



CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

SICKNESS AND ABSENCE POLICY & PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

This document outlines the Town Council's approach to managing staff sickness and absence. The Council understands that employees may be absent for a variety of reasons, including short-term illnesses and acute medical conditions. The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that employees are supported through periods of absence and their subsequent return to work.

There are both direct and indirect costs to the Council from staff absences, such as sick pay, missed deadlines and the impact on the morale of colleagues. It is therefore important that the Council effectively manages staff absences. Through an effective policy, the Council will be able to identify any potentially unsafe work practices, issues affecting morale and any other underlying issues impacting employees.

This policy aims to ensure that all employees are treated fairly, properly and consistently.

SICKNESS AND ABSENCE NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

1. First Day of Absence

If an employee is unable to attend work through illness or injury they must notify their line manager as soon as possible, but not later than the end of the working day. If the employee is unable to make contact, someone may do this on their behalf. The reason for the absence must be given. If possible, the employee should indicate the likely duration of the absence.

If an employee fails to follow these reporting requirements, they may be classed as absent from work, rather than on sick leave, and may not be paid.

2. Continuing Absence for Less than Seven Calendar Days

It is important for the employee to keep in contact with their line manager (or member of staff delegated by the line manager) whilst they are on sick leave, getting in touch at least every other day to notify the manager that they are still unwell and how long they anticipate that their absence will continue. Depending on the working patterns of your own department, you may be required to keep in touch every day; your line manager will explain to you the requirements of your department.

3. Returning to Work after Seven Calendar Days or Less

When an employee returns to work from sickness absence which has lasted up to seven days (they must count all days, including weekends, rest days and public holidays), they will be asked to complete a Self-Certification form.



They may be required to attend a Return to Work meeting with their manager. This is an informal meeting to:

- Check how they are feeling
- Make sure that they are well enough to work
- Ascertain the cause of their absence and whether there may be any underlying issues or work-related issues
- Update them on anything important that they missed while they were absent
- Develop an action plan for the way forward
- Set a review date if needed

Notes of the meeting will be kept.

4. Being Absent for More Than Seven Calendar Days

For absences of more than seven calendar days (they must count all days, including weekends, rest days and public holidays), the employee must obtain a Fit Note/Statement of Fitness for Work from their GP or hospital doctor and provide this to their line manager. A Fit Note is provided free of charge. Assessments for a Fit Note can be conducted face to face, by telephone or issued after considering a written report from another doctor or healthcare professional. In the first six months of a condition, the Fit Note can cover a maximum of three months. After that, it can cover any clinically appropriate period.

The Fit Note will either state that the employee is **'Not Fit For Work'** or that they **'May Be Fit for Work Taking Into Account the Following Advice'**. The advice may include a phased return, temporarily working different hours, performing different duties or tasks, or workplace adaptations. The employee is required to have a discussion with their line manager to see if they can return to work. If the Council is unable to accommodate the changes advised in the Fit Note, the note will be treated as though it said **'Not Fit For Work'**.

It is important that the employee maintains regular contact with their line manager in their absence. This can be through telephone calls, electronic communications or meetings. This will help to keep the employee updated in their absence and plan for their return to work.

5. Returning to Work after More Than Seven Calendar Days

When an employee returns to work from sickness absence which has lasted more than seven calendar days, they may be asked to attend a Return to Work meeting with their manager. This is an informal meeting to:

- Check how they are feeling
- Make sure that they are well enough to work
- Ascertain the cause of their absence and whether there may be any underlying issues
- Update them on anything important that they missed while they were absent
- Check that any required adjustments from the Fit Note have been implemented



- Develop an action plan for the way forward
- Set a review date if needed

Notes of the meeting will be kept.

SICK PAY ENTITLEMENT

If an employee is sick and has notified their line manager following the above procedure, they will receive sick pay in accordance with the Sickness Absence Scheme agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services and set out in the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service.

INCAPACITY DUE TO ILLNESS

The Council is committed to considering all possible options to help employees back to work, including obtaining their permission to get a medical report from their GP, arranging an occupational health assessment and making reasonable adjustments to help them do their job. However, an illness may render an employee incapable of any work for the foreseeable future. In this case, the Council will follow its capacity procedure.

TERMINAL ILLNESS

When an employee has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, each case will be dealt with on the basis of their individual circumstances. If the employee wishes, the Council will make every effort to facilitate them in continuing to work for as long as possible.

MANAGING PERSISTENT SICKNESS ABSENCE & ABSENTEEISM

The Council is committed to treating all employees fairly, but will be firm in dealing with abuse of the sick pay scheme. To ensure consistency of treatment, the Council has set trigger points to determine the level of absence at which further action may be considered. The triggers are:

- Three occasions of absence in a rolling 3 month period
- Ten working days or more absence in a rolling 6 month period

In the event of a trigger being breached, the line manager may hold a discussion with the employee about the reasons behind these absences. If the explanation is unsatisfactory, the Disciplinary Policy can be implemented. The employee may also be required to obtain a private medical certificate from the first day of subsequent sickness absences, regardless of the duration of absence. It should be noted that GP Practices may charge the employee for this service.

The Disciplinary Policy can also be implemented for other abuses of the sickness procedure, including failure by an employee to notify their line manager of their non-attendance or giving false reasons for their absence.

RAISING A GRIEVANCE

If an employee is dissatisfied with any management action relating to this policy,



they may take out a formal grievance in accordance with the Council's Grievance Procedure.

EQUALITY

Maternity and disability sickness records must be treated separately to other sickness records. For example, if an employee has been absent three times in a rolling 3 month period, but one of these occasions was due to sickness related to pregnancy, no trigger has been breached.

Reasonable adjustments including the form of provision of aids or equipment, adjustment to duties or even redeployment may enable an employee with a disability to remain in employment. Under the Equality Act (2010), the Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to assist disabled people to have access to employment.

RECORD KEEPING

The Council will maintain records of sickness. This will include self-certification forms, return to work meeting notes and Fit Notes. This will enable analysis of absences to detect any problems and identify absences that may not be genuine, e.g. repeated patterns of short term absences before and/or after weekends. This analysis will also help to identify whether there are problems in particular sections that may be contributing to frequent absences, e.g. bullying.

There is no statutory period for sickness record retention. Records will be kept for 6 years after the employment of an individual ceases. This will ensure that the Council has the records needed in the event of a contractual claim for breach of an employment contract.

Information relating to an employee will be treated as confidential and in adherence with Data Protection legislation.

REVISIONS

The policy will be reviewed every four years.

Version 1 Adopted: 5 February 2018

Policy Due for Review: 5 February 2022

