

ESSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

(NALC-aligned version)

1. Policy Statement

Essington Parish Council is committed to promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees. The Council recognises that illness is sometimes unavoidable and will manage sickness absence in a **fair, consistent, supportive and sensitive manner**, while balancing the need to maintain effective service delivery.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Support employees during periods of illness;
- Facilitate a safe and timely return to work;
- Ensure sickness absence is managed consistently; and
- Reduce unnecessary absence levels.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Essington Parish Council and should be read in conjunction with:

- The employee's **contract of employment**; and
- The **NJC Green Book (National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service)** where incorporated into contracts.

3. Principles

- Employees will not be disadvantaged for genuine sickness absence.
- The Council will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Disability-related absence will be recorded but **will not be treated as ordinary sickness absence**.
- Confidentiality of medical information will be maintained at all times.

4. Reporting Sickness Absence

4.1 Notification

If an employee is unable to attend work due to sickness they must:

- Notify the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or a nominated councillor **as early as possible on the first day of absence**;
- State the reason for absence and expected duration;
- Maintain reasonable contact during the absence.

If the employee is unable to notify personally, someone else may do so on their behalf.

Failure to follow reporting procedures may affect entitlement to occupational sick pay.

5. Certification Requirements

5.1 Days 1–7

For absences of **seven calendar days or fewer**, employees must complete a **self-certification** on return to work.

5.2 Absence over 7 days

For absences exceeding seven calendar days, employees must provide a **Statement of Fitness for Work (Fit Note)** and continue to provide updated certification as required.

6. Sick Pay Entitlements

6.1 Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Employees may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) subject to statutory eligibility rules.

6.2 Occupational Sick Pay (Green Book)

Where an employee's contract incorporates **NJC Green Book terms**, occupational sick pay will be paid in accordance with the following scale:

Length of continuous service	Full pay	Half pay
During first year	1 month	2 months
During second year	2 months	2 months
During third year	4 months	4 months
During fourth and fifth year	5 months	5 months
After five years	6 months	6 months

- Payments include SSP where applicable.
- Entitlement is calculated over a rolling 12-month period.
- Occupational sick pay is conditional on compliance with reporting and certification requirements.

7. Return to Work Discussions

A return-to-work discussion will normally take place **on the first day back at work** following any sickness absence.

The purpose is to:

- Welcome the employee back;
- Confirm the reason and duration of absence;
- Identify any ongoing health issues or required support;
- Confirm records are accurate; and
- Offer reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Notes of the discussion will be made and a copy provided to the employee.

8. Medical Advice and Occupational Health

The Council may seek medical advice or refer an employee to Occupational Health where:

- There is concern about frequent or long-term absence;
- Support or adjustments may be required; or
- Clarification is needed regarding fitness for work.

The cost of medical reports will normally be met by the Council. Employees have rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988.

9. Short-Term Sickness Absence

Short-term or intermittent absences may be managed through:

- Informal discussions;
- Monitoring absence patterns;
- Supportive interventions.

Where improvement is not achieved and no underlying medical condition exists, absence may be managed through formal procedures.

10. Long-Term Sickness Absence

Long-term sickness absence is normally defined as **four weeks or more continuous absence**.

Management may include:

- Regular review meetings;
- Occupational Health referrals;
- Adjusted duties or phased return;
- Reasonable adjustments; and
- Consideration of alternative roles where appropriate.

Dismissal on grounds of ill health will only be considered as a **last resort**, following medical advice and proper procedures.

11. Phased Return to Work

Where appropriate, the Council may agree a **phased return to work**, normally for up to **four weeks**, during which:

- Hours and/or duties are gradually increased; and
- **Normal pay will be maintained**, unless otherwise agreed.

12. Sickness During Annual Leave

If an employee falls sick during annual leave, the leave may be reinstated subject to provision of appropriate medical evidence. Retrospective fit notes will not normally be accepted.

13. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All sickness and medical information will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with data protection legislation.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains compliant with legislation, NALC guidance and best practice.

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