



ABSENCE POLICY

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the operational efficiency of West Hunsbury Parish Council can be maintained whilst the employee is absent from work for sickness or injury related reasons.

It also seeks to provide guidance, security and support to employees during periods of ill-health.

Sickness Pay

Sick pay will be paid in accordance with their contract. SSP is paid where applicable at the current rate.

Employees who are unable to attend work through sickness, accident or personal circumstances must notify their line manager (Chairman or Vice Chairman) of the reason for their absence by no later than 10am on the first morning of absence.

If you cannot reach your line managers, you should make every effort to speak to someone who can be briefed on your workload and any urgent matters that may require attention.

If possible, you should give an indication of how long you expect to be absent so that arrangements can be made for cover if required.

If the absence is for a period of less than 7 days, employees should complete a self-certification form on their return to work. For periods over 7 days a medical certificate or 'fit note' from their GP is required. It is the responsibility of each employee to keep their line manager advised of the circumstances that are preventing them from attending work, of their likely return date, action being taken to mitigate the effect of the illness (e.g. GP visit) and contact details in case of work-related queries.

Employees who are absent from work due to reasons other than sickness/accident are required, wherever possible, to obtain prior permission from their line manager. Where absenteeism appears unreasonable or unwarranted, employees may be liable for disciplinary action for misconduct. The parish council reserves the right to make welfare visits to the home of employees whilst they are on sick leave.

You should expect a "return to work" meeting, this may in person or remote, with your line manager on your first day back after any period of absence, this will be to ensure that you are fit to work and to update you on developments in the department and your workload.

Line Managers Return to Work Discussions

Line managers will discuss absences with employees when they return to work to:

- Welcome the employee back to work.

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- Enquire as to the nature of their sickness and present state of health.
- Make the employee aware that they have been missed.
- Bring the employee up to date with any work issues.
- Ensure that the absence has been correctly certified and recorded.
- Ask whether there is any further support that can be offered to assist in ensuring attendance and point out the consequences of any further episodes of sickness absence.

If an employee's GP has advised that they 'may be fit for work' the return-to-work discussion can also be used to agree in detail how their return to work might work best in practice. If it is not possible to provide the support an employee needs to return to work – for example, by making the necessary workplace adjustments – or an employee feels unable to return then the Statement will be used in the same way as if the GP advised that the employee was 'not fit for work'.

Absence levels will generally start to be of concern to line managers at the following intervention points: • 3 absences in a 12-week period. • 10 days intermittent absence over the past 12 months. • 3 weeks continuously off sick.

Absence due to Disability

West Hunsbury Parish Council is an inclusive employer and as such does all they reasonably can to support disabled employees, workers and job applicants and protect them from disability discrimination, including harassment and victimisation. West Hunsbury Parish Council will make reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability and absences relating to the disability of an employee will be kept separate from sickness absence records.

Absence due to Maternity

West Hunsbury Parish Council is a family friendly employer and support all our staff through each stage of life. Absences relating to the pregnancy of an employee will be kept separate from sickness absence records.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

West Hunsbury Parish Council values its employee and supports their welfare. It will therefore respond to alcohol, drug or substance misuse problems as primarily a health issue, recognising that an employee with a problem can put themselves, their colleagues and the public at risk of harm. It is the Council's intention, as an employer, to respond positively to these issues and to encourage staff with problems to seek help and advice and reasonable time off will be given. However, employees must not consume alcohol or use substances outside of working hours that may affect their performance or their ability to work safely. Neither must they report for work if they may be under the influence of alcohol or other substances that may affect their performance and if they do, manager will send them home and consider action under the disciplinary procedure. The consumption of alcohol by employees during working hours is not allowed. The possession, use, production or supplying (selling or giving) of illegal drugs is forbidden and will be reported to the police in line with the Council's statutory responsibility under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (legislation.gov.uk). Serious incapacity due to alcohol, drugs or other substances whilst on duty will be regarded as gross misconduct and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.