

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

Ledbury Town Council recognises that its employees form a vital part in ensuring its commitment to the people of Ledbury is met. To this end it will encourage and develop initiatives to promote the health and wellbeing of all employees.

The aim of this policy is to minimise absence levels across the organisation, whilst providing support to those absence, with the primary aim of assisting a return to work at the earliest opportunity.

The policy will inform Ledbury Town Council employees of their own responsibilities in relation to sickness absence, and the relevant reporting mechanisms.

The Council will seek to ensure that the reasons for sickness absence are understood in each case and investigated where necessary.

Whilst there is a collective responsibility to minimise sickness absence all such absence will be monitored and dealt with fairly and effectively in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service.

Date Adopted: 1 October 2020
Review Date: 30 September 2022

SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Reporting Sickness Absence

If you are away from work because of illness you **MUST** telephone your line manager within 30 minutes of your usual start time. If your line manager is not available, you must speak to their line manager. If you are unable to make the call, in exceptional circumstances, you may ask someone to make it on your behalf. You must however make direct contact with your line manager as soon as possible thereafter. You can expect your line manager to make enquiries with you about work matters during the telephone call. Text messages, emails or indirect methods of communication are not acceptable.

The call should include:

- Name
- Nature of illness
- Likely duration of absence
- Work commitments that need to be covered during absence

If you are employed to work outside of normal office hours and you need to contact your line manager out of hours you will have been provided with a telephone number to call. However, if you are aware that you will not be well enough to attend work prior to that date you should make every effort to contact your line manager during working hours the previous day.

This process must be repeated on the 3rd day of absence unless you have provided an “fit note”.

Certification and Medical Certificates

You must complete a sickness self-certification form for every period of sickness absence unless covered by a “fit note”. Self-certification can only be made for periods of absence covering up to 7-calendar days.

A doctor’s or hospital fit note is required if the absence is more than 7-calendar days. The certificate should be forwarded immediately after your 7th day of absence and will be required chronologically for all subsequent absences. Where there is a continuing sickness absence you must therefore, submit consecutive fit notes to cover the whole period of absence and these must be sent to your line manager within 2-days of the previous note expiring.

Failure to notify sickness absence or provide self-certificates or fit notes may lead to the absence from work being considered as unauthorised, resulting in the loss of occupational sick pay and possible disciplinary investigation.

Hospitalisation

Employees who become hospitalised will need a fit note to cover their absence in hospital if exceeding 7 days. This can be provided by the hospital.

Accidents and Injuries

An employee who has an accident, incident or near miss (that could have resulted in injury or ill health) that occurs whilst they are at work must report it to their line manager at the earliest convenience. The incident can then be investigated to identify any action needed to prevent further injuries and ill health and to ensure that the incident is recorded in the accident book and reported as necessary.

Work Related Ill Health or Injury

If the employee or line manager believes that ill-health or injury has been caused by work the manager must complete the Council's accident report form as above.

If the reason for absence is work related stress the line manager should complete a Stress Risk Assessment with the employee to endeavour to establish the root causes of the pressure. They must then refer the individual to Occupational Health sending the risk assessment in order to seek advice on how to support the employee and facilitate a return to work as soon as possible.

Contact with Infectious Diseases

Employees prevented from attending work due to contact with a reportable infectious disease should notify the Clerk immediately.

Monitoring Sickness Levels

All sickness absences must be recorded on the Council's monitoring system.

The information recorded will be used to produce sickness absence level statistics on a quarterly basis to monitor the success of the Sickness Absence Policy and identify any causes for concern. This information will be presented to the Council's Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

Line managers will use this information to identify employees with frequent short-term absence which may require further investigation as set out within the sickness absence policy and procedures.

Return to Work

On the first day of your return to work, or at least within three days of your return, you will have a "return to work" interview with your line manager. This must be completed for any period of sickness absence, including short term sickness of one day only. The purpose of the interview is to assure both you and your manager that you are fit to return to work and to identify any concerns around your health that need to be addressed. All information will be recorded on the form and signed to show that you and your line manager agree. Any recommendations will be clearly stated.

If your absence was for less than 7 days you will be asked to complete a self-certification form.

If your absence was medically certified your GP will provide you with a Statement of Fitness for Work, commonly known as a “fit note”. In this your doctor may suggest ways of helping you return to work e.g.

- A phased return to work
- Altering hours
- Amended duties
- Workplace adaptations

There may also be recommendations following a referral to Occupational Health.

Where recommendations have been made by a doctor or Occupational Health Specialist, these are dependent on whether or not they are available and must have the Clerk’s agreement. The Council will try to accommodate recommendations and support needed to facilitate a return to work.

Phased returns to work will normally be for a 4-week period and will be paid at normal salary regardless of days or hours worked in this period. Options during this time include reduced hours, different working days or adjusted worktimes and will be agreed between you and your line manager. Generally, the return to your normal pattern of work and contracted hours over a 4-week period.

If a phased return to work is recommended over a period more than 4-weeks, then salary will be based on the hours and days worked and not the normal salary. Arrangements can be considered to use annual leave or any TOIL owed as part of this phased return which will need to be considered and agreed by the line manager and Clerk.

If the Council is unable to support the change(s) recommended by the doctor, the fit note will be interpreted as you not being fit for work. A further sicknote is not required but you will not be allowed to return to work until we have an occupational health opinion that you are fit for work, and you will continue to be classed as on sick absence.

Frequent and/or Persistent Short-term Sickness Absence

The Council may on reviewing your sickness record, take action if:

- There are three instances or 10 self-certified days of absence within 12 months;
- There emerges a regular pattern of recurring absences of if the reason given for absence gives rise for concern

First Stage Informal Interview

This will be an informal review meeting with your line manger who will advise you of their concerns. This meeting will be in addition to the Return to Work Interview.

The line manager will send a letter to the employee inviting them to the Review Meeting providing at least three clear days’ notice. Representation is not required at this meeting. The line manager, HR Manager and the employee will discuss:

- The reasons for the repeat absences;
- The likelihood of further absences;
- Whether medical advice is required – Occupational Health, GP and whether there is any underlying condition;
- If any measures might improve the employee's health and/or attendance;
- A way forward, including the immediate improvement expected and a review date set;
- If a further sickness absence is recorded the disciplinary procedure may be followed.

The line manager may at any meeting escalate to the Formal Action stage if it appears the employee's attendance has not improved, without the need for a further meeting under the informal review stage.

Formal Action

If the informal review meeting has not led to any improvement in the sickness absence, the Council will make the matter a formal issue and follow the process outlined below.

Formal Sickness Review Stages

If there is insufficient improvement within the monitoring period in the employee's sickness absence record, a formal review will be held with the line manager where reasons for the continued absence levels will be explored.

Four or more occurrences will automatically trigger a Formal Review to discuss the sickness absence record.

In terms of the Formal Sickness Review Stages, the following will apply:

Stage 1 – Formal Action

The employee will be given a minimum of 7-days' notice inviting them to a meeting and advising the employee of the reason for the Formal Review, the date and time, their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. The purpose of the formal review is:

- To highlight