**Human Resources information and guidance - top ten tips**

**Fact Sheet Six: managing sickness**

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| **What happens when someone is off sick for any length of time?** | |
| Tip one | Have a clear sickness absence policy! Without a clear policy you are in danger of managing sickness absence in ad hoc ways, and treating people / issues differently. The policy will say what payments a PCC make eg statutory minimum or other enhanced pay. | |
| Tip two | What if we didn’t get things right from the outset? If you have found a problem that hasn’t been well managed from the start, don’t worry! Now is the time to start. Agree your PCC policy so you can share this and explain there is a new policy to support things. | |
| Tip three | Self certification or doctors note? A member of staff can self certify (template attached) for up to one working week, after that all sickness absence should be authorised through a FIT NOTE these can be signed by a GP or other government approved professional. | |
| Tip four | Take an active role in managing absences! In general, short-term absences may indicate little – however, recurrent periods of short term absence, regular, or longer-term absence may be indicative of something more concerning that needs to be explored. | |
| Tip five | Be aware that sickness absence may result from a disability or other complex range of issues. Be committed to supporting disabled staff in accordance with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010; and be open minded to a complex range of health issues. | |
| Tip six | Encourage open conversations! Encouraging employees to feel able to talk to line managers about any health issues or concerns so that any adjustments or flexible working can be arranged early, can be motivating and supportive. | |
| Tip seven | Be Mental Health aware! Mental Health first aid, or other wider understanding of mental health issues is an incredibly important aspect of understanding employee wellbeing. | |
| Tip eight | Be Health and Safety aware! Employees working from home, out and about in the community or from the office are all protected by H&S legislation. Be aware of risks, responsibilities and general wellbeing so that appropriate actions/support can be given. | |
| Tip nine | Stay in touch! Any member of staff on sick leave can be contacted at agreed regular intervals to check in and offer support. It is fine to arrange to meet somewhere neutral if they are struggling to think about returning to work; pastoral support can be key. | |
| Tip ten | Where sickness is complex or long term, you may need to discuss sensitively and confidentially longer term options. Occupational Health, or early retirement might be options; or there may be adjustments/changes that can be made to support someone. | |

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| **Information sheet four – further information, template appraisal form**  **and a draft PCC performance policy** |

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| **Other sources of advice and support** | <https://www.acas.org.uk/podcast/sickness-absence-how-employers-can-better-manage-sick-leave>  Government resource: [www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview](http://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview) |
| **Self Certification template form** | Attached |
| **Template PCC sickness absence policy** | Attached |

**Appendix 1 Draft PCC Policy**

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| **PCC policy – sickness absence policy – LOGO of parish** |

**Scope**

1. This policy applies to paid employees only. It does not relate to any volunteers in a parish role.

**Background and introduction**

1. The purpose of this procedure is to provide a framework for managing and supporting sickness absence (short, medium, and long term).
2. Employees should feel able to discuss concerns about their absence in confidence with their line manager.
3. The PCC is aware that sickness absence may result from a disability and we are committed to supporting disabled staff in accordance with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
4. If you are absent on sick leave, you should expect to be contacted from time to time by your line manager in order to stay in touch and offer support, and to check in on the expected length of continued absence from work. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and pastoral care and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.

**Reporting arrangements**

1. Employees must notify their line manager at the earliest opportunity and, other than in exceptional circumstances, no later than 10am on the first day of absence and this should be done in person, or by phone/email or text message, with the reason for the absence and an idea for how long the absence might last.
2. Line managers may make contact if any confirmations or immediate support is required.
3. If an absence is likely to be more than seven calendar days, the employee must notify their appropriate line manager manager and send in authorised GP’s sickness certificates at regular intervals.
4. For periods of up to seven calendar days, employees must complete a self-certification absence form.

**Returning to work**

1. Even if the absence has been short, on any return to work, a line manager may hold an appropriate ‘Return to Work’ meeting. A meeting may just be a `glad you are back how are you feeling’ conversation but it may also be an opportunity to talk through things where there are longer term concerns, where there are more medical tests, or where the individual is worried about their health and where adjustments or flexibility may be needed.
2. Where appropriate, a line manager may work to design a phased return to work where this would be helpful to assist the employee to take up their role in managed and supported ways.

**Payments during absence**

1. The PCC offers both Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and this is paid at the government thresholds.

12a. IF APPROPRIATE – PCCs TO AMEND AS REQUIRED – this is an example

In additional to Statutory Sick Pay the PCC also offers additional sick pay during periods of certificated absence.

Under the PCC’s occupational sick pay arrangements employees who have completed their probation period will receive their salary inclusive of SSP for a maximum of 4 calendar weeks within any rolling 12-month period (i.e. not in a calendar year), which will be monitored by the line manager. Thereafter SSP will continue according to the government threshold at the time.

**Calculating sick leave**

1. Sick leave is calculated on a rolling year basis, i.e. cumulative within any 12-month period. (For example, if an employee was sick for three months from April to June and then sick again the following March, the rolling year goes back to the previous 12-month period and so the April to June absence is included.)

**Long-term sickness**

1. Long-term sickness is defined as a period of absence, which continues for a number of consecutive weeks/months.
2. During a period of prolonged sickness absence, the appropriate line manager will arrange to visit the employee to discuss progress and/or to keep them informed of news.

**Procedure for dealing with sickness absences**

1. If the line manager is concerned with a level of sickness absences as a first step this will be followed up as set out here:

* a review of sickness records (FIT notes and self certification forms);
* a meeting with the employee to discuss any steps which could reasonably be put in place to plan support, and where relevant, a likely date for a return to work and any steps which could be put in place to facilitate this
* to discuss an individual’s concerns about their views on their health generally
* to review any medical reports if this is something that has been requested (GP or occupational health for example)
* reviewing any entitlement to insurance or ill-health retirement benefits.

1. The PCC is committed to supporting all staff with long-term health conditions. Where the medical evidence indicates that there is a long-term condition which falls within the definition of a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, which is contributing to sickness absence considerations may include:

* making reasonable adjustments where possible to support a member of staff in fulfilling their duties and maintaining a satisfactory level of attendance;
* providing a phased return to work;
* redeployment to a suitable alternative vacancy;
* making reasonable adjustments to this process;
* only taking action under this procedure where it is justified.

1. Where it is considered necessary to address sickness absences formally, the employee will be invited to a formal sickness absence meeting to discuss the matter further in accordance with the procedure below.
2. Where it reasonably appears that the employee may not be fit to return to work or to perform their duties at the required level (which may include maintaining a satisfactory level of attendance) it may be appropriate to move directly to a Stage 3 final sickness absence meeting.
3. The PCC will ensure that reasonable advance notice will be given of the timing and location of any sickness absence meeting and that this will be given in writing.
4. The line manager will ensure that the letter includes why the meeting is taking place, and will attach a copy of any documents which may be referred to at the sickness absence meeting and the individual will be invited to submit any relevant documents.
5. An individual can be accompanied to a sickness absence meeting by a colleague or trade union official. The PCC has the discretion to permit a companion who is not a member of staff or union representative (for example, a family member) where this will help overcome particular difficulties caused by a medical condition.
6. The sickness absence meetings will be conducted by a line manager and/or another appropriate PCC member(s) who may determine any of the outcomes up to and including dismissal on the grounds of ill health.

**Stage 1: Sickness Absence Meeting for recurring absences: the meeting will address:**

1. Any concerns about the sickness absence, the impact of this, and sensitively discuss the issues:

* where there have been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences;
* discussing the reasons for the absences and any points in response;
* suggestions as to any appropriate measures or support which could improve attendance or support in the workplace where this is possible;
* whether it would be helpful to obtain any medical advice or further medical advice;
* the likely consequence of further absences or a failure to return to work and maintain satisfactory attendance levels;
* the time in which attendance must improve and the method by which this will be monitored.

1. On completion of the sickness absence meeting any outcome will be confirmed in writing which may include a formal written warning that where attendance is not meeting the required standard and setting out the required improvement and any time period for improvement. The individual will be advised of their right to appeal the outcome.

**Stage 2: Further Sickness Absence Meeting:**

1. If attendance does not improve (and this is NOT linked to serious medical ongoing health issues) the employee will be invited to a further sickness absence meeting. The meeting will address the points set out above including the reasons for and impact of the ongoing absence.
2. On completion of the further sickness absence meeting any outcome will be confirmed in writing which may include a final written warning that attendance is not meeting the required standard, and setting out the required improvement and any time period for improvement. This will include a warning that failure to meet and sustain the required level of attendance is likely to result in dismissal, along with the right to appeal the outcome.

**Stage 3: final sickness absence meeting:**

1. Where an individual has been warned several times that their level of absence has put them risk of dismissal following a prior warning, or where it reasonably appears that you are unfit to perform your duties, or unlikely to return to work, the line manager may invite the individual to a final sickness absence meeting with them and a member of the PCC.
2. The purposes of the meeting will be:

* to review the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed;
* if it has not been obtained, to consider whether medical advice is required. If it has been obtained, consider the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required;
* where there is long-term sickness absence, discussing how long the absence is likely to last and whether there is a reasonable likelihood of a return to work;
* where there have been repeated absences discussing the likelihood of further absences and to consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time;
* considering an individual’s ability to return to / remain in their role in view of both/and/or the situation and any adjustments that can reasonably be made.
* considering possible redeployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeployment.
* to consider the possible termination of employment.

1. On completion of the final sickness absence meeting, any outcome will be confirmed in writing which may include giving notice to terminate employment. The employee will be advised of their right to appeal the outcome.
2. A requirement to improve attendance which is issued following a sickness absence meeting will remain in effect for a period of 12 months from the date of issue unless otherwise advised.
3. Employees have the right to appeal to Appeal against any decision made following a sickness absence meeting if they are dissatisfied with it. The policy is set out below and notification should be made within five working days with the full details.

**Governance and PCC responsibilities**

1. The PCC may from time to time review its employment practices.
2. The PCC may appoint or delegate certain employment oversight, projects or developments for recommendation etc to a small working group/standing committee to oversee practical issues and to report back to the wider PCC.

**Appeals policy**

1. Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay at an agreed time and place.
2. An employee must inform of their wish to appeal against a decision that has been taken, and the grounds on which they wish to appeal and should put these in writing within [one week] of the date that the decision was sent or given to them.
3. All appeals are considered by a Churchwarden and one other member of the PCC (or delegated members of a PCC employment working group) not previously involved.
4. The decision will be confirmed in writing without unreasonable delay [and usually within one week of the appeal hearing]. There is no further right of appeal.

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| **Policy version** | Version one |
| **Approved by the PCC on (date)**  **Date for renewal of policy** |  |
| **Signed by (name)**  **Print Name**  **Role** |  |

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| **PCC Template Self Certification Form - LOGO of parish** |

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| **Name of employee** |  |
| **Dates of absence from work** |  |
| **Reason for absence from work** |  |
| **Was any medical advice needed/taken?** |  |
| **Is this an ongoing issue and is there anything that we can do to support you ?** |  |
| **Are you taking any medication that may have side effects that we may need to know in case you are taken poorly at work?** |  |
| **Return to work discussion with the line manager and any comments, agreements, information etc**  **Date of meeting**  **Follow up actions required by the employee or the line manager etc**  **Does there need to be a follow up meeting?**  **When?** |  |

**Signing off**

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| **Signed and dated by the line manager** | **Signed and dated by the employee** |

**This form will be kept on the individual’s HR/Personnel File.**