



## **Management of Sickness Absence Policy 6**

**Adoption Date: 16.09.2016**

**Review Date: As Required**

### **1.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.1 The Council operates a standard procedure for the recording of sickness absence. It is hoped that in so doing, it will quantify the level of sickness absence and, if appropriate, take steps to reduce it.
- 1.2 Equally important is the need for the Council to ensure a fair and consistent approach to the management of sickness absence. Other objectives that the policy aims to achieve are:
- The promotion of employees' health, safety and welfare.
  - The saving of resources.
  - The identification of changes necessary in working practices or environment.
  - Ensuring that the Council complies with the Disability Discrimination Act
- 1.3 The responsibility for applying the provisions of this policy lies with the Clerk.

### **2.0 Application of Policy**

- 2.1 All provisions of the policy will apply to all staff, irrespective of their location or designation.

### **3.0 Recording of Sickness Absence**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The Council has procedures for recording absence for the purpose of paying employees in accordance with NJC terms and conditions relating to sick pay.

- 3.2 The Council has a standard procedure for monitoring sickness absence. A pre-requisite of effective sickness absence management is accurate, accessible and well-presented information. The aim of section 3.6 of the policy is to achieve that goal.

#### **3.3 Reporting Procedure**

The recording and monitoring procedures described in 3.6 and 4.0 below do not affect the current and separate procedure for the reporting of sickness absence for sick pay.

- 3.4 Accordingly, each member of staff who is ill and unable to attend work, must telephone the Council Office, on (01444) 451610 before 10.00 am on each of the days they are absent and explain their absence, unless they have been to see their GP and have been given a doctor's certificate which has been forwarded to the Council Office. This applies to all staff, including office staff, grounds staff and caretaking staff. The Clerk will be informed immediately of all sickness absences.
- 3.5 On returning to work the Clerk must ensure the employee completes the sickness absence form, and produce any doctor's certificates/'fit notes' as appropriate and arrange a return to work interview. (Copies of these forms are attached to this policy.)
- 3.6 **Recording Procedure**  
An Employee Sickness Record form should be used to record all employee sickness absence including appointments with a GP or at hospital. The form records each incidence of sickness absence. Specific information to be recorded on the form is detailed below:
- The length of each absence in working days, including half days.
  - Whether the absence is self-certified or authorised by a doctor's certificate.  
(Reasons for each absence can be obtained from the sickness absence forms.)
- 3.7 It should be emphasised that employees have the right to confidentiality regarding illness. Considerable care should, therefore, be given to the security of records. Those responsible for maintaining sickness records must ensure that absence records are held in a secure place and made available only to authorised staff.
- 3.8 Employees should be permitted to see a copy of their own sickness record on request.

#### **4.0 Monitoring of Short Term Sickness Absence**

- 4.1 **Introduction**  
As an employer the Council has a responsibility to ensure that its sick pay scheme is not abused. The Council should also raise awareness of the effects of absence on colleagues and service delivery.
- 4.2 Monitoring absence in a systematic fashion also facilitates an early identification of an employee's health problems and instances of working practices or environments, which may be contributing to sickness absence.
- 4.3 **Monitoring Procedure**  
In dealing with sickness absence, the Council should ensure a consistent approach between the various categories of staff.
- 4.4 The Clerk (or Deputy Clerk) will, therefore, play a major role in managing each particular case and will review the sickness records of employees at the end of each quarter.

## **5.0 Approaches to High Levels of Sickness Absence**

5.1 Sickness absence falls into four categories and each demands a different response. By examining the records, the Clerk should determine into which of the following categories of absence the case falls:

- (1) A one-off absence (e.g. minor operation).
- (2) A series of absences due to one diagnosed cause.
- (3) Serious long-term illness.
- (4) Multiple absences due to minor unrelated illnesses.

5.2 The approach adopted will differ according to the nature of the absence(s). Early Occupational Health intervention after 10-15 days' absence has been shown in many cases to have dramatic effects on long-term sickness, by starting to find solutions whilst the psychology remains one of temporary absence.

5.3 In the first case, for example, a minor operation will have usually remedied an employee's ill health and no further action will be necessary. The Council may, however, want to satisfy itself that the health issue will not recur or be further exacerbated by the duties of the employee's job, by writing to an employee's GP when they return to work, after first obtaining permission from the employee. The Council reserves the right to refer the employee to their own doctor for a second opinion, under the NJC terms and conditions.

5.4 Absences falling into the second category may require an exploration of the possibility of redeployment of an employee into another job or job re-design as described in 7.5 below.

5.5 Absence cases falling into the third category, which do not lend themselves to adaptation of job duties or redeployment, may lead to ill-health early retirement or termination of employment on grounds of capability and will be dealt with in accordance with 7.8 below and in accordance with NJC terms and conditions.

5.6 Absences in category four may be the most common, and may also form recognisable patterns, e.g., where someone calls in sick with a variety of ailments on the last week of the month or during school holidays. These absences may be the hardest to address and in some cases will need to be dealt with using the Capability Policy or the Disciplinary Policy.

## **6.0 Return to Work Interviews**

6.1 The Clerk will carry out an interview with an employee returning to work after each spell of sickness absence. The employee will be advised that the interview will be recorded on the return to work interview form and kept on their personnel file.

6.2 The interview should be carried out sympathetically, in private, by the Clerk and should be aimed at confirming the cause of the absence and indicating the Council's interest in the welfare of the employee.

## **7.0 Long Term Sickness Absence and Referrals to General Practitioner**

7.1 Definition

The Council considers any single absence of a duration of two (2) or more weeks as being long term. Where there is a suggestion that the absence is in any sense work-related, the Clerk should contact the Chairman of the Council immediately.

7.2 Approach

The Council should make and maintain regular formal contact with the employee during any period of long-term sickness.

7.3 The Council may obtain written permission from the employee in order for the Council to approach the employee's GP. The approach to the GP is in turn intended to provide the following information:

- A prognosis of the employee's illness in terms of when they are likely to be fit to return to work.
- Whether adaptation of the job, working hours or environment might facilitate an early return to work.
- An early indication of whether a return to any form of work is unlikely.
- Whether the normal duties undertaken by the individual could be a contributory factor to the illness.

7.4 Where an employee has undergone or is about to undergo major surgery or medical treatment or has an apparently very serious medical condition, the Clerk should determine an approach in consultation with the Chairman of the Council.

7.5 Redeployment and Accommodation of Disability

In accordance with ACAS guidance on redundancy and the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, the Council will endeavour to accommodate an employee in their current post if they are suffering from ill health or disability.

7.6 Accommodation may involve re-designing the individual's job, adapting the working environment or changing the hours of work. If accommodation proves impossible, every attempt will be made to redeploy the employee into a position for which they are capable.

7.7 In pursuing its policy of attempting to accommodate or redeploy staff the Council will make full use of the advice and assistance of external agencies such as the Placement, Assessment and Counselling Team (PACT) of the Employment Service. Employees will also be fully consulted regarding such options.

7.8 Ill Health Early Retirement. Termination of Employment on Grounds of Capability Incapacity

Where accommodation and redeployment are not viable options, ill health early retirement or termination of the individual's employment will be the only options. No decision to pursue these options would be taken without reviewing the medical evidence and consulting personally with the employee

## **Additional Notes**

### The return to work interview:

These notes are intended as guidelines to assist with conducting return to work interviews with members of staff.

- When an individual returns to work following a period of sickness absence, you should arrange to have a meeting with them as soon as is convenient, but certainly this meeting should be on the day they return to work.
- You should advise the individual that the meeting will be recorded and that a copy will be placed on their personnel file.
- If possible the meeting should be held away from the individual's usual work environment and is at all times confidential.
- During the meeting, you should enquire sympathetically as to the person's health, initially to ascertain whether or not they are fully fit to return to work, and as to the nature of the illness.
- If you have concerns that there are either work related or external factors that are affecting the person's health, you may want to make a tactful enquiry. It may be that the person may benefit from counselling by a qualified practitioner or by visiting their GP for additional advice and support.
- You should share any concerns you may have with the employee about their level of sickness absence where there have been a number of absences due to minor and unrelated illnesses.
- In serious cases, where there is no improvement as a result of such counselling, this could lead to disciplinary action being taken. In no case, however, would the Council issue a warning before first discussing the matter with an employee and, where appropriate, referring them for medical opinion.
- It should also be stressed that the aim of any counselling or warning associated with absence would not be to cast doubt on the legitimacy of absences, but to indicate that they were having adverse operational effects and that the Council requires an improvement.
- At the end of the meeting, advise the person again that a record will be kept on their personnel file and that they have the right to see their file should they so wish.
- After the meeting, you should ensure that the notes from the meeting are placed on the individual's personnel file. If this is not immediately possible, the form should be placed in an envelope and clearly labelled "confidential".



# CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## SICKNESS ABSENCE FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first day of absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Person contacted to report sickness absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of return to work: \_\_\_\_\_

If part time, date fit to return to work (If earlier than the actual date of return.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature and symptoms of illness** (Please be as comprehensive as possible)

Did you visit your Doctor?

If so, what was the advice given?

Did you visit a pharmacist?

If so what was the advice given?

Details of any medications taken or additional treatment required

I confirm that the above information is correct and that I am fit and well to return to work.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***Once complete, please pass this form on to the Clerk to complete the Return to Work interview overleaf***

## Return to Work Interview

### To be completed by the Clerk

- Was the sickness absence reporting procedure followed? Yes  No
- Is the member of staff fit to return to work? Yes  No
- Has a doctor's 'Fit Note' been submitted?  
(For absences of more than seven calendar days) Yes  No  N/A
- Was the absence work related e.g. accident at work or  
General conditions of work area? Yes  No  N/A
- Is an Occupational Health referral required? Yes  No  N/A
- If 'Yes' has the member of staff given permission? Yes  No  N/A
- Are any workplace adjustments required? Yes  No  N/A

Details of any adjustment required, who is to action, a timescale for completion and any other action to be taken or agreed.

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Is a risk assessment being requested? Yes  No  N/A

Tick to confirm that the Sickness/Absence has been recorded

Date of meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Clerks' signature \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of member of staff \_\_\_\_\_

***Please ensure both sides of this form are fully completed***