



**Knutsford Town Council**

# Sickness Absence Policy

November 2019

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## Introduction

- 1.1 The Council may need to dismiss an employee whose attendance does not meet an acceptable standard either because of a long-term absence or because of a series of short-term absences.
- 1.2 Such dismissals do not depend on any wrongdoing on the employee's part and do not mean that the Council does not accept that their absences are genuinely due to illness or injury. Rather, dismissal is recognition that unfortunately the employee is no longer able to perform their role, or attend work on a sufficiently regular basis to make their continued employment a viable option.
- 1.3 At all meetings under this policy, an employee will have a right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official on the same basis as set out in the council's Performance Management Policy.

## Short Term Absence

- 2.1 An employee who the Council considers to have an excessive sickness absence record will be spoken to informally. They will usually have specific attendance targets set and be advised that if these are breached they will be invited to a meeting to discuss their attendance.
- 2.2 The meeting will usually be conducted by the employee's line manager
- 2.3 At the meeting the employee will be asked to explain the level of their absence. Where there is any indication that the absences are caused by an underlying medical



condition then the matter may be dealt with under the procedure for long-term absence set out below. The Council may also seek medical evidence from either the employee's doctor or an occupational health specialist in which case the meeting will be adjourned for a report to be obtained.

- 2.4 Subject to any medical evidence, the manager conducting this first-stage meeting may decide to issue a warning to the employee setting out the Council's expectations regarding attendance, indicating the level of improvement needed. A review period will normally be set which may range from one month to 12 months depending on the circumstances.
- 2.5 If the employee's attendance does not improve to the extent required they may at any stage in the review period be invited to attend a second-stage meeting to discuss the matter. The meeting will be conducted by the employee's line manager.

This meeting may result in an extension of the review period or the issuing of a final written warning requiring the employee's attendance to improve, setting out the level of improvement required over a specified period of up to one year.

- 2.6 If the employee does not meet this standard and there is no underlying condition where reasonable adjustments would assist the employee to attend, they may be dismissed.

A final meeting will be convened which shall be conducted by a manager with appropriate authority to dismiss and will consider any representations made by or on behalf of the employee.

Any dismissal arising out of this meeting will be with notice.

## Long Term Sickness

- 3.1 Where an employee is absent for an extended period, or it is clear that their absence is likely to continue for some time, the Council will want to investigate the prospects for their return and consider what actions can be taken to facilitate this.
- 3.2 The extent to which the Council can continue to sustain an employee's absence will depend on a range of factors, including the role of the employee and the prevailing circumstances of the organisation.
- 3.3 The Council will seek medical advice as to the employee's condition either from the appropriate professionals caring for the employee or from a specialist occupational health practitioner. The focus will be on ascertaining when the employee will be able to return to work and what steps the Council can take to facilitate this.



- 3.4 An employee is not obliged to consent to any medical reports or records being shared with the Council as part of this process. However, in the absence of medical evidence the Council will have to work on the basis of what information is available in reaching its decision.
- 3.5 One or more meetings will be arranged by the employee's line manager to discuss the employee's condition, the prospects for any return to work, and whether anything more can be done by the Council to help.
- 3.6 Every effort will be made to make suitable arrangements for the meeting to allow the employee to attend. Where the employee is simply too ill to take part in the process, however, the Council may proceed to dismissal in the absence of a meeting taking into account any representations made on the employee's behalf.
- 3.7 Where it appears that the employee will be unable to return to work within a reasonable time frame then the Council may need to consider dismissal. Any dismissal will be with notice.

## General

- 4.1 An employee may appeal any decision taken under this policy in accordance with the council's appeals policy.
- 4.2 Any action to be taken against the Town Clerk will be conducted by a sub-committee of the Personnel Committee. Dismissal of the Town Clerk must be ratified by Full Council.

