

**DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

**May/June 2013**

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**Sickness Absence Reporting Procedure**

a) An employee who is sick and cannot attend work should normally contact their manager (or the person designated for the purpose within the service area) by telephone as soon as possible on the first day of absence, or within one hour of their normal start time at the latest.

b) Employees should not normally ask anyone else to make contact on their behalf unless it is not possible for them to do so. If the designated person is not available when the call is initially made, then attempts must be made to call again later or a contact number should be left with a work colleague to pass to the manager/supervisor so that the call can be returned later in the day by the manager/supervisor. If no work colleagues are available, contact details may be left with the Contact Centre for forwarding to the manager/supervisor. Absence should not be communicated via text message or email.

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c) When reporting absence from work due to sickness, employees will be expected to give as much of the following information as possible:

- The nature of illness and the anticipated length of absence;
- Details of any outstanding or urgent work that needs to be dealt with during the absence;
- Details of how they can be contacted if necessary, especially where the employee is staying at a different address during their absence.

d) Where an employee becomes ill while at work and feels too unwell to continue working, they must speak to their manager who will give permission for them to leave work (either temporarily or for the day) and for them to seek medical advice where appropriate. When an employee has attended work for half of their normal working day or more but has then had to leave due to illness, this will not be recorded as sickness absence. When an employee has left work having worked for less than half of their normal day, the day will be recorded as sickness absence.

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e) Employees who fail to follow the sickness absence procedure may be subject to action under the council's Disciplinary Procedure. Unauthorised absence is considered to be misconduct and will be considered in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure. In exceptional circumstances, the council reserves the right to withhold Occupational Sick Pay if an individual does not comply with the requirements with this Policy and Procedure.

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## 2. **Certification**

Every absence of 4 calendar days or more has to be certified to ensure prompt and correct payment of occupational and statutory sick pay and to ensure that accurate records are maintained. Employees are required to complete a 'Self Certificate' form (available on Evoice or from Human Resources) for each absence of 4 calendar days or more and forward it to their manager as soon as possible. A Self Certificate is not required when a Statement of Fitness for Work is obtained that covers the employee from the first date of absence. Failure to comply with the certification procedure may result in loss of sick pay. Misleading or false statements will be dealt with under the council's Disciplinary Procedure.

## 3. **Absences longer than Seven Calendar Days**

If the employee continues to be absent for more than 7 consecutive days (regardless of whether or not these are working days) they must consult a doctor and obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work or 'Fit Note', for the eighth day onward, which must be forwarded immediately to HR – Payroll office. Any delay in receiving the statement will require an explanation and may lead to sick pay being withheld. The employee must also contact their manager on the eighth day of absence to inform them of relevant details and likely length of absence.

Notes must be dated to run consecutively with no gaps to ensure there are not uncertified periods during the period of absence.

## 4. **The Statement of Fitness for Work or 'Fit Note'**

The Statement of Fitness for Work or 'Fit Note', focuses on what an employee may be able to do at work rather than what they cannot do.

A GP will be able to suggest ways and temporary adjustments that may help an employee to get back to work. This might mean discussing:

- a phased return to work
- flexible working
- amended duties
- workplace adaptations

The GP's recommendations are not legally binding and the employer does not have to act on the advice or suggestions. If the changes suggested cannot be made for whatever reason, the statement will be regarded as saying 'not fit for work' for sick pay purposes. An employer is, of course, obliged to pay statutory sick pay and to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

You do not need a note to say you are fit to return to work. You should return to work as soon as you feel well enough. If this is before your 'Fit Note' runs out, you should discuss this with your manager and obtain their agreement to your return. However, if your doctor has advised that it would be unsafe or bad for your health to return to work, you should not return to work before the end date on your 'Fit Note' and if your GP wants to assess your fitness again before you return to work, they will indicate this on the note.

## 5. **Hospitalisation**

In the event of hospitalisation, the same notification procedure should be followed unless the sickness/hospitalisation prevents this. The manager should be notified of the hospitalisation as soon as practicably possible, either by the employee or by a person acting on their behalf. Hospital admittance and discharge certificates should also be forwarded to the manager as soon as possible. It is not expected that employees should send further medical certificates during a stay in hospital providing admittance certificates have been forwarded.

Following the period of hospitalisation, any additional sickness absence reporting necessary should follow the procedure outlined in paragraphs 2 and 3.

## 6. **Statutory Sick Pay Expires**

If your entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay runs out, you must still produce 'Fit Notes' to HR – Payroll office. These will then be forwarded to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) by HR – Payroll. Any notifications you receive from the DWP regarding Employment and Support Allowance must be sent to HR – Payroll.