

Absence Management Policy

Last Reviewed: 30th September 2021

As adopted 11th October 2021

Minute ref: 106/21b

Introduction

1. The Council wishes to ensure that it delivers quality services. This can only be achieved if it is possible to provide consistency and ensure that disruption to service provision, due to staff absence, is minimised. In dealing with sickness absence the organisation must balance the needs of individual employees against the need to provide and manage quality services, and the cost of employing temporary staff to cover absences.
2. The Council recognises that there will be occasions where employees will be absent through sickness or ill health. Policies and procedures are designed to ensure that any such absences are dealt with fairly and consistently, whilst taking into account individual circumstances. The Council is sympathetic where employees have genuine sickness, but extended or recurrent absence that affects the level of service provided by the Council must be addressed.
3. Where, following discussion with an employee, problems relating to patterns of absence have been identified, and where counselling is considered a way forward in helping to identify and resolve those issues, that shall be the first step taken before any formal action is considered. The Council will also make use of Occupational Health experts where health assessments are appropriate.
4. Absence will not normally be regarded as a disciplinary matter, but if the reasons for absence are considered unsatisfactory or if an employee is in breach of the absence procedures, it may be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures.
5. Where an employee's persistent short term absence or long-term absence is a cause for concern and/or affecting the services provided, the Council may seek to terminate an employee's contract.

Reporting Sickness

6. Employees are required to notify the Council as soon as practical on the first day of sickness, giving an indication of the likely length of absence. If an employee's sickness is likely to last longer than originally indicated, the employee must keep in regular contact with the Council about the likely date of return.

7. Where an employee is absent for more than four consecutive days (including weekends) they are required to obtain a Medical Certificate from their Doctor or Hospital. The Medical Certificate should be sent to the Council as it is received.
8. Where an employee does not submit a Medical Certificate for a period of absence over 7 days they are not entitled to, and will not be paid, sick pay and may be disciplined for unauthorised absence.
9. Where an employee returns to work within seven days, a self-certification form SC2 must be completed (available at https://public-online.hmrc.gov.uk/lc/content/xfafoms/profiles/forms.html?contentRoot=repository:///Applications/PersonalTax_iForms/1.0/SC2&template=SC2.xdp).

Probationary Period

10. 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.

Review of Sickness

11. The Parish Clerk shall keep records of sickness absence and report to Council. Where an individual's absence level is greater than normal, or where the pattern of sickness is a cause for concern, it is the responsibility of the Council to raise the sickness record with the employee.
12. Absence is not normally regarded as a disciplinary matter, but if the reasons for absence are considered unsatisfactory or if an employee is in breach of the absence policies and procedures it may be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures
13. Where the Council is concerned about an employee's absence record or length of absence from work, they must meet with the employee to discuss their sickness record. The Council may require an employee to produce a Medical Certificate for all absences and where there is continued concern employees should receive first and final warnings that their absence records could lead to the termination of their contract.
14. Examples of absences causing concern include :
 - an absence repeated in three consecutive months
 - where there are four periods of absence in any six months
 - where there is a long history of intermittent sickness
15. Where an employee's persistent short term absence or long-term absence is a cause for concern and/or affecting the services the Council provides, it may seek to terminate an employee's contract. This will only be done after
 - Discussion with the employee
 - Having sought Independent Medical Advice at no cost to the employee
 - Offering suitable alternative employment, where appropriate
 - Offering counselling, if appropriate

16. Employees have the right to refuse any independent medical examination, and the right to see, or withhold the results of any such examination and the right of appeal against any termination on the grounds of ill-health.
17. An employee's absence may be for reasons other than ill-health. Where it is clear that this may be the case, the Council should consider alternative appropriate action to resolve the difficulties facing the employee. In such cases the Council will seek advice from Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils as to options.

Statutory Sick Pay

18. Employees are eligible for SSP only after 7 or more days incapacity for work, including weekends and holidays. Employees must complete the Absence Notification Form either self-certifying their absence or provide a Medical Certificate. Employees only receive SSP if their earnings are above a statutory minimum. Employees will not receive SSP if they do not advise the Council of their absence or there is good cause to doubt an employee's incapacity for work.
19. SSP is not paid where employees are entitled to other benefits e.g. Maternity or Disability Benefits, they are over 65, or they have exceeded the maximum for payment of SSP.