

# **WEST BLETCHLEY COUNCIL**

## **POLICY RELATING TO STAFF SICKNESS ABSENCE**

West Bletchley Council acknowledges that appropriate management of staff sickness is vital for the benefit of both the Council and its employees. Statistics evidence the fact that many working days are lost unnecessarily across all forms of work as a result of poor management of sickness absence.

This policy document sets out working practices for the management of sickness absence which, if adhered to by all, will promote improved working conditions for both the Council and its staff.

### **Reporting of Sickness Absence**

The employee is responsible for contacting the employer as soon as possible on the first day of absence to advise that they will not be reporting for work, the reason and an expected return date.

If the employee is sufficiently incapacitated that they are unable to contact the employer, they must ask a relative/friend to do so as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

### **Confirmation of Reason for Absence.**

If the period of sickness absence lasts for 7 consecutive days, or less (including weekends) the employee must complete a "self certification" form on the first day that they return to work. Although the employee can self certify for this period, this does not mean that they do not need to consult a medical practitioner.

If the period of absence extends for longer than 7 consecutive days (including weekends), the employee will be required to provide a "fit note(s)" from a medical practitioner, covering the total number of days absence, immediately upon their return to work.

### **Extended Periods of Absence**

It is important that the employee and employer keep in contact during extended periods of absence. From the employee perspective, it is important that they feel "included" when they are not at work due to sickness, and that the employer cares about their condition and is keen to get them back to work.

From the employer's perspective, it is important, from both a planning and cost point of view, that they understand how long they might be without a member of staff and when they might expect them to return.

The onus for continued contact remains with each party.

## **Return to Work**

Each time an employee returns to work following a period of sickness absence, the employer should discuss the absence with the employee to determine whether:

- The employee is well enough to return to work, without causing further impact to themselves or colleagues.
- The reason for absence is likely to recur. If so, what can be done to mitigate the impact on both the employee and the employer.
- There are recurring patterns of sickness absence, which may indicate the need for further medical or other related intervention eg. change of working practices, patterns or methods.

If during the discussion, it becomes apparent that the absence is due to a recurring medical problem, the employer may feel it necessary to refer the employee to Occupational Health for further assessment.

When an employee, who has been away from work due to sickness for an extended period of time, is nearing the time when they are able to return to work, they should meet with the employer to discuss arrangements for return to work. Return to work might need to be on a phased basis, there may be a need to adapt working practices, albeit temporarily, or indeed equipment used may need to be adapted or changed.

## **Trigger Points**

The trigger points for absence are when an employee has been absent due to sickness for either 3 periods or 10 days (whichever is the earliest) within a rolling 6 month period. When an employee's absence reaches the trigger points, an informal meeting will be arranged with their Line Manager. During the meeting their sickness absence record will be discussed and attendance improvement targets will be agreed. Improvement targets may take the form of an "Attendance Improvement Plan".

During an "Attendance Improvement Plan", your attendance will be monitored for an agreed period of time. Should your attendance remain unsatisfactory, the monitoring period may be extended or the Disciplinary Policy will be implemented.

Attendance may also be reviewed where no trigger points have been met if attendance patterns show cause for concern.

## **Recording of Sickness Absence**

The employer will complete a "return to work form" on the first day of sickness absence for any employee, following advice of absence. Sickness absence for all employees will be recorded on a chart, to help identify patterns of absence which may indicate that further investigation is needed, either about long term symptoms, or indeed working patterns or practices.

**September 2013**

**Reviewed *March 2018***