



Huntington Parish Council

Sickness Policy

POL_115



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Version Control

Version N ^o	Content	Date Implemented	Lead Cllr
1	Sickness Absence Policy Implemented	December 2024	Cllr Newman



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Huntington Parish Council are committed to the fair, consistent and effective management of sickness absence for its staff.
- 1.2 Through this we aim to reduce the impact of sickness absence on the Council's ability to provide services to the community and others accessing its assets.
- 1.3 Additionally, Huntington Parish Council are resolute in its support of those employees who have a disability falling within the scope of the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.4 This policy sets in place the guidelines we expect our employed staff to follow in cases where they are too unwell to work – covering both short-term and long-term absence.
- 1.5 This Policy applies to:
 - Physical illness or injury.
 - Mental health conditions.

2. Communicating absence to the Parish Council

- 2.1. If you are unwell and cannot work, you must:
 - Contact the Clerk before the normal start time of your shift (in circumstances where the Clerk is unavailable, please direct contact to the Assistant Clerk or Chair).
 - Contact in these circumstances is defined as a phone call or, if during unsocial hours, an email. SMS texts or social media messaging platforms are generally not suitable methods of communicating absence and may not be accepted.
 - It is the member of staff's responsibility to ensure that the Parish Council is notified as soon as possible.
 - Unless you have a 'Fit to Work' certificate, detailing a period of absence, you are expected to contact the Parish Council each day of absence. In special circumstances the Chair or Clerk can make exceptions to this rule.
- 2.2 If you are absent for seven days or less (including weekends and other non-working days) you must complete a self-certification form upon returning to work and send this to the Clerk.
- 2.3 If you are absent for more than seven days (including weekends and other non-working days) you must provide a 'Fit to Work' certificate from your Doctor and continue to do so as each new certificate is issued. This certificate details whether you are too ill to work or whether you could work with support from the Parish Council. This is an important document as it will assist the Parish Council with supporting you as part of the return-to-work process.
- 2.4 All sickness absences will be retained in your employment record and will be monitored to identify recurrent sickness trends - which may necessitate further action.

3. Return to Work Meetings

- 3.1. On your return to work following a sickness absence the Clerk or Staffing Committee will conduct a Return-to-Work meeting with you to ascertain your fitness to resume duties.
- 3.2. Ideally, the Return-to-Work meeting will take place on the day of your return.
- 3.3. In some circumstances, the Clerk or Chair may instruct you not to resume duties until the meeting has been held. This will ensure that the Parish Council are satisfied in your ability to safely return to work.
- 3.4. The Return-to-Work meeting will include:
 - A discussion about the reasons for absence.
 - A review of your absence record over the last 12-months and any impact this will have on your pay and/or progression through the Sickness Absence Policy.



- An attempt to identify if the Parish Council can take any steps to help you transition back into work safely and with confidence.
- A review of self-certification form and/or medical certification.
- A handover of any work if applicable.

4. Formal Absence Management

- 4.1. For the management of short-term absence, the Parish Council consider an employee breaching one of the following conditions as a cause for concern. Should this happen, it will be deemed necessary to arrange a formal meeting and the employee will be deemed to be on Stage 1 of the Absence Management process:
 - i. Three periods of sickness within a twelve-month rolling period.
 - ii. Seven days of sickness within a twelve-month rolling period.
 - iii. A pattern of absence which causes concern, for example: persistent absence on the same day of the week; persistent absence on or immediately before/after Public Holidays, school holidays, annual leave or Parish events (not an exhaustive list) which evidences a pattern of absence.
- 4.2. For the management of long-term absence, an employee breaching the following condition will be raised to Stage 1 of the Absence Management process and it will be necessary to arrange a formal meeting:
 - a. Any absence lasting four consecutive weeks or more where there is evidence that the absence is due to ongoing or repeated long-term or chronic complaints.
- 4.3. The purpose of a formal absence management meeting is to provide assistance and support to the employee to improve their attendance.
- 4.4. If an employee breaches one of the conditions above, their line manager will seek to hold a meeting with them. The line manager will speak to the employee, where possible, and issue a letter inviting them to attend the meeting.
- 4.5. The meeting will be held in a timely manner as soon as possible following the employee's return to work or as part of a welfare meeting if a return to work is not imminent. Note that the Return to Work meeting and Absence Management meeting are different events and not the same meeting.
- 4.6. There are three formal stages to Absence Management:
 - Stage 1 – If there is no visible improvement or absence persists move to
 - Stage 2 – If there is no visible improvement or absence persists move to
 - Stage 3 – Final review where potential dismissal is considered on the grounds of ill health capability.
- 4.7. At each stage of the process a review meeting with the employee will be held. During each meeting the employee's absence record will be reviewed and improvement targets set.
- 4.8. Where the absence relates to long term or chronic conditions, the Parish Council will seek advice from South Staffordshire Council HR Services with possible referral to a Occupational Health Service to ensure that the absence is managed in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.9. Where the employee's absence record does not improve, they will be escalated to the next Stage until, at Stage 3, where the meeting may ultimately result in a decision to terminate the employment. This will normally only happen once targets, support, work adjustments or ill-health retirement (if applicable) have been considered. The employee must be advised that the eventual outcome of the Absence Management process may result in dismissal.
- 4.10. A copy of the meeting outcome will be provided to the to the employee.



5. Medical Appointments

- 5.1. The Parish Council understands that you may, from time to time, need to attend medical appointments. Where possible these should be made in your own time and not conflict with any scheduled duties required by the Parish Council.
- 5.2. If this is not possible, you are encouraged to make any appointments at times where they offer the least conflict with work commitments.

6. Statutory Sick Pay

- 6.1. If you are ill and unable to attend work, you may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). This is paid when an employee is sick for more than three days in a row, including non-working days.
- 6.2. If you have received SSP within the last eight (8) weeks the 3-day waiting period does not apply.
- 6.3. SSP is usually paid for sickness absences up to 28 weeks. The current rate can be found on the gov.uk website [Statutory Sick Pay \(SSP\) : What you'll get - GOV.UK](#)

7. Occupational Sick Pay (OSP)

- 7.1. Huntington Parish Council will pay you your normal basic rate of pay exclusive of overtime or allowances during periods of sickness absence.
- 7.2. Your Contract of Employment will indicate how much OSP you qualify for.
- 7.3. The Parish Staffing Committee reserve the right to withhold OSP if the process outlined in this document is not followed. For example:
 - Refusal to engage with the process, management or occupational health services
 - Where you have refused to attend a Return-to-Work meeting
 - Where you do not supply a Fit to Work certificate for long-term sickness in a timely manner
 - Where you mislead the Parish Council about your fitness to work.

8. Medical Fitness

- 8.1. As may be outlined in your Contract of Employment, it is a condition of your employment that the Parish Council are satisfied with your medical fitness to carry out your duties.
- 8.2. The Council may want to obtain advice on your fitness for work from Occupational Health advisors or medical practitioners. We may seek professional advice:
 - To seek a medical report on your illness or injury.
 - To establish when you may be able to return to work.
 - To understand when you are likely to be fully fit to resume your normal duties.
 - To understand what alternate duties you might be fit to undertake – if you are unfit to resume your normal duties.
 - To understand when you are likely to be fit to undertake any alternative duties.
 - To ask for guidance on your medical condition, for example if there is a possibility that you are disabled and where adjustments need to be considered or ambiguity as to the exact nature of the condition.
 - To ask what reasonable adjustments could be made to working conditions or premises to facilitate a return to work.
 - To understand the likely recurrence of the illness or injury once you have returned to work.
 - To discuss any adjustments that could be made to accommodate your disability if you are disabled.



- 8.3. The Parish Council will pay the cost of the report and you will have the right to see it. The council will also be provided with a copy of the report and, once you have seen it, the Staffing Committee will want to meet you to discuss the findings and consider options available to you.
- 8.4. If you choose not to consent to an Occupational Health referral, any decisions in relation to your employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

9. Persistent Absence and Disciplinary Procedures

- 9.1. Persistent short-term absence is classified as where the employee is frequently absent from work for short periods due to sickness.
- 9.2. Persistent absence can affect productivity and efficiency and place an additional burden on the Parish Council or your colleagues – as they step in to cover your work.
- 9.3. The Parish Council will step in to deal with persistent absence and may decide to commence capability or disciplinary procedures as part of Absence Management Process stated above.
- 9.4. You are entitled to attend any formal meetings with a fellow worker, recognised trade union representative or trade union official.
- 9.5. You are also entitled to appeal any written warning if a disciplinary process has been undertaken in writing to the Vice Chair and Chair.
- 9.6. If persistent absence is due to an underlying long-term medical condition, supported by adequate reports or documentation, the Parish Council will take this into account when setting attendance targets.
- 9.7. The Parish Council will not deem pregnancy-related illness as persistent absence.
- 9.8. If persistent absence is related to a disability, then this will be considered when setting attendance targets.
- 9.9. Where it appears that there is no acceptable reason for absence, or if evidence is provided to question the authenticity of your absence reasons, or you do not follow the guidelines of this Policy, the matter may be treated as a misconduct issue or in certain circumstances gross misconduct and dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy.

10. Long-Term Absence

- 10.1. Long-term absence is any absence period which lasts or is expected to last over 4 consecutive weeks.
- 10.2. If you are off on long-term sickness, the Parish Council will keep regular contact with you throughout the absence to establish information on your health – directing you to Occupational Health if required.
- 10.3. Where ill health means that you are unlikely to return to work for a long period of time, the Parish Council may need to consider progressing with the Absence Management process detailed above.