

higwell

CPARISH COUNCIL

Hainault Road • Chigwell • Essex • IG7 6QZ

Tel: 020 8501 4275

e-mail: HR@chigwellparishcouncil.gov.uk



Absence Management Policy

Policy Name:		Absence Management Policy		
Policy Owner:		Chigwell Parish Council		
Amendments:	Version	Date	Author	Adopted By Full Council
Absence Management Policy	1	July 2025	Hayley Moore	Date: 24 July 2025
Reviewed and updated				
Reviewed and updated				
Reviewed and updated				

1. Introduction

You should stay away from work if you are too unwell to carry out your duties for us. Chigwell Parish Council want to make sure that you understand our approach to sickness absence and know the processes that we follow for short-term and long-term absence.

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy:

- Explains how you should report any absences from work due to sickness
- Sets out how you will be paid if you are off work due to sickness
- Explains what we regard as an unauthorised absence and how such absences will be handled
- Sets out our approach to short-term absence
- Explains when we might seek a medical opinion in relation to your health and how we might go about doing that
- Sets out our approach to long-term sickness absence
- Sets out the support measures in place for any return to work following sickness
- Sets out other reasons why you may need to take time away from work and our approach to them

Please note that this Policy does not form part of your contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy applies to all employees.

2. Reporting your absence from work

If you are unwell and unable to attend work, then you should phone your line manager or failing that the Clerk as early as possible and in any event before your scheduled start time to confirm that you are sick and will not be at work. The Clerk should contact the Chair of the Council or the RFO and notify the HR consultant. You must notify your absence by phone. We may ask you to provide some details about the reason for your absence, whether you are going to see a doctor and to let us know how long you are likely to be off work. We realise that you might not know this straight away – we just ask that you keep us informed as your absence develops. The more information you provide to us, the easier it will be for us to manage and support your absence.

For the first seven days of absence (including any non-working days, weekends and bank holidays), we will generally allow you to self-certify. This means that you do not need to provide us with a fit note from your doctor. You will just be asked to complete a self-certification form on your return to work.

If your absence continues for longer than seven days, then we will need you to obtain a fit note from your doctor or other healthcare professional covering the remainder of your absence. You should send your fit note to the HR department.

A fit note includes details of the reason for your absence and allows your doctor or other healthcare professional to stipulate whether you are 'not fit for work' or whether you 'may be fit for work'. If the fit note states that you 'may be fit for work, then they are invited to provide details of any measures we could take to help you return. If your fit note provides this information, then we will generally arrange a meeting with you to discuss whether we are able to put these measures in place (which will depend on the needs of the organisation and our resources and capabilities). If we are not able to facilitate your return, then you will continue to be treated by us as if you are not fit for work.

3. Keeping in contact during sickness absence

We expect you to maintain regular contact with us during any period of sickness absence. This will generally be by telephone or email with your line manager.

We, for our part, will maintain regular contact with you to discuss your wellbeing, the expected length of your continued absence from work and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.

This will usually be via telephone calls or emails from, but we will modify our contact arrangements if necessary to take account of the reason for absence.

We expect you to cooperate with our requests for updates on your condition.

4. Sick Pay entitlement & Contractual Sick Pay

Your contract of employment sets out your pay entitlements when you are off sick. Unless your contract of employment sets out any enhanced entitlement, you will usually be entitled to receive Statutory Sick Pay (**SSP**) for the first 28 weeks of absence. The rate of SSP is set by the Government and changes every year. You can request details of the current rate of SSP from HR. You will not receive any payment of SSP during the first three days of any absence. These are known as 'waiting days'. SSP becomes payable after completion of these 'waiting days'. In order to receive SSP, you must make sure that you follow our rules on reporting absence.

The Company offers Contractual Sick Pay and will pay you as follows:

Service Not Exceeding	Full Pay	Half Pay
4 months	1 month	Nil
1 year	1 month	2 months
2 years	2 months	2 months
3 years	4 months	4 months
4-5 years	5 months	5 months
After 5 years	6 months	6 months

We will add up all absences due to sickness or injury in the last 12 months before your current absence. All Contractual Sick pay is inclusive of any Statutory Sick Pay entitlement.

5. Holidays and sickness

When you are off work sick, you continue to accrue holiday. You are able to contact us to request holiday whilst you are off sick. In such cases, you will be paid holiday pay rather than sick pay for the days which you request to be treated as holiday.

If your sickness absence spans two holiday years, then you may be able to carry forward untaken holiday from one year to the next, subject to certain restrictions.

If you become unwell while on holiday, then we will usually allow you to convert your holiday into sick leave.

You must report your absence as set out above and provide any evidence of sickness which we request. If approved, you will be able to take your holiday at another time, but you may also have to repay the holiday pay that you received.

6. Unauthorised absence

If you fail to turn up for work without good reason, then your absence will be treated by us as being unauthorised. Unauthorised absence includes any sickness absence which is not covered by required supporting evidence (for example, a fit note) or absence where you might be entitled to self-certify but you have not contacted us to tell us about your sickness absence.

If your absence from work is unauthorised, then you will not be entitled to receive pay or any other benefits. We reserve the right to deduct from your pay to take account of your unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence is a disciplinary matter which will be handled under our Disciplinary Policy and may result in the termination of your employment.

7. How we deal with short-term absence

Short-term absence can have a real impact on our organisation. Effective management of short-term absence to make sure that it does not happen too often is, therefore, important.

We will always take the time to discuss your absence with you. This will be done at return-to-work meetings following any period of absence, regardless of duration. We will ask what we can do to help you to maintain good attendance and try and understand the reasons why you may be failing to reach our attendance standards. On occasion, this may involve asking for your permission to obtain information and support from a medical professional (see below).

We aim to manage short-term absence by following a trigger system which monitors short-term absence levels and triggers formal action if patterns begin to emerge. Our system follows the 'Bradford Factor' model and operates as follows:

- A score is created by using the calculation $S \times S \times D$, where 'S' is the number of spells of absence in a rolling 12-month period and 'D' is the total number of days absent over that same period.
- The action taken based on the score reached by applying the calculation will generally be as follows:
 - 0-49: no action required
 - 50-214: consider issuing a verbal warning
 - 215-399: consider issuing a first written warning
 - 400-649: consider issuing a final written warning
 - 650+: consider dismissal

If a trigger point is hit, then you will generally be invited to a formal hearing at which your absence levels can be discussed. You are entitled to be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative. This meeting will provide an opportunity to take an in-depth look at the reasons, impact and possible solutions in respect of your absence. We will always approach such meetings supportively, with the aim of understanding and addressing any underlying problems which are contributing to high absence levels. Having looked at all options available, one outcome of this meeting may be the imposition of a warning. We will explain the improvement we require and what support we will provide to help you with this. You will then be set a target for improved attendance in line with the system set out above. You have the right to appeal any warning issued. The same process of meeting, warning and right of appeal will be followed at each stage of the absence management process. If, following the imposition of a final written warning, absence remains an issue and avenues for support have been explored, a final formal meeting may result in the termination of your employment with notice.

Warnings at each stage of this procedure generally remain live on your file for 6/12 months, although we reserve the right to extend the length of time that a warning remains live in appropriate circumstances.

We will always take the time to understand the background to any absence and will not operate this system in a vacuum.

We will make reasonable adjustments to the above process to take account of individual circumstances and any disabilities. For example, absences relating to pregnancy will be discounted and absences relating to a disability will generally be subject to a higher trigger level, supported by medical evidence.

8. Disabilities

We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the sickness absence meetings procedure (both long-term and short-term), particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or

other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which impacts your ability to undertake your work, you should inform the HR department. Any information you provide will be handled in a confidential manner and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

9. Seeking a medical opinion

We may, at any time in operating this Policy, require you to attend a medical examination by either or both of our Occupational Health Department and a doctor nominated by us (at our expense).

We will ask for your consent for us to have full access to medical reports and to discuss the contents with the relevant medical practitioner. You do not have to consent, but if you don't, we will make decisions based on existing medical and other information.

10. How we deal with long-term absence

We will maintain regular contact with you throughout any period of long-term absence. We will discuss with you the best way to do this, bearing in mind the reason for your absence, and we will be sensitive to your needs.

We may, at any point during your absence, seek to obtain a medical opinion regarding your condition and likely timescale for recovery. This request may be made at our first informal meeting with you or at any time during your absence from work. Any request will be processed in line with the 'Seeking a medical opinion' section.

We will hold regular absence management meetings with you during your long-term absence to keep up to date with your prognosis, any adjustments which we may be able to make to enable you to return, the impact that your absence is having on the organisation and any support we can provide. We will discuss the most appropriate way to hold these meetings with you – for example, we could agree to hold them at your home, at an agreed location or remotely via video conference.

If your absence continues and we believe (whether based on medical evidence obtained or otherwise) that you are unlikely to return to work for some time, then we may proceed to hold a formal absence management meeting with you. You are entitled to be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative. In the letter inviting you to this meeting, we will warn you that dismissal may result. At the absence management meeting, we will normally cover the following:

- A review of the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with you
- Whether there have been any changes since the last meeting, regarding either your possible return to work or opportunities for return or redeployment
- Whether there are any reasonable adjustments which could be made to allow you to return to work

- The impact that your absence is having on the organisation
- Any further matters that you wish to raise
- Whether there is a reasonable likelihood of you returning to work in a reasonable time
- The possible termination of your employment

Termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

11. Returning to work following absence

We will hold a return-to-work meeting or virtual/online consultation with you after sickness absence, even if it is only one day. A note will be taken of the meeting or virtual/online consultation, which you will be asked to sign, and which will be retained on your personnel file for future reference. The return-to-work meeting or virtual/online consultation also provides the opportunity for you to complete our self-certification form.

At the return-to-work meeting, we will discuss the reason for the absence and any support we can provide to improve future attendance levels.

If you are returning from a period of long-term sickness absence, then we will, where appropriate and possible, support your return by:

- Obtaining medical advice (if you agree that we are able to do so and sign all appropriate consents)
- Making reasonable adjustments to the workplace and/or your duties
- Considering redeployment
- Considering a phased return to work

12. Other types of absence

Jury service

If you are called for jury service, you must tell your line manager as soon as possible. While you are on jury service, you will not be paid and should therefore claim all allowances made available by the court.

Other public duties

We will allow you time off to carry out duties in some public roles, including magistrate and school governor. As soon as you know what your duties are and have dates for hearings/meetings you must attend, you should tell your line manager so that we can plan for your absence from work. While you are carrying out these duties, we will not pay you for time taken off work.

Emergency time off to look after dependants

You may take reasonable time off work to deal with emergencies involving your dependants. This does not cover general home issues, such as wanting time off to deal with a problem with your boiler. We define a dependant as your spouse, civil partner, children (including adopted children) or parents. Also included are people who live in your household or anyone else who relies on you - for example, an elderly family member. You must follow the same procedure as for sickness leave and contact your line manager as soon as you know you will be taking time off.

The time you take off must be both reasonable and necessary for you to deal with something immediately and/or respond to an emergency. Normally, this means hours or a maximum of one or two days, and this type of leave is not designed to provide care over the longer term. We do not pay you when you take time off to look after dependants.

Other family-related absences

We cover all other types of time off for family-related matters - including maternity, paternity, shared parental, parental and adoption leave - in our separate Maternity and Family Friendly Policy.

Carrying out trade union duties

If you are elected as a trade union official, you are legally entitled to reasonable time off to fulfil your obligations, and you will be paid at your full basic rate for all related absences during working hours. We will not pay you for duties carried out outside working hours.

13. Review and updates

This Policy delegates authority to officers and the HR consultant to oversee and manage the this process. It is the responsibility of Chigwell Parish Council's HR department to ensure that this Policy is reviewed and updated at least annually or when there is a significant change in either the regulatory environment or internal processes. Such updates should be made in a timely manner and wherever practical introduced at the same time as the new process or regulation is effective. It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure this processes is formally adopted by the Council on an annual basis.

14. About this document

The information contained in this document is strictly confidential and is intended for Chigwell Parish Council employees only. The unauthorised use, disclosure, copying, alteration, or distribution of this document is strictly prohibited.