

Stranton PCC – Absence management policy and procedure

Absence management policy – statement of policy

The objective of this policy is to ensure so far as possible that the welfare and wellbeing of staff are protected in any period or periods of unplanned sickness or unauthorised absence, and that absence is managed to ensure staff are supported as necessary to meet work objectives.

It aims to ensure that staff are aware of their statutory entitlements to paid and unpaid leave over and above annual holiday and Sick pay.

This policy addresses the management of:

- Short-term sickness, lasting less than one week.
- Multiple short-term sickness absences, which might follow a pattern.
- Long-term sickness absence lasting several weeks or longer.
- Unauthorised absence
- Statutory entitlements

Most absences are genuine, the policy is intended to support and manage employees in a positive way, ensure that absence is minimised and that return to work after unplanned absence is supported in a manner that deals with the causes of absence. It also addresses potential for home working as an alternative to absence under certain circumstances.

Procedure

1. Related policies:

- **Disciplinary**
- **Grievance**
- **Drugs and alcohol**

2. Prevention of unplanned absence

The PCC wishes to provide a safe, happy and supportive working environment. If a member of staff considers that working conditions, the working environment, workload or other occupational circumstance are causing stress or risk of other sickness or unplanned absence, they should raise their concerns with the line manager and then if unresolved in accordance with the Grievance procedure. Staff should be advised not to work outside agreed and scheduled hours.

3. Staff obligation to contact in case of unplanned absence

In the case of unplanned absence, regardless of the cause, the employee has the primary responsibility to contact their line manager - or if the line manager is not available a colleague - by work phone, as soon as the unplanned absence becomes unavoidable, giving the reason for the absence, the expected duration of the absence. A note of the absence should be recorded by or for the line manager to keep on the staff record. If a staff member is absent without explanation, the line manager or a colleague covering line manager responsibilities must try to contact the missing staff member and record the explanation.

4. Return to work

To comply with the Equality Act 2010, a risk assessment of the workplace for the returning employee is needed after sickness absence: there will often be nothing to note but if there are any work related aspects to their illness, they must be provided with any equipment or access necessary to do their job safely (e.g. a modified desk/chair following a back injury, or modified duties if they are on certain types of medication) An employee has a responsibility under the drugs and alcohol policy to notify the line manager of any prescribed medication they may be taking that could affect their work.

On the return to work of any member of staff who has had a period of unplanned absence he/she will meet formally with the line manager, to ensure that wellbeing is maintained and that the member is either fully fit to return to duties or needs to be placed temporarily on modified duties (e.g. office based rather than community based in very cold weather). In the case of a return to work after long term absence it may be appropriate depending on the reasons for the absence to agree a graduated return i.e. starting on reduced hours, with a progression back to contracted hours, to help the member of staff.

At the end of a period of absence, on the staff member's return to work the line manager must notify the payroll manager to confirm the period of absence, and how the absence is to be paid i.e. as Statutory Sick Pay, special leave, holiday pay or unpaid leave.

5. Occupational Health support

If a long term absence has no expected date of return after two months, the line manager (with the consent of the member of staff) should obtain approval from the Chair or Vice-chair of the PCC to seek Occupational Health advice. This advice may also be sought if needed to inform a risk assessment on return to work.

6. Sickness absence and holiday pay

A member of staff who is sick when they have booked planned holiday may at the start of the period of sickness notify the line manager and elect to have the period treated as a period of sickness (paid at Statutory Sick Pay rates) and to defer their holiday leave.

7. What information needs to be collected and recorded?

If any member of staff is sick, he/she should "self certify" for the first five working days in a full time contract (four, if 30 hours) by notifying the Line Manager: for absence lasting more than a working week, the staff member should obtain a "Fit note" to inform and support their return to work, when fit to do so, on light duties if necessary. During a period of absence lasting longer than two weeks, there should be weekly contact between staff member and line manager initiated where possible by the staff member, to discuss progress and likely return date.

8. Current fit note guidance is here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578032/fit-note-guidance-for-employers-and-line-managers.pdf

9. Staff records

An employee record is to be maintained securely for each member of staff, to which only the staff member and line manager have access, all absence communications and notes of meetings should be logged and filed.

10. Repeated sickness absence

if in any period of three months a member of staff is absent sick on three or more separate occasions he/she will have an absence review meeting with the line manager to determine if any modifications to working hours or conditions is required, of if there are any work related causes that can be addressed to improve attendance.

11. Non – sickness absence

If a member of staff is well but self-isolating or quarantined for public health reasons according to current government regulation and guidance, they should arrange with their line manager to work from home where possible and the manager is responsible for reallocating and rescheduling work and providing resources to support this.

Special paid leave (sometimes called compassionate leave) is permitted in case of close family bereavement, or serious illness of a family member, or similar domestic crisis, for a period to be agreed with the line manager, not to exceed or be extended beyond two weeks without contacting the individual for review and re-confirmation.

Maternity and Parental leave will be paid according to current legislation and rates, subject to notice being given in accordance with the relevant regulations.

An occasion of unexplained absence including one where the member of staff cannot be contacted will be counted as unpaid leave, the payroll manager needs to be informed by the line manager how many days are not to be paid.

In addition to contractual paid holiday leave which is normally to be agreed in advance , a member of staff may request in writing and the PCC may approve at its discretion a period of unpaid leave or a temporary reduction in paid hours.

12. Review triggers for further action

Any repeat of unexplained absence within 12 months may become a matter for review and investigation by the line manager and could lead to disciplinary action.

Repeated sickness absence where the cause is not work related on more than six occasions in any twelve month period will trigger a review with the line manager, which could lead to disciplinary action (e.g. if there is a pattern of absence suggesting an abuse of sick pay arrangements) .

13. Sick pay rates

Staff are entitled to sick pay at statutory sick pay rates for 28 weeks (after initial waiting days) based on their normal working week (e.g. 5 days, or four days for a 30 hour contract). The line manager may use discretion to authorise additional sick pay to top up to normal pay, where a member of staff's sickness absence is exceptional.

15, Summary of Responsibilities

- Who notifies the absence?

The member of staff in the first instance

- Who records the absence?

The member of staff's line manager, who in each case of absence passes only relevant details to the payroll manager as required for payroll adjustments (i.e. not the nature or clinical details of any illness .

- Who reports absence statistics to senior management?

The payroll manager

- Who enforces your absence management policy?

The line manager, with support if required from the Chair or vice chair of the PCC

- Who monitors repeated absence trigger points?

The line manager

- Who will lead meetings when someone's absence is too high?

The line manager, or a member of the PCC or subcommittee if appropriate to the circumstances .

This policy was approved by Stranton PCC on.....

This policy will be reviewed three months after implementation and annually thereafter