerk which took the decision to dismiss you. The Parish Council's final decision will be sent to you in writing, where possible within two weeks of the appeal hearing. There is no further right to appeal the dismissal.

4. RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED

- The employee has the right to take a colleague or trade union representative with them to any formal meeting called under this procedure, including the appeal meeting. The employee should tell us as soon as possible who will accompany them, it is their responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If a work colleague is chosen the Parish Council will not prevent them from attending, but may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work causes operational problems.
- The colleague or union rep can, if this is a preference, explain the key points of the case to the meeting and can respond on behalf of the employee. It is also acceptable to confer during the meetings, they must not however, answer questions put directly to the employee or try to prevent the Parish Council asking questions or outlining its arguments.

5. OTHER TYPES OF ABSENCE

- **Jury Service** – The Parish Clerk must be informed as soon as possible. While on Jury Service, employees will receive full pay minus any allowances paid by the court
- **Other public duties** – Time off will be allowed to carry out duties in some public roles, including magistrate and school governor. As soon as duties are known and meeting dates available the Parish Clerk should be informed. The Parish Council will not pay for time taken off work.
- Reasonable time off may be taken to deal with emergencies involving dependants. A dependant is defined as spouse, civil partner, children (including adopted children), or a parent. Also included are other people who live in your household or anyone else who relies on the employee – for example an elderly family member. Procedures for sickness leave must be followed.
- The circumstances of each case will be considered to allow for some flexibility, but the time taken off must both be reasonable and necessary to deal with something immediately and /or respond to an emergency. Normally this means hours, or a maximum of one or two days and this type of leave is not designed to provide care over the longer term.
- No payment will be made for time taken off for dependants
- **Other family related absences** – Time off for family related matters will be paid including maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave.
- **Carrying out trade union duties** – Elected trade union officials are legally entitled to reasonable time off to fulfil obligations and will be paid at full basic rate for all related absences during working hours. Duties carried out outside working hours will not be paid.