

Birchanger Parish Council Sickness and Absence Policy

Adopted	3 rd June 2015
Reviewed	June 2025
Date of next review	Spring 2028

Document history	
May 2022	Typographical and grammatical amendments
June 2025	Gender neutral amendments

This policy and procedure applies to all Birchanger Parish Council employees.

Key Principles:

1. As a responsible employer, Birchanger Parish Council undertakes to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend to work due to sickness. (See Contract of Employment for sick absence and sick pay details.)
2. Each employee is asked and expected to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance to cover the work required.
3. The Parish Council will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes:
 - “Special leave” for necessary absences not caused by sickness.
 - A flexible approach to the taking of annual leave to fit in with regular Parish Council meetings.
 - Access to wellbeing counsellors where necessary.
 - Rehabilitation programmes in cases of long-term sickness absence.
4. The Parish Council will consider any advice given by the employee’s GP on the “Statement of Fitness for Work”.
5. The use of an occupational health adviser, where appropriate, to:
 - Help identify the nature of an employee’s illness.
 - Advise the employee and the Parish Council on the best way to improve the employee’s health and wellbeing.
6. The Parish Council’s disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.
7. The Parish Council respects 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.

Notification of absence

If an employee is going to be absent from work, they should speak to the Parish Council Chair or the Chair of the Employment Committee (both referred to after as the Chair) as soon as they are aware that they will not be able to fulfil their contractual hours. The employee should also give a clear indication of the nature of the illness and a likely return date.

The Chair will check with the employee to ascertain if there is any information that they need to know about the current workload. If the employee does not contact the Chair by the appropriate time, the Chair must attempt to contact the employee at home.

An employee may not always feel able to discuss their medical problems with the Chair who must always be sensitive to individual concerns and make appropriate arrangements where necessary.

Evidence of incapacity

Employees can use the accepted self-certification arrangement for the first seven days of absence. Thereafter a "Statement of Fitness for Work" is required to cover every subsequent day.

If the absence is likely to be protracted, i.e. more than four continuous weeks, there is a shared responsibility for the Chair and the employee to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

"May be fit for some work"

If this is the advice of the GP on the Statement of Fitness for Work, then it will be discussed with the employee as to ways of helping them to get back to work, possibly by a phased return or temporarily amended duties. If it is not possible to provide the support an employee needs to return to work, or the employee feels unable to return, the Statement will be used as if the GP advised that the employee was 'not fit for work'.

Return to work discussions

The Chair will discuss absence with employees upon return to work to establish:

- The reason for and cause of absence.
- Was there anything that the Parish Council can do to help.
- That the employee is fit to return to work.
- If an employee's GP has advised that they 'may be fit for work,' the return to work discussion can also be used to agree in detail how their return to work might work best in practice

A more formal review will be triggered by:

Frequent short-term absences or long-term absence.

This review should look at any further action required to improve the employee's attendance and wellbeing.

Absence due to disability/maternity

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records.

Disability - employees and the Council are referred to relevant legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Maternity/paternity/adoption leave – is as set out in the relevant legislation.

In connection with this policy and its employees, Birchanger Parish Council is also committed to its Equal Opportunities Policy.