

## **ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **Purpose**

Cranbrook Town Council is committed to providing a healthy workplace and to promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff. This policy is designed to promote good practice aimed at preventing illness, effectively managing sickness absence when it does occur, enabling staff to return to work after a period of sickness (including taking all reasonable measures to support and retain those with ongoing health issues) and ensuring that sickness leave is monitored.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all paid Cranbrook Town Council employees. Any questions about this policy should be directed at line managers.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with (i) employees' contract of employment and (ii) the Annual Leave & Sickness form. Individuals might also wish to refer to the Equal Opportunities and Health & Safety policies.

### **Aims and Objectives**

Cranbrook Town Council is committed to ensuring that:

1. It treats employees who have suffered ill health, injury or disability fairly, equally and consistently.
2. It makes reasonable adjustments to retain any employee who has become disabled (or whose disability has worsened) so they are not put at a substantial disadvantage in their workplace.
3. It supports those returning to work e.g. by making reasonable adjustments to the workplace/changes to systems or hours of work wherever possible or offering redeployment where this is possible and appropriate.
4. It agrees a written return to work plan with employees returning to work after a medium to long term absence. For short absences due to minor illnesses, the line manager will agree a verbal plan informally.
5. It investigates unreasonable, persistent (without reasonable cause) absences or patterns of absence and takes suitable actions to prevent this continuing.

### **Reporting Sickness Absence**

Employees must inform their line manager if they are unwell and unable to attend work, including the reason for this, as soon as reasonably possible and certainly no later than the end of the working day on which the first absence occurs. Acceptable methods for this are a personal phone call or, if the line manager is unavailable, an

email with the option of a call back. Text messages are not an acceptable method unless this has specifically been agreed with the line manager.

The line manager will remain in reasonable contact with the absent employee throughout the sickness absence and liaise with them regarding their progress, any fit note(s) required and likely return to work date.

The line manager may, in the case of longer absences, wish to encourage the employee to speak to an employment support/occupational health expert.

The Council reserves the right to arrange for the employee to attend an examination by an independent medical practitioner chosen by the Council in order to obtain an objective report on the employee's condition, also to discuss the findings with the practitioner to establish likely recovery, fitness to resume work and any recommended treatment.

## **Returning to Work**

For absences of up to seven days, including non-working days, the employee will be required to complete a form on their return to work, to 'self-certify' their absence. This should be done using form SC2 Employees Statement of Sickness which can be found online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

For absences of more than seven days in a row, the employee should provide a doctor's 'fit note' (previously called a sick note). This can be obtained from the employee's GP or hospital doctor and is free unless requested before the seventh day. The fit note will state whether the employee 'may be fit for work' or is 'not fit for work'.

Sickness absence will also be recorded on the Annual Leave & Sickness form.

A return-to-work interview will be conducted by the line manager. For short absences this may be an informal verbal conversation but for medium to long term absences it will involve a meeting at which notes will be taken and signed by the employee and the line manager. In certain circumstances, return to work may be offered on a phased, flexible or part-time basis. Everything reasonably possible will be done to support employees to make a successful return to work. Requests for paid time off to help return to work or to attend medical appointments will be determined by the line manager who will take into account individual circumstances.

## **Absence Management**

In the case of unreasonable, persistent (without reasonable cause) absence or suspicious patterns of absence the line manager will (i) ensure the employee fully understands the impact of this on the organisation (reduced output, additional strain on colleagues etc.) (ii) investigate the cause and take appropriate action to prevent this continuing. The emphasis will always be on early intervention and good communication to establish the causes, whether work related or not, of the absence and to seek to address them promptly.

## **Sickness Pay**

The arrangements for sickness pay and qualifying periods are described in employees' contract of employment.

## **Useful Links**

**Acas Helpline** 0300 123 1100 - free and impartial advice on employment issues and mediation.

**Citizens' Advice** [0800 144 8848](tel:08001448848) - [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) - free and impartial advice on a range of areas including personal and employment issues.

**Equality Advisory and Support Service** 0800 800 0082 - freephone helpline, advice and help on equality and human rights issues.

**Employment Tribunal public enquiry line** 0300 123 1024 - helpline and information about tribunals.

## **Cranbrook Town Council**

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