

## Heckington Parish Council

### Attendance Management & Wellbeing Policy and Procedure

This policy sets out the Parish Council's policy and procedures for managing short (STS) and long term sickness (LTS) absence.

The Parish Council will be proactive in managing sickness absence and all staff will be properly supported in their return to work taking due account of the Equality Act 2010. Such support will include discussions with staff at Return to Work interviews about any ongoing support required and the consequences of ongoing absences (in line with the formal processes outlined in this document).

This policy also helps Managers, when sickness does occur, to manage this in a structured way which is fair and consistent.

The Parish Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment and to promoting the wellbeing of its staff.

#### Definitions

<b>Long term sickness (LTS)</b>	Sickness absence will be classed as long term if the employee has been absent for a continuous period of 28 days or more.
<b>Short term sickness (STS)</b>	Sickness absence will be classed as short term if the employee has been absent for a continuous period of less than 28 days.
<b>Trigger points</b>	3 episodes or 10 working calendar days in any 'rolling' 12-month period (pro rata to the number of days worked per week for staff working less than 5 days per week).
<b>Intermittent absence</b>	This refers to time taken off by employees in separate blocks rather than all at once and is often due to on-going medical conditions.
<b>Phased return</b>	A phased return to work is used for staff who have been absent from work for a long period of time and may find it difficult to do their full contractual hours or full duties straight away. This will apply when an employee has been assessed fit to return to work by their GP.
<b>Health Passport</b>	A live document recording reasonable adjustments that have been agreed.
<b>Stress Risk Assessment</b>	Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.
<b>Reasonable adjustments</b>	Reasonable adjustments remove or minimize disadvantages experienced by disabled people and those experiencing short term disability.
<b>Sickness Absence Monitoring Form</b>	All absences will be recorded by your line manager on the Sickness Absence Monitoring Form. A copy of this will be held in your Personnel File.

## Short Term Sickness Absence Procedure

The aim of the short term sickness absence procedure is to ensure that staff who fail to meet the standards of attendance expected of them are managed fairly and consistently and given the opportunity to improve their attendance.

The fact that short-term absences are reasons for illness and may be covered by a Fit Note does not mean that action by Management is inappropriate. Occasions will arise when it is reasonable to review the attendance record of a staff member because of the effect of the absences upon the delivery of service.

**Continued failure to meet the required standards of attendance may result in dismissal on the grounds of capability.**

### 1. Reporting

Employees, absent from work due to illness, must notify their Manager by telephone permitting they are physically able to do so. This must be done on every day of their absence unless otherwise agreed with their line manager. Your line Manager will complete the **Absence from Work Contact Sheet** in Appendix 2.

You must obtain permission from you line manager to carry out any outside occupation (paid or voluntary) when you are absent due to illness. **Failure to report this may** be deemed as a fraudulent act and may lead to your dismissal.

If you fail to report your absence for one or more days this will be viewed as an unauthorized absence. This will be investigated by your line manager. Unauthorised absences may lead to disciplinary action. Pay will be withheld.

You are entitled to take sick leave when you are ill or injured but you should explore with your Manager whether basic help and support could be provided to enable you to attend work or carry out some of your duties.

*Please note that if you fall ill whilst at work you will be encouraged by your line manager to go home.*

### 2. Return to Work Interviews & Self-certification

- On return from every period of sickness absence the employee will attend a **Return to Work Interview** with their Manager and where possible this will be on the same day the employee returns to work. Where this is not possible, it is advised that the Return to Work interview takes place within three days of the return to work date. The employee's participation is not optional.
- As part of the Return to Work interview, the employee must complete the **Self-Certification Declaration** (Appendix 3) to cover the first 7 calendar days of any sickness absence. *Unless there is significant mitigation, failure to do so could result in the absence being considered unauthorized and therefore unpaid.* Your line manager will complete the **Return to Work Interview Record** (Appendix 4) and the **Sickness Absence Monitoring Form** (Appendix 5)

- Early consideration will be given to supporting employees to maintain a healthy lifestyle and achieve a healthy work-life balance, e.g. your Manager may suggest undertaking stress risk assessments, discussing temporary changes to work patterns, hours or duties, or consider reasonable adjustments. Consideration may also be given to making a referral to Occupational Health if the employee declares an underlying health condition. Absences due to pregnancy or an assault at work should be discounted.
  - Employees will be notified at the Return to Work interview if they have met the criteria for **a Stage 1, Wellbeing Review**.
3. A **Stage 1 Wellbeing Review** will be held when an employee has been absent for a total of 10 calendar days or 3 individual episodes in a 12-month rolling period (Trigger Points).
- The Manager must write to the employee (see Appendix 6) requiring them to attend a Stage 1 Wellbeing Review, giving at least 5-working days' notice.
  - Employees will be asked to complete the **Wellbeing forms** in Appendix 7 for consideration by Management ahead of the meeting. The purpose of the review is to understand the reasons for absences so that Manager can provide wellbeing support leading to improved attendance. If there is evidence of an underlying health condition, consideration may be given to a referral to Occupational Health.
  - The employee will set attendance targets with their line Manager relating to future absences.
  - A 12-month review meeting will be scheduled for the employee and manager to discuss and review unless early intervention is required due to repeat absences.
  - Or, if the target is exceeded or absences are deemed to be concerning a **Stage 2 Wellbeing Review** will be held.

### **Stage 2 Wellbeing Review**

- The Manager will write to the employee requiring them to attend a **Stage 2 Wellbeing Review** giving at least 5 days' notice (Appendix 8). Your line manager will complete the appropriate forms in Appendix 9. The Manager may wish to seek external specialist HR advice in advance of this meeting.
- New targets will be reached in agreement with your Manager. *Stretched targets may be considered for employees with underlying health conditions.*
- At this point the employee will be made aware that if there is no acceptable improvement in their sickness absence levels, this may be escalated to Stage 3 (final) of the sickness management process. The Stage 3 review will be triggered if the targets set at the Stage 2 review are exceeded.

Note: All meetings will be recorded. The employee will be asked to sign documents detailing agreed actions or targets. A signed copy will be kept in the employee's personal file and a copy will be provided to the employee for their own records.

### Stage 3 Final Review

A **Stage 3 (final) review** will consider the employee's continued employment with the Parish Council. This could result in the staff member's dismissal from employment with the Parish Council on the grounds of ill-health, or on the grounds of capability due to an inability to attend work on a regular basis. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the manager to continue to monitor the sickness absence in the informal stage in consideration of mitigating factors.

An Occupational Health report should be obtained in advance of this meeting, particularly if the employee has an underlying medical condition. This will assist the Manager to identify whether the employee is able to sustain the Parish Council's attendance standards with any adjustments.

The Manager will write a report detailing the process followed to date.

Expert advice from an external HR specialist will be sought in advance of the meeting.

The staff member will be notified of the meeting in writing, giving at least 15 days' notice and (Appendix 10) indicating that this is the Stage 3 Final Review of the Short Term Sickness Absence procedure. Your line manager will complete the forms in Appendix 9.

The employee should be made aware that this is a serious issue which may lead to decisions being made leading to their dismissal.

## Managing Long Term Sickness Absence Procedure

The Managing Long Term Sickness Absence Procedure is designed to assist staff to return to work from a period of sickness absence.

Where an absence exceeds the initial 7-day self-certification period, managers should arrange a **'Wellbeing discussion' Stage 1** with the staff member before their absence reaches 14 calendar days. If an absence reaches 28 calendar days, or as soon as the Manager is aware that the absence will be certified for at least 28 calendar days, long term sickness procedures will be invoked.

Where an absence reaches a point where it becomes concerning or where a member of staff is unlikely to return, this would instigate a **Final Review Meeting**.

### Stage 1 – Wellbeing Discussion (LTS)

Where an absence exceeds the initial 7 day self-certification period, managers should arrange a **Wellbeing Discussion** (LTS) with the staff member before the absence reaches 14 days. This will preferably take place face to face in an appropriate location to suit the employee, taking into account the reason for their absence. It may be acceptable for a wellbeing discussion to take place as a telephone conversation or video call to avoid any delays in the process. Your line manager will write to you giving you 15 working days' notice (Appendix 11).

The aim of the Wellbeing Discussion (LTS) will be to consider the reason for the absence and to establish a target for returning to work including a consideration of duties the staff member could reasonably undertake to facilitate an earlier return to work; this may include restricted duties or a temporary change to their job role. The discussion might lead to a referral to Occupational Health, flexible working options and arrangements will be established for methods and frequency of contact between an employee and Management. Contact will be sensitive to the reason for absence but communications will not exceed two week intervals unless agreed in advance.

### Stage 2 Management Discussion and Review (LTS)

Where an on-going absence reaches 28 calendar days, or as soon as the manager is aware that the absence will be certified for at least 28 calendar days the Stage 2 review process will be initiated.

If not completed at the Stage 1 Wellbeing Discussion, the Manager should make a referral to Occupational Health.

A meeting will be convened with the line manager and employee and their representative. Representatives from the Staffing Committee will attend where necessary.

The Manager must write to the employee giving them five days notice requiring them to attend the Stage 2 Review Management Discussion and Review (LTS) giving at least 5 working days' notice (Appendix 11). Should the employee be unable to attend, they should contact their Line Manager to rearrange the meeting without delay.

The letter shall explain:

- The reason for the meeting.

- Advise the employee that may be accompanied by a trade union representative or other representative.
- The purpose of the Stage 2 Management Discussion and Review will be to determine the likely duration for the absence, any likely return to work and/or any support that may facilitate a return to work. Consideration will be given to:
  - The outcome of the Occupational Health report.
  - Revising actions from the initial Wellbeing Discussion undertaken at the informal stage, and updating the Wellbeing Road Map as necessary.
  - Obtaining up to date medical advice.
  - Identify whether there are any factors affecting the absence under the Equality Act 2010 (including any reasonable adjustments required).
  - Returning flexibly during a period of rehabilitation.
  - Discuss the options and consider the staff member's views on continuing employment.

At the meeting, a review period may be agreed. Regular discussion as agreed between the Line Manager and employee should continue throughout the absence. Further meetings under Stage 2 will be arranged at appropriate points in recovery to assess and monitor absence and determine any action required.

The details of the meeting, together with the detail of any agreed actions and potential next steps, should be recorded at the time of the meetings using the Further Review Outcome template. A signed copy should be kept in the employee's personnel file and a copy will be given to the member of staff for their own records.

There may be occasions when an employee is off work with a planned absence, where Stage 2 of this process may not be appropriate but ongoing discussion may be required.

### **Stage 3 Final Review (LTS)**

Where an absence record reaches a point where it becomes concerning, meaning the Parish Council may not longer be able to sustain an individual's sickness absence as a whole; or where a member of staff is unlikely to return to work, this would instigate a **Final Review Panel**. This may also include staff who have failed to maintain their return to work. In this meeting, a decision on the appropriate way forward is made including a return to work or termination of employment.

A management report will be prepared by the Line Manager detailing the process followed to date and any reasonable adjustments implemented to support improved attendance. This should include an Occupational Health report. The purpose of this is to establish whether there is a likelihood of the individual being able to return to work in the foreseeable future, and/or the likelihood of repeated absences, and/or their ability carry out their substantive duties.

The Line Manager should write to the employee requiring them to attend the meeting and send a copy of the report or information that will be referred to. This should be notified to the employee in writing, giving at least 15 days' notice and indicating that the meeting is being held under the Attendance Management and Wellbeing Policy and advising them that this is a serious issue which may result in decisions being made up to and including their dismissal. The employee should be advised of their

right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or other representative and that they should provide a copy of their own written documentation to be relied upon 5 days prior to the meeting.

The meeting should be Chaired by a member of the Parish Council who has had no prior involvement in the case. The Parish Council representative will be supported by a member of the Staffing Committee and Clerk. In the event that the employee is the Clerk, it may be the Parish Council's HR representative, Mr. Chris Moses.

The Line Manager will present their case in respect of the employees attendance and the rational for progressing to stage 3. The employee and panel will have an opportunity to ask any questions.

The line manager and employee will be offered an opportunity to sum up their case prior to a decision being taken by the Parish Council.

At the meeting, the Chair will consider:

- The level and reason for absence
- Medical evidence (if appropriate)
- The nature of the illness (paying due regard to an individual's right to confidentiality)
- Whether the requirement to consider reasonable adjustment has been followed in cases relating to disability.
- The impact of the staff member's absence on the service.
- Whether ill health retirement is appropriate.
- The panel will take into account the staff member's length of service and previous attendance records.

On presentation of mitigating evidence, the panel may at their discretion consider an adjournment to allow for a further period of review and assessment up to a period of 12-months (where the employee is able to return with a satisfactory fitness to work certificate) in order to monitor the level of absence and attendance.

If the panel believe dismissal is appropriate, they must identify the potentially fair reason for dismissal as set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996. This will most likely be capability or some other substantial reason.

The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing to the employee within five working days of the meeting including a reason for the decision, together with details of the right of appeal. A copy will be sent to the employees trade union representative (where so represented). A copy must be filed on the employee's personnel file. The appropriate contractual period must be given. Notice periods need not be worked at the discretion of the manager but could be paid in lieu including any unused annual leave entitlements pro rata up to the termination date.

## **Ill Health Retirement**

Ill health retirement will be considered if deemed appropriate.

## **Repeated Patterns of Long Term Sickness or Patterns of Intermittent and Long Term absence**

When a pattern is identified or the Manager becomes concerned at the cumulative amount of absence over a period of time, the Manager will arrange an informal meeting, if this has not already been done, to discuss the situation. The Manager may refer the staff member to Occupational Health to obtain a medical opinion.

In the case of long-term, repeated absences, it would not be appropriate to set attendance targets but regular reviews should be carried out with the employee by the Line Manager. If the absence record reaches a level where it becomes concerning, or where Occupational Health advice demonstrates no sustainable return to work, then consideration should be given to termination of the employee's contract of employment. In these circumstances, this procedure follows the process outlined in Stage 2 of the LTS process. It is expected that previous meetings will have been held with the employee during their previous episodes of absence, and therefore this process will escalate to Stage 2 Final Review Meeting.

## **Flexible Return to Work**

In some circumstances an employee may return to their role with modified hours or duties for a period of time. It is expected that discussions around any adjustments will have been held between the Manager and employee before seeking advice from Occupational Health and Chris Moses at Personnel Advice and Solutions. Any adjustments would be subject to the needs of the Parish Council and would be on a temporary basis.

## **Phased Return to Work**

A paid phased return to work would only be supported when an employee has been off sick for a number of months. Ordinarily, a paid period of phased return should be achieved within 4 weeks. However an extenuated phased return may be accommodated in line with Occupational Health recommendations. It may be appropriate for a staff member to use their annual leave to support an extension to their phased return. It is expected that a phased return to work will not commence on less than 50 percent of the employee's substantive hours.

Employees will return to work on full pay. In this situation, only one phased return to work in a 12 month period will be supported by full pay. Thereafter, annual leave, unpaid leave, reduced hours or other flexible working options must be considered. The Manager should arrange a review with the employee at appropriate points during the phased return and rehabilitation period to assess progress before resuming normal duties. Where an extended phased return to work is required, consideration may be

given to flexible working arrangements, a temporary reduction in contractual hours or using any accrued annual leave to reduce working time.

### **Sustaining an Injury at Work**

If you are absent due to an assault while on duty or in relation to your employment, you will not suffer any loss of pay, regardless of the length of your absence.

### **Sickness Absence and Annual Leave**

Where an employee is scheduled to take annual leave whilst on sick leave, they should make contact with their line manager prior to the commencement of the annual leave to discuss how absence during this time will be recorded.

Where an employee falls ill during a period of pre-booked annual leave they should, if wishing to reclaim the period of annual leave, follow the usual reporting procedure and submit a medical certificate (Fit Note).

Where an employee has been on long-term sick leave, they are entitled to their annual leave balance upon their return to work. Upon agreement with your line manager, you may be entitled to carry forward annual leave to the new financial year. In the event of dismissal, the annual leave balance will be paid to the staff member.

Employees are not entitled to additional days off if sick on a public holiday.

### **Medical and Dental Appointments**

There is no right to paid time off to attend pre-planned medical or dental appointments. Staff may, at the discretion of the line Manager, be allowed to make up time at a later date or use annual leave to cover the absence.

Medical appointments where a procedure is due to be carried out should be agreed with your line manager to determine potential fitness to work following the appointment.

### **Menopause**

Menopause is a natural part of aging and most women will experience menopausal symptoms. Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before the menstrual cycle ceases and can last around 4 years after this time, although some women experience them for much longer. Some of these symptoms can be severe and have a significant impact on everyday activities. Resources to support those experiencing menopausal symptoms can be located in the Menopause Toolkit.

## Right of Appeal

Employees have the right to appeal. Appeals should clearly outline the reasons for the appeal and must be made within 10 working days of receipt of the Parish Council's decision. The procedure for hearing appeals will be held in line with that outlined in the Disciplinary Policy. The decision of the appeals panel is final.

## Sick Pay

Employees who are absent from work due to illness will be entitled, subject to the conditions of this policy and procedure, to receive sick pay in accordance with the scale below:

- During 1st year of service                      1 months full pay, and (after 4 months' service and 2 months half pay
- During 2nd year of service                      2 months full pay, 2 months half pay
- During 3rd year of service                      4 months full pay, 4 months half pay
- During 4th & 5th year                              5 months full pay, 5 months half pay
- After 5 years service                              6 months full pay, 6 months half pay

## Version control and amendment history

Date approved	Version Number	Revision / amendments made	Review date
23 March 2026	V1.0	New policy	May 2026

## Duties of Managers

Managers are expected to manage staff's attendance and absence to include:

- Provide relevant support and identify wellbeing interventions to ensure staff members maintain a satisfactory level of health and fitness.
- Create and keep up to date a record for staff absences to include the date and time the call was made, the stated reason for absence, how long the staff member expects to be absent and any relevant work matters.
- Keep confidential records of all absences, discussions and medical certificates.
- Contact the staff member at agreed intervals and by agreed methods. Communication should not exceed two-week intervals unless agreed between Managers and staff in advance.
- Conduct a return to work interview.
- Ensure staff members complete a self-certification each time they return to work following a period of sickness absence.
- Timely consideration of the nature and frequency of absences will encourage early intervention for support and identify ways to assist staff to improve attendance in the future. This approach will alert the staff member to the fact that the situation is being monitored and will potentially deter any casual absences.
- Be alert to patterns in absenteeism. If a pattern is identified, the Manager should put their observations to the staff member directly so that the staff member has the opportunity to provide an explanation.
- Try to establish, through investigation and discussion, the underlying reasons for frequent absences as until the underlying cause is identified, it will be impossible to identify an appropriate and effective remedy.
- Check whether absences are due to personal or family problems. Explore whether annual leave or other leave types would be appropriate. Be supportive but explain clearly to the staff member that continuing frequent absences from work are unsustainable.
- Are absences work-related?
- Implement the procedures set out in this policy and set reasonable targets with the staff member for improvement in attendance.
- Ensure staff are aware of the consequences of continued unsatisfactory attendance i.e. they may be managed through a formal process which may ultimately lead to dismissal.
- Ensure that the working time directive is being adhered to e.g. appropriate rest breaks during and between shifts to ensure health and wellbeing.
- Seek expert advice from external agencies where appropriate. Where a staff member's absence is attributable to stress or anxiety, an early Occupational Health referral is recommended in order to seek advice as to how to support the individual. In cases where stress or anxiety is work related, the line manager should work with the staff member to identify the factors causing work-related stress and undertake a risk assessment. This process should help to identify and implement possible solutions to minimise or eliminate factors causing concern. Staff should be signposted to avenues of support.
- Ensure staff members are aware that they have the right to be accompanied by a representative, trade union or other, at each formal stage of either the STS or LTS process.

## **Responsibilities for Staff**

Staff members who need to be absent from work due to sickness must comply with the following rules:

- Be responsible for their own health and wellbeing and identify any wellbeing interventions to enable them to maintain a satisfactory level of health and fitness to ensure that they are able to fulfill their range of duties.
- To make a reasonable assessment of their ability to carry out their contracted duties and determine whether they are well enough to attend work.
- Where appropriate, staff members are encouraged to notify their Manager as soon as they become aware of a health issue which is having or likely to have an impact on their ability to carry out their full range of duties or lead to a period of absence. This is to encourage a level of transparency which will allow the Manager to support the staff member, manage their health and wellbeing and balance attendance at work.
- Notify their Manager by telephone if they are ill or unable to attend work for any reason. Text and other equivalent messages are not considered acceptable for the purposes of this policy. This must be as early as possible and no later than one hour before they are due to start work. The nature of the absence and expected duration and any relevant work matters should be shared at the point of notification. In exceptional circumstances, if a member of staff is too unwell then a close relative may report the initial absence. It is expected that this will be followed up by/with the staff members when well enough to do so.
- To contact and engage with their manager or agreed nominated person during sickness absence.
- Participate in an interview with their manager on return to work to discuss the absence and the reason for it and any support that could facilitate attendance at work in the future.
- Complete a self-certification on return to work for all periods of sickness absence not exceeding 7-calendar days.
- Provide a Fit Note or Doctor's certificate for a period of sickness absence exceeding 7-calendar days and to submit subsequent 'Fit Notes' within 7 days of the end date of the previous certificate, failure to do so may result in suspension of sick pay.
- Agree, on request, to be referred to an Occupational Health Specialist and to attend any such appointments and authorize the release of any medical report from Occupational Health to the Manager. Failure to do so may lead to discussions regarding the management of absence without the benefit of Occupational Health input.
- To notify the appropriate person in advance if for any reason they are unable to attend formal meetings of Occupational Health appointments arranged as part of the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Co-operate with the employer with regard to the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, resulting from recommendations made by the Occupational Health department or GP on a Fit Note, notwithstanding the fact that the advice on a Fit Note is not binding on the employer.

**Please note that you are entitled to be accompanied by a representative, trade union or other, at each formal stage of the STS or LTS process.**