



SICKNESS, ABSENCE & WELL-BEING POLICY

WRITTEN BY:

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy provides guidance for the employer and the employee to ensure that the health and well-being of all employees is effectively managed.

Biddulph Town Council recognises that, whilst a certain level of sickness may be inevitable, a reasonable balance must be maintained between the needs of the Council and those of the employees to take time off from work due to sickness.

1.2 People are absent from work for three reasons:

1. They are sick – they might have a common cold or a more complicated medical condition that needs medication, an operation or recuperation. Employees should either fill in a self-certificate explaining their short-term sickness or they should get a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' if the illness lasts more than seven days.
2. They feel they are unable to come to work because of family or caring responsibilities or they simply do not want to come to work – they may be unhappy, or lack motivation. Sometimes employees take sick absence because they feel they cannot ask for annual leave at

short notice. Some unauthorised absence may require disciplinary action.

3. They are on authorised leave such as holiday, on a training course, or on maternity/paternity or some form of leave related to their caring or family commitments. They may also be on jury service or some other form of public duty.

This Policy focuses on the first two kinds of absence.

1.3 Employers have a 'duty of care' to protect employees from risks to their health and safety. In order to manage this, Biddulph Town Council will ensure that:

- good physical working conditions are provided
- health and safety standards are rigorously maintained, including stress management
- new starters are given sufficient training and receive particular attention during the initial period of their work
- the prevailing ethos is one of teamwork
- jobs are designed so that they provide motivation and job satisfaction. They should, where possible, provide some or all of the following: variety, discretion, responsibility, contact with other people, feedback, elements of challenge and clear goals
- training, career development and promotion policies, communication procedures and welfare provision are examined, to see if they can be improved
- policies on equal opportunities, discrimination, and bullying and harassment are up-to-date and observed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Manage employee sickness absence effectively in a fair, supportive and consistent way;
2. Treat employees who have suffered ill health, injury or disability with dignity and respect at all times;
3. Promote employee health, safety and wellbeing and seek to prevent occupational injury and absence;
4. Ensure employees are aware of their responsibilities relating to attendance at work and complying with sickness absence notification procedures;

5. Make reasonable adjustments where the need arises for employees with regard to their working arrangements or working conditions so they can continue to work
6. Keep in contact with absent employees;
7. Record, measure and monitor sickness absence.

2.2 There are several key principles underlying the management of sickness, absence and well-being:

1. As a responsible employer we undertake to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness (see the employee contract).
2. We ask each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.
3. We will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes 'special leave' for necessary absences not caused by sickness, and a flexible approach to the taking of annual leave.
4. We will consider any advice given by the employee's GP on the 'Statement of Fitness for Work'. If the GP advises that an employee 'may be fit for work' we will discuss with the employee how we can help them get back to work – for example, on flexible hours, or altered duties.
5. We will seek professional advice, where appropriate, to help identify the nature of an employee's illness and the best way to improve the employee's health and wellbeing.
6. The Town Council's disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.
7. We respect 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.

PROVISIONS

3.1 Notification of absence

If an employee is going to be absent from work they should speak to the Chief Officer within an hour of their normal start time. They should also:

- give a clear indication of the nature of the illness and
- a likely return date.

The Chief Officer will check if there is any information that needs to be passed on about the employee's current work.

If the employee does not contact their manager by the required time the manager will attempt to contact the employee at home.

3.2 Evidence of incapacity

Employees can self-certificate for the first seven days absence. 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 Biddulph Town Council and the employee to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

3.3 Short-term sickness

Short-term sickness is by far the most common form of absence (accounting, on average, for around 80 per cent). Short-term sickness usually takes the form of:

- minor one-off absences: for example, toothache, colds, muscular sprains and strains, migraines etc.

minor absences that occur more regularly: for example, an employee may be off with minor strains/injuries etc. four times in a year or may be off every few weeks with a migraine.

3.4 Biddulph Town Council recognises that early intervention and good communication are key ingredients in managing attendance. The Chief Officer will:

- apply standards consistently
- look after the employees' wellbeing
- keep within the law
- look after the best interests of the employee and the Council
- keep in touch with employees when they are sick and away from work.
- complete a 'return to work interview' when the employee returns to work.

Following each period of absence, a 'return to work' interview will take place, using the template document included in **Appendix 1**. During the 'return to work' discussions the Chief Officer will discuss absences with employees to establish:

- the reason for, and cause of absence
- anything the Chief Officer or the Council can do to help
- that the employee is fit to return to work.

If the Chief Officer has a period of absence, the interview will be completed by a member of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

3.5 Biddulph Town Council will build up a picture of an employee's short-term sickness using the methods above. This will enable the Chief Officer to monitor sickness levels.

If the employee has four separate periods of absence in a rolling year, this will trigger a 'formal review'. At this meeting, consideration will be given to trends in sickness absence, workload, possible disciplinary action, personal issues, etc.

3.6 Long-term sickness

As part of the management of long-term sickness, the Chief Officer will consider the following:

- does the 'Statement of Fitness for Work' say that the employee 'may be fit for some work'? If so, would a phased return – working part-time or flexible hours – help the employee to get back to work?
- in the opinion of the worker's general practitioner/medical consultant, when will a return to work be possible?
- will there be a full recovery or will a return to the same work be inadvisable?
- could the employee return if some assistance were provided? Could some re-organisation or re-design of the job speed up a return to work?
- is alternative, lighter or less stressful work available, with retraining if necessary?
- is there a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to make a reasonable adjustment?

3.7 To manage long-term absence, the Chief Officer will:

- keep in regular contact
- seek to understand and implement the recommendations from medical professionals
- be clear about arrangements for sick pay
- conduct return to work interviews
- develop a 'getting back to work' programme to support the employee's return
- dismiss fairly (after a proper investigation).

3.8 Absence due to disability/maternity

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records. Advice can be sought from the Chief Officer in relation to these areas.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1 Disability

If your employee is disabled or becomes disabled, you are legally required under the **Equality Act 2010** to make reasonable adjustments to enable the employee to continue working. For example, providing an ergonomic chair or a power-assisted piece of equipment.

4.2 Data Protection

Relevant points are:

- the Council must get the employee's permission in writing in order to see their medical records
- the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 gives an employee the right to see the medical practitioner's report – up to six months after it was supplied
- an employee can ask the GP to amend their medical report if they think it is incorrect or misleading.

4.3 Health and Safety

Health and safety legislation requires the Council to undertake risk assessments of activities to prevent people being harmed, and to review those risk assessments if employees have suffered injury or ill health that makes them more vulnerable.

Return to Work Form

Part 1: Self-Certification *(to be completed by employee)*

Name:	Job Title:
1 st Day of Absence:	Date Returned to Work:
Number of working days absent:	Are you: full time/part time * *Delete as appropriate
State briefly why you were unfit for work (specify nature of illness or injury. Words like “illness” or “unwell” are not enough)	
I reported my absence to: _____ on (date): _____	

Signed (employee): Date:

Part 2: Return To Work Discussion *(to be completed by manager)*

Manager's Name:	Date of RTW Discussion:
Has the necessary medical certification been presented? (e.g. where required, a fit note/s)	Yes/No
Summary of discussion:	
Any other comments or issues raised, and any further action agreed:	

Signed (employee): Date:

Signed (manager): Date: