

Harrietsham Parish Council

Staff Sickness Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out the procedures for reporting sickness and absences caused by injury. It applies to short periods through to continuous periods of long-term absence. The Council recognises that there are occasions when an employee will need support and guidance to help with their reasons for absence. The Council also needs to ensure that the high-quality service to the Parish is not affected by absence, and it will therefore manage absence to ensure fair and equal treatment of all employees. The Council respects the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness. This policy will be implemented in line with relevant data protection legislation and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988.

Scope

This policy applies to all Employees of the Council.

Purpose

The parish Council's sickness absence control procedure is there to provide a fair and consistent framework for handling staff sickness. It makes the employees' responsibilities clear and gives guidance to Members.

Absence Definition

This policy refers to sickness absence that may or may not be paid. Sickness can be defined as: Incapacity to carry out the duties and responsibilities which the employee is contractually obliged to do because of their own illness or injury.

Reporting of Sickness Absence

If an employee is absent from work on account of sickness or injury, they or someone on their behalf should inform the Clerk (or the Chairman of the Staffing Committee in the case the Clerk) of the reason for their absence as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the working day on which the absence first occurs. The report should include the nature of the illness or injury, the expected length of absence and any urgent work that requires attention whilst absent.

1. Short Absences

In respect of absence lasting up to seven calendar days, the employee is required to self-certificate their absence. A copy of the certificate should be sent to the Clerk or the Chairman

2. Extended Absences

When an absence exceeds seven calendar days, the employee must provide a Fit for Work certificate stating the reason for the absence and thereafter provide a consecutive medical certificate to cover any subsequent period of absence. The Council reserves the right to require an employee at any time to submit to a medical examination by a medical practitioner nominated by the Council, subject to the provisions of the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 where applicable. Any costs associated with the examination will be met by the Council. There may also be occasions where the Council considers it necessary to request a medical report on an employee's health from their GP or consultant. Where a medical report is necessary, the employee will be informed of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and they will be asked to

give their written consent for the Council to contact their GP or consultant to obtain a medical report. Copies of all Fit to Work certificates are to be held by the Parish Clerk.

Payment of Sickness Absence

As a responsible employer, the Parish Council undertakes to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend to work due to sickness, provided that the employee complies with this policy. Individuals should see their Contract of Employment for details of sick pay entitlement. The employee will be paid as per their agreed basic remuneration in line with the scale of payment for any one year that runs from 1 April to 31 March. Entitlement to payment is subject to notification of absence and production of medical certificates as required above.

Sickness during Probation Period

Whilst it is recognised that there may be some genuine absence during the probationary period, prolonged or frequent absence during a probationary period may result in failure to confirm an employee in post or the termination of the contract prior to the completion of the probationary period.

Sickness during Annual Leave

If you are sick or injured during a holiday and would have been incapable of work, you may choose to treat the period as sick leave and reclaim the affected days of holiday. If you are already on sick leave before pre-arranged holiday you may choose to cancel any days of holiday and treat them as sick leave. In both cases the same reporting requirements are required.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences may be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy.

Medical Treatment and Appointments

Where possible you should attend medical appointments or receive treatment outside of normal working hours or at other times to minimise business disruption. If appointments are required during normal working hours then you should obtain approval in advance.

Absence Due to Disability/Maternity

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records.

Working on Sickness Absence

Whilst on absence due to sickness or injury, the employee is not permitted to undertake any paid work for another employer or for any business established by them without express permission from the Council.

Maintaining Contact during Sickness Absence

It is important that the employee and the Council keep in contact during the period of absence. From the employee perspective, it is important that they feel "included" when they are not at work due to sickness, and that the Council cares about their condition and is keen to get them back to work. From the Parish Council's perspective, it is important, from both a planning and also cost point of view that the Council understands how long they might be without a member of staff and when they might expect them to return. The onus for continued contact remains with each party.

Return to Work

When an employee returns to work following a period of sickness absence, their Line Manager should discuss the absence with the employee to determine whether:

- The employee is well enough to return to work, without causing further impact to themselves or the Council,
- The reason for absence is likely to recur. If so, what can be done to mitigate the impact on both the employee and the Council.

When an employee, has been away for an extended period of sickness absence and is nearing the time when they are able to return to work, they should meet with the Council to discuss return to work arrangements. Return to work might need to be on a phased basis, there may be a need to adapt working practices, albeit temporarily, or indeed equipment used may need to be adapted or changed.

Return of Parish Council Equipment

If the employee is off sick for an extended period of time (e.g. one month or more) the Council may require them to return Council equipment until they are well enough to return to work. If the employee does not return to work following a period of sickness absence, they will be required to return all outstanding Council equipment on the date of termination of his or her employment.

Unsatisfactory Sickness Absence

A formal review will be triggered by frequent short-term absences or long-term absence. This review should look at any further action required to improve the employee's attendance and wellbeing. If the reasons for absence are:

- considered unsatisfactory,
- a cause for concern and/or are affecting the services provided,
- or an employee is in breach of this policy, the Council may seek to take disciplinary procedures which could lead to the termination of the employee's contract.