

# **ILSTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

## **Sickness absence policy and procedure Final 26 July 2023**

### **Policy**

The Community Council understands that employees may need to be absent from work from time to time due to sickness. This policy covers employees and their line managers in handling time off from work where the reason for absence is sickness. The Community Council aims to have as many employees as possible in attendance at all times during the working week and sickness absence needs to be managed so that an acceptable level of absence can be permitted and any problems resolved.

Note that ICC, at the time of preparing this policy, has a single employee, the Clerk, with the Chairperson representing their Line Manager for day to day activities. Consequently the sickness and absence policy is less rigidly structured than if ICC had an employee workforce. In the event that ICC does employ a workforce this policy will need to be upissued.

### **Procedure**

#### **Notification**

If employees are unable to attend work due to sickness absence, they must notify their line manager/supervisor in a timely manner. They will need to explain why they are unable to attend and indicate when they best expect to return to work.

#### **Certification**

Absences should be certified by a Fit Note from a GP, however if the employee is absent for seven calendar days or less in each instance, the employee may instead self-certify their absence.

For absences of seven consecutive calendar days or less, upon their return to work, a self-certification form should be completed and passed to the employee's line manager/supervisor.

For absences of eight days or more, a fit note is required. Fit notes are issued by the employee's GP and should be passed to their line manager/supervisor upon their return to work. The fit note should cover each day of absence and, if multiple fit notes are issued, they should be posted to the employee's line manager/supervisor with a brief explanation of their absence, the condition and if known their expected return to work date or next GP appointment.

Failure to follow the certification process outlined above may be considered misconduct and may be dealt with under the Community Council's disciplinary process.

Noting the nature of the Clerk's role there is no entitlement to sick pay or SSP (statutory sick pay) during any period of absence due to sickness.

## **Return to work**

A fit note may make a recommendation for temporary changes to be made to an employee's working environment or conditions to facilitate a return to work.

Where the fit note contains recommendations for changes to be made to working conditions or practices, the Community Council will consider those recommendations and try as far as possible to accommodate those changes, where permissible in accordance with the needs of the Council.

In all circumstances, a return to work interview will be arranged by the line manager/supervisor for the employee.

The return to work interview will confirm the employee's fitness to return to work, update the employee on any changes that may have taken place in the workplace whilst absent and confirm that if any necessary support is required, and make arrangements for this as appropriate.

## **Fit notes**

Where a fit note is marked as "may be fit for work" by the employee's General Practitioner, the GP usually sets out the possible alternations or amendments that could be made to the employee's working practices to facilitate their fitness for work. Examples of the options available are:

- phased return to work
- amended duties
- altered hours
- workplace adaptations.

A meeting will be arranged by their line manager/supervisor to discuss the arrangements recommended in their fit note and how best the Community Council can facilitate a return to work.

In the event that adjustments and amendments cannot be made, the employee will not be able to return to work and will need to remain on sickness absence. However, where adjustments and amendments can be facilitated, regular reviews will be undertaken with the employee to confirm that the changes made continue to be adequate. The changes should be temporary and should not be considered permanent changes to the terms and conditions.

## **Frequent and short term absences**

### **Trigger points**

Absence triggers enable the Community Council and line managers/supervisors to address all absences and ensure absences are managed fairly and consistently.

The absence triggers are as follows:

**Triggers for employees within their probationary period.**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Trigger</b>
Number of absence events	2
Continuous calendar days of absence	5 days

**Triggers for employees who have completed their probationary period.**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Trigger</b>
Number of absence events	5 in a rolling 12 month period
Absence events totalling more than 10 working days (pro-rated)	2 in a rolling 12 month period
Continuous calendar days of absence	14 days

Only one of the triggers needs to be reached for the line manager/supervisor to be required to review the employee's sickness record.

The line manager/supervisor should meet informally with the employee to discuss the fact that an absence trigger has been reached and to discuss necessary actions, such as implementing any possible reasonable adjustments that may be necessary in relation to disability, or any possible formal disciplinary action. The line manager/supervisor may establish that there is an underlying medical condition and it may be that external advice is required as to the best course of action to take. Disciplinary procedures may not be necessary or appropriate in those circumstances.

A summary of the meeting should be kept by both the Line Manager and Employee.

In the event that an agreement cannot be reached there is a consultative channel with OVW.

**Long term sickness**

Employees should be aware that although the Community Council is sympathetic towards genuine illnesses, it is not realistic for the sickness-related absence to continue forever. The Community Council will be eager to get the employee back into the workplace as appropriately and effectively as possible, but the employment may need to be reviewed if this cannot be achieved. There will be a full consultation with the employee, together with a medical investigation and consideration of redeployment or alternative employment.

**Updates during sickness**

Employees are expected to keep their line manager updated with their health and expected date of returning to work.

Line managers/Supervisors will arrange periodic meetings with the employee to discuss the current situation so that each side is kept up to date with developments.

This will usually be at the employee's usual place of work but if a home visit is necessary due to serious ill health or being physically unable to attend work, this can be accommodated.

## **Disability**

The Community Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustments where an employee has a disability covered by the Equality Act 2010.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments covers elements such as making changes and adjustments to working hours, existing equipment, provision of different equipment and workplace practices, if the employee is placed at a substantial disadvantage. It may also involve physical changes, such as to the building entrance points, or alterations to the floor plan, furniture etc.

The employee will be consulted fully on these.

The duty to make the adjustments is 'reasonable' so if the suggested adjustment is not viable it will not be made. It may also be the case that no reasonable adjustments are possible to facilitate a return. There may be no alternative roles or employment available and if there is no prospect of the employee being able to return to work in the near future, it may be inevitable that a decision to dismiss is the last and only option.

## **Absences for reasons other than sickness**

Long term absences for reasons other than sickness will be considered in line with the needs of the Council prior to being authorised.