

Wisborough Green Parish Council

Employee Absence Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the operational efficiency of Wisborough Green Parish Council can be maintained whilst employees are 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.

2. Key Principles

1. As a responsible employer the Parish Council undertakes to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend to work due to sickness. (See points 16 & 17 of the Contract of Employment for sick absence and sick pay.)
2. Each employee is asked and expected to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance to cover the work required.
3. The Parish Council will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes:
 - (a) "Special leave" for necessary absences not caused by sickness.
 - (b) A fairly flexible approach to the taking of annual leave to fit in with regular Parish Council meetings.
 - (c) Access to counsellors where necessary.
 - (d) Rehabilitation programmes in cases of long-term sickness absence.
4. The Parish Council will consider any advice given by the employee's GP on the "Statement of Fitness for Work".
5. The use of an occupational health adviser, where appropriate, to:
 - (a) Help identify the nature of an employee's illness.
 - (b) Advise the employee and the Parish Council on the best way to improve the employee's health and wellbeing.
6. The Parish Council's Disciplinary Procedures will be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.
7. The Parish Council respects the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness. This policy will be implemented in line with all data protection legislation and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988.

3. Notification of Absence

If an employee is going to be absent from work they should speak to their Line Manager or deputy (i.e. Chairman/Vice Chairman/Parish Clerk) within an hour of their normal working time/meeting time. They should also give a clear indication of the nature of the illness and a likely return date.

The Line Manager will ascertain if there is any information that they, as the manager, need to know about the current workload. If the employee does not make contact by the appropriate time, the Line Manager must attempt to contact the employee at home.

An employee may not always feel able to discuss their medical problems with their Line Manager. Managers must always be sensitive to individual concerns and make appropriate arrangements where necessary.

4. Evidence of Incapacity

Employees can use the accepted self-certification arrangement for the first seven days of absence. Thereafter a "Statement of Fitness for Work" is required to cover every subsequent day. If absence is likely to be protracted, i.e. more than four weeks continuously, there is a shared responsibility for the Manager and the employee to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

"May be fit for some work"

If this is the advice of the GP on the Statement of Fitness for Work, then ways of helping them to get back to work will be discussed with the employee, possibly by a phased return or temporarily amended duties. If it is not possible to provide the support an employee needs to return to work, or the employee feels unable to return, the Statement will be used as if the GP advised that the employee was 'not fit for work'.

5. Return to Work Discussions

The Line Manager will discuss absences with employees upon return to work to establish:

- (a) The reason for and cause of absence.
- (b) Was there anything that the Line Manager or Parish Council could do to help.
- (c) That the employee is fit to return to work.

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.

6. Formal Review

A more formal review will be triggered by frequent short-term absences or long-term absence. This review should look at any further action required to improve the employee's attendance and wellbeing.

7. Absence Due to Disability/Maternity

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records. Disability - employees and managers are referred to relevant legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Maternity/paternity/adoption leave – is as set out in the relevant legislation.

In connection with this policy and its employees, Wisborough Green Parish Council is also committed to its Equal Opportunities Policy and Data Protection Policy.