

Managing Sick Absence Policy and Procedure

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The Council sees health and wellbeing as an important aspect of the successful delivery of our services and seeks to promote and support healthy living through internal health improvement initiatives, occupational health advice, and by working with the individual employee as a collaborative process to identify and meet their physical and mental well-being needs at work.

This policy advises the Council's People Managers and employees on the appropriate procedure for the management of absence from work due to ill health and refers to both short term and long-term absences.

The Council ensures this is a fair, equitable and transparent policy, with the needs of employees at heart. This policy is fully compliant with equality and diversity, making sure care and consideration is given to the needs of our employees, whilst balancing these with the needs of the Council's business.

Policy	Managing Sick Absence Policy and Procedure
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Managing Sick Absence Policy and Procedure

Introduction

The ill-health of an employee, whether mental, physical or both, resulting in absence from work, not only has a significant impact on the person who is unwell, but also has a major impact on the operating capability of the Council. It is envisaged that the Council's Managing Sickness Absence policy and procedure will assist employees to achieve their full potential in the workplace and contribute to the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives for the communities that are served.

The Council wishes to create and support a healthy and efficient working environment, not only through its obligations to comply with employment legislation, but also through a caring and rehabilitative approach towards sickness absence management.

People Managers in the Council have a critical role in the effective management of sickness absence and its impact upon work performance and service levels. It is important that all People Managers, supported by the Council and the HR team at PSPS, are enabled to acquire the skills and training needed to conduct relevant absence management processes in a competent and caring manner.

The Council is committed to providing an approach to managing Sickness Absence that ensures no employee is treated less favourably due to a protected characteristic as defined under the Equality Act (2010). Where a sickness absence is caused by an underlying medical condition that is defined as a disability under the terms of the Equality Act (2010), the Council will formally consider all possible reasonable adjustments.

Aim

This policy aims to promote a positive, proactive, and supportive approach to the management of sickness absence within the Council, and to encourage and assist employees to maintain good records of attendance.

Scope

The Policy applies to all employees of the Council who are absent from work through ill health including those employed on fixed-term contracts, following the successful completion of the probationary period, whether the type of sickness absence is short-term or long-term. It does not apply to agency workers, self-employed contractors, or consultants.

To ensure disabled and pregnant employees are supported appropriately under the Managing Sickness Absence policy: disability and pregnancy-related absences will be recorded separately and not used to contribute to the Sickness Absence Triggers as set out in this policy.

Absence during a probation period will be dealt with under the Council's probation policy and therefore falls outside the scope of this policy. The policy does not cover Maternity Leave; Paternity Leave; Adoption Leave; Shared Parental Leave; Time off Work; Annual Leave. Policies regarding these types of absence from work can be found in the Corporate Directory on First4HR and advice on this policy and the policies above are available from the HR team at PSPS.

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1. Guiding Principles.

The following principles govern the Council's Managing Sickness Absence policy and procedure which are:

- **fairness** - actions should be reasonable, necessary, known and understood. Employees involved are entitled to be heard with courtesy and respect.
- **confidentiality** - information relating to sickness absence should not be divulged to a third party not involved in the process
- **equality** - the Council will not discriminate unfairly or illegally, directly, or indirectly

2. Responsibilities under this Policy – The Council

- 2.1 The Council's duty of care to all employees will be at the centre of this policy and will treat employees who are absent due to a medical condition, sympathetically and supportively.
- 2.2 The recording and monitoring procedures used in the management of sickness absence will be applied in a fair and consistent manner.
- 2.3 The Council will continue its commitment to creating and maintaining a positive and healthy workplace environment
- 2.4 The Council will continue to develop further the extensive portfolio of proactive support service provisions available to its employees which currently include:
 - Access to a free confidential 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) that provides a range of advice and support services to employees including counselling;
 - Qualified Occupational Health professional provision;
 - Ongoing programme of employee initiatives to support employees of the Council's Health and Wellbeing, both physical and mental.

3. Responsibilities under this Policy – Employees

- 3.1 All employees of the Council should make sure that they are aware of the absence notification procedures and comply with them in a timely manner.
- 3.2 The Council expects the employee to notify their People Manager at least one hour before their normal start time personally by telephone on the first day of absence, to discuss how long they are likely to be absent from work.
- 3.3 The employee should keep in daily contact with their People Manager during their first week of absence.
- 3.4 Regular contact should continue as per an agreed communication plan for any absence beyond this period of absence due to ill-health.
- 3.5 If it is not reasonably practicable for the employee to make personal contact with their People Manager for example if the employee has been admitted to hospital, then an employee's family member or close friend should contact their manager for them on the first day of absence by the quickest means possible.
- 3.6 In cases where the absence is longer than expected then the employee should contact their People Manager by telephone on a regular basis explaining the reason for absence, how long it is likely to last, and when they plan to come back to work. This will help the People Manager plan the operational needs of the business. The frequency and time of contact should be mutually agreed upon.

- 3.7 During any period of sickness absence, employees should make every effort to focus on getting better and speed up their recovery.
- 3.8 Employees are required to submit a Statement of Fitness for Work ('Fit Note') issued by a GP or other medical professional to their People Manager for any absence that lasts more than seven calendar days, which includes non-working days and weekends.
- 3.9 The Council recognises its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) for those employees with either a disability or an underlying health condition that would constitute a disability under the Equality Act (2010) and those in relation to pregnancy.
- 3.10 Absences arising from these protected characteristics will be recorded separately from general sickness absences and will not count towards the Sickness Absence Triggers within this Policy.
- 3.11 Where an employee is absent from work because of an accident in the workplace, the employee will be paid (inclusive of statutory benefits) in line with their contractual entitlement.
- 3.12 Where an employee experiences prolonged, persistent short-term absence through illness or injury, and where medical evidence shows that the employee is unable to fulfil their duties within a reasonable time or on a consistent basis, it may be necessary for the Council to consider termination of employment. In such cases, there will be a clear process as set out in the short-term absence section of the policy and will be managed sympathetically and supportively.
- 3.13 Employees are responsible for their general health and are expected to take steps to minimise unnecessary absence from work due to ill health and should avoid prolonging or aggravating an episode by either remaining at work or returning too soon.
- 3.14 If an employee is struggling to undertake duties due to a illness, then they should speak to their People Manager to arrange a referral to Occupational Health.

4. Responsibilities under this Policy – People Managers

- 4.1 People Managers are responsible for fairly and consistently applying the Managing Sickness Absence Policy and its procedure.
- 4.2 All People Managers have a responsibility to manage an employee who is absent from work due to sickness proactively and sensitively.
- 4.3 In applying the Managing Sickness Absence policy and procedure, decisions about an employee who is absent from work due to ill health may only be made by Managers based on information obtained through meetings with the employee, absence data, and advice from the PSPS HR team and Occupational Health advisors.
- 4.4 People Managers are required to ensure that all sickness absence is recorded accurately on First4HR from the first day of absence.
- 4.5 People Managers are required to conduct a return-to-work interview upon an employee's return to work after every period of sickness absence. A record of the meeting should be made by the People Manager on First4HR.
- 4.6 People Managers have responsibility for undertaking appropriate training to allow them to deal with managing Sickness Absence and return to work issues effectively and consistently.
- 4.7 People Managers have a responsibility to maintain regular dialogue with an employee who is absent whether it is a long-term absence or a series of short-term absences. Dialogue with the employee may include such issues as the management of workload, the need to refrain from activities likely to exacerbate or prolong recovery, for example, carrying out business on behalf of the Council whilst on sick leave or checking work emails.

- 4.8 In cases where there is a particular concern about the nature of the employee's sickness absence, or if it is an illness of a complex nature or involves a protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010), People Managers should seek advice from the PSPS HR team.
- 4.9 People Managers are required, as far as possible, to manage the consequences of an employee's sickness absence to minimise the effects on performance, service levels and the workload of colleagues whilst the employee is absent from work.
- 4.10 People Managers are responsible for the initial investigation of cases where it is felt that abuse of the Council's sick pay arrangements may have taken place and, in consultation with Human Resources, initiating the appropriate procedures to deal with the abuse.

5. Responsibilities under this Policy – PSPS Human Resources Team.

- 5.1 The PSPS HR Team is responsible for providing advice, guidance and support to People Managers and employees on the application of this 'Managing Sickness Absence' policy.
- 5.2 The PSPS HR Team is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the Managing Sickness Absence policy and procedure.
- 5.3 The PSPS HR Team is responsible for providing training in the management responsibilities required under this policy.
- 5.4 The PSPS HR Team is responsible for the provision of reports on absence information and other associated people management information to the Council on a monthly basis.
- 5.5 The PSPS HR Team advises employees and Managers on ill-health retirement or termination on the grounds of ill health where appropriate.
- 5.6 The PSPS HR Team act as a liaison between the Council and occupational health provider.

6. Responsibilities under this Policy – Occupational Health

- 6.1 The role of the external Occupational Health Advisory service is to provide professional occupational health information and advice, in support of the effective management of sickness absence to the Council's People Managers and the HR team at PSPS, as follows:
 - advising whether there is a medical condition affecting attendance or work performance
 - advising on the potential impact of such a medical condition and on the employee's ability to perform their duties
 - where appropriate, and with the consent of the employee, liaising with the GP/Clinician responsible for the medical care of the employee (under the Access to Medical Records Act 1988, the Council's employee has the right to obtain access to the GP/Clinician's report before it is forwarded to Occupational Health)
 - advising on a likely date for return to work
 - what temporary or permanent adjustments to the job would enable the employee to function safely and effectively despite the health condition
 - suggesting types of suitable alternative work if an employee will be unable to return to their own job
 - providing advice on an appropriate process for a successful rehabilitation back to work after a long-term absence from work
 - advising whether work has had an adverse effect on the health of employees and how this can be prevented from happening in the future

7 Interaction with other Council policies

7.1 The arrangements set out in this policy and procedure relate to managing sickness absence affecting the ability of an employee of the Council to carry out their contractual duties and should be distinguished from any unauthorised absence from work, which is an issue of potential misconduct and may fall within the scope of the Council's Disciplinary policy and procedure. Advice and guidance on such a situation are available from the HR Team at PSPS.

8. Medical Appointments

8.1 Wherever possible, employees should make medical/dental appointments outside of their normal working hours. However, where this is not practical, appointments must be made to cause minimal disruption to the working day, i.e., lunchtime, early, late

8.2 Hospital/Consultant/Specialist Clinic appointments are considered authorised absence and time off will be paid; Team Leaders will use their discretion to how much time is allowed and if unsure, seek advice from an HR Business Partner (HRBP). Employees should provide their Team Leader with proof of their appointment when requesting time off to attend appointments.

Operations and Recovery Periods

8.3 Operations are considered as authorised time off and will be paid. Managers/Team Leaders should provide the necessary support to the employee during this period of absence and agree on an appropriate means/delegated person of contact. The manager/Team Leader should work collaboratively with HR, Occupational Health, and the employee's specialist to ensure a safe and appropriate return to work.

IVF Treatment

8.4 Time off to undertake IVF treatment is considered authorised absence and time off will be paid; Team Leaders will use their discretion to how much time is allowed and if unsure, seek advice from an HR. If employees are undertaking IVF treatment, they should provide their People Manager with proof of the appointment for treatment. If an employee is unwell and not able to work as a result of the IVF treatment it should be recorded as sickness absence

Gender reassignment

8.5 Time off for these purposes will be treated no less favourably than time off for illness or other medical appointments.

9. The Council's Sick Pay Scheme

9.1 Please see the Council's sick pay entitlement as set out in the attached summary in Appendix One of this policy.

10. Statement of Fitness for Work – known as the “Fit note”

10.1A 'Fit Note' describes the medical reason for an employee's absence and whether the doctor thinks an employee is '*not fit for work*' or '*may be fit for work*' if the employer takes into account some recommendations for temporary adjustments at work, for example:

- a phased return to work:
- altered hours;
- amended duties;
- workplace adaptations.

10.2 This allows maximum flexibility to discuss possible changes to help support a return to work.

10.3 Where it is not possible for the Council to implement the recommendations from the 'Fit Note', then this document should be treated as if the 'Fit Note' advised that the employee is **'not fit for work'** and they should remain absent.

11. Sickness Absence and Annual Leave

11.1 If an employee is sick whilst on 'Annual Leave' then the 'Annual Leave' can be 'retaken' at a later date on the condition that medical evidence is provided to PSPS.

11.2 This will include medical evidence, e.g., medical certificate details of treatment and, if relevant, a copy of any insurance policy claim.

11.3 To be able to 'reclassify leave' the employee must be able to show that they would not have been fit for work had they not been on Annual Leave. Wherever reasonable and practicable the Council still requires its notification procedures to be followed.

11.4 In circumstances where an employee is sick before starting Annual Leave, and they wish to use the entitlement at another time, then they should inform their People Manager at the earliest opportunity.

11.5 The request to cancel a period of booked Annual Leave must be supported by a Medical Certificate. The People Manager should discuss the request and inform the employee accordingly seeking advice from the HR Team at PSPS where appropriate.

11.6 Where an employee has been on long term sickness absence and has been unable to use their Annual Leave entitlement by the end of the Annual Leave year, the employee may wish to carry over leave not taken due to the sickness absence.

11.7 The employee should discuss this with their People Manager on an individual basis. It is the People Manager's responsibility to ensure that the opportunity to take accrued but untaken Annual Leave is provided.

11.8 Upon termination of employment with the Council, it is expected that any outstanding annual leave entitlement will be paid as a part of the termination/end of the contract.

12. Return to Work Meetings

12.1 Return to work meetings must be conducted by People Managers following every period of sickness absence.

12.2 The immediate People Manager should arrange a meeting with the employee on their first day back, or as soon as possible afterwards.

12.3 If an employee feels that they are unable to discuss the reasons for their absence with their People Manager, then they should contact the PSPS HR Team via HR@pspsl.co.uk

12.4 The purpose of the return-to-work meeting is:

- To give the People Manager the opportunity to check that the employee is fit to return to work;
- To allow the People Manager to fully understand the reason for the employee's absence;
- To allow the employee to voice any concerns they may have, and to identify any domestic, welfare or work-related concerns that may affect their return to work;
- To allow the People Manager to raise awareness about the available services and support provision available to employees, e.g. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health;
- Where appropriate to discuss the need for a referral to Occupational Health;
- To discuss where appropriate an agreed return to work programme, including phasing, where deemed necessary;
- To allow the People Manager to update the employee on events that may have occurred during their absence;
- To ensure that the employee is aware of the 'Managing Sickness Absence' Policy;
- To inform the employee of the number of absences recorded and about the 'Sickness Absence Triggers' Policy;
- To notify the employee of how their absence will be managed and about the 'Managing Sickness Absence Policy'.
- A record of the return-to-work meeting will be made by the People Manager on the return-to-work proforma which is available in the employee's absence management record on First4HR.

13. Sickness Absence Reporting

Short-term and Long-term Sick Absence Trigger Points.

13.1 People Managers will manage sickness absence where sickness levels reach the following Sickness Absence Triggers for short-term and long-term sickness absences.

Short Term Sickness Absence Triggers are:

- three occasions of sickness absence within a rolling 12-month period.
- seven calendar days within a rolling 12-month period.
- eight consecutive days (which includes non-working days and weekends).

Long Term Sickness Absence Trigger is a period of long-term sickness absence that has lasted or is expected to last, four weeks or more.

13.2 Where an employee attends work and subsequently is unable to continue to work due to sickness then this will be logged on First4HR in accordance with the following :

13.3 Where an employee attends work for a period of less than 3 hours and is unable to continue due to sickness, then the time taken will be logged as 1 day of sickness absence

13.4 Where an employee attends work for a period of 3 hours or more and is unable to continue due to sickness, then the time taken will be logged as ½ a day of sickness absence.

Managers' Discretion on Trigger Points

13.5 When reviewing absences against the trigger points it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances for managers to use their discretion on what the trigger points are. This particularly applies when an employee has an underlying medical condition that is covered under the Equality Act 2010 and advice is usually obtained from OH.

13.6 If management wish to apply discretion to change an employee's trigger point, then this should only be applied in exceptional circumstances. Following advice from HR, the manager must be able to justify, discuss, and record the reasons for this decision.

13.7 Any extensions to the trigger points as a reasonable adjustment resulting from OH advice should be regularly reviewed by the People Manager with advice from the PSPS HR Team .

14. Stage 1 - Managing Short Term Absence

Invite to Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

14.1 Where an employee's absence through sickness becomes a cause for concern i.e., absence levels have met the short term 'Sickness Absence Trigger' of three occasions of sickness absence within a 12-month rolling period; seven calendar days of absence within a rolling 12-month period, or eight consecutive days (which includes non-working days and weekends) then the People Manager should invite the employee to a Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting.

14.2 Where a 'Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting' is to be held, the People Manager will notify the employee in writing of the details of the Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting; normally giving 5 working days' notice and setting out the reason for the meeting.

14.3 Employees have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union official or a workplace colleague of their choice and will be advised of their right to do so.

14.4 If required, a note-taker and member of the PSPS HR team will attend the Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting and will record in writing the main points of the meeting; including details of remedial or supportive measures to be taken by the People Manager and the employee.

Conducting the Stage 1 – Formal Sickness Absence Review Meeting

14.5 At the meeting the People Manager will sympathetically discuss with the employee the reasons for their absence and advise them that their level of attendance is a cause for concern. The People Manager will review with the employee previous absences where they have contributed to meeting the Sickness Absence Trigger.

14.6 The People Manager should also discuss any issues that might be affecting the employee's attendance e.g., personal, family, or work-related issues, being sensitive to only encouraging the employee to disclose what is suitable.

14.7 During the Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting it may be appropriate to discuss with the employee referring them to an Occupational Health Advisor.

14.8 Where the employee's pattern of absence is such that a Formal Review Period is required then the People Manager should discuss this with the employee.

14.9 A Formal Notification of concern about the level of absence from work due to sickness may be issued where the People Manager sets out a 'Formal Review Period' and should notify the employee of the date of the Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting.

14.10 During the meeting the employee should be reminded that any failure to improve attendance at work could lead to further notifications of concern about the unsustainable level of absence from work due to ill health and may ultimately lead to dismissal from employment with the Council.

Outcome of the Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

14.11 There are three potential outcomes following this stage of the procedure. They are:

- No Further Action
- A Formal Review Period
- Formal Notification of Concern About the Level of Absence from Work

14.12 The People Manager should confirm the outcome of the ‘Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting’ in writing, to the employee within 5 working days of the meeting.

14.13 Where the People Manager is satisfied with the sickness absence record and the reason for absence then the employee should be notified that the matter will not progress to Stage 2.

14.14 Where a formal notification of concern about the level of absence from work due to sickness is issued and a Formal Review Period has been agreed, then the letter from the People Manager to the employee should include details of any further support, actions required with an agreed action plan, the length of the monitoring period and how progress will be monitored during the review period, along with any reasonable adjustments that are to be made and any further assistance that is available to assist the employee to improve the attendance level at work to meet expectations of their contractual obligations to the Council.

14.15 The employee should be notified in writing of the date of the ‘Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting’.

14.16 If a Formal Notification of concern about the level of absence from work due to sickness is issued, an Appeal against this outcome must be submitted in writing to the Head of HR and Organisational Development at PSPS via the HR Portal, within 10 working days from the receipt of the outcome letter.

15. Stage 2 – Managing Short Term Absence

Invite to Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

15.1 The ‘Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting’ should be scheduled to be held at the end of the review period which was set out at the ‘Stage 1 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting’.

15.2 Where a ‘Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting’ is to be held, the People Manager will notify the employee in writing of the details of the ‘Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting’; normally giving 5 working days’ notice and set out the reason for the meeting.

15.3 At the meeting the employee is permitted to be accompanied by a Trade Union official or a workplace colleague of their choice and will be advised of their right to do so.

15.4 A note-taker and a member of the PSPS HR Team will attend the Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting and will record in writing the main points of the meeting, including details of remedial or supportive measures to be taken by the People Manager and employee, where appropriate.

Conducting the Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

15.5 At the meeting the People Manager will discuss the employee’s level of absence during the ‘Formal Review Period’.

15.6 Where the employee’s attendance at work has improved then the People Manager will discuss the importance of the employee maintaining an acceptable level of attendance in the workplace.

15.7 The People Manager should discuss with the employee that should their sickness absence levels meet the short term 'Sickness Absence Trigger' of 3 occasions of sickness absence within any 12-month rolling period or 7 calendar days which include non-working days within a rolling 12-month period in the future then the People Manager may invite the employee to a further 'Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting'.

15.8 Where following the Formal Review Period, an employee is unable to demonstrate a clear and sustained improvement in their attendance, then the People Manager should discuss with the employee the reasons for their absence and advise them that their level of attendance is a continued cause for concern.

15.9 In cases where the employee's attendance has not improved to the required standard during the 'Formal Review Period' then the employee should be reminded that any failure to improve attendance at work could lead to further warnings or ultimately dismissal.

15.10 Second formal notification of concern about the level of absence from work due to sickness may be issued where the employee's attendance has not improved to the expected level. The People Manager should set out a further 'Formal Review Period' and notify the employee of the date of the 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting'

Outcome of the Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

15.11 There are three potential outcomes following this stage of the procedure. They are:

- No Further Action;
- A Formal Review Period is set;
- A Formal Notification of Concern About the Level of Absence from Work is issued.

15.12 The People Manager should confirm the outcome of the 'Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting' in writing, to the employee; within 5 days of the meeting.

15.13 Where the People Manager is satisfied that the level of sickness absence has improved and has sustained an acceptable level of attendance at work within the 'Formal Review Period' then the employee should be notified by the People Manager in writing that the matter will not progress to Stage 3.

15.14 Where a Second Formal notification of concern about the level of absence from work due to sickness is issued by the People Manager and a further 'Formal Review Period' agreed, then the letter should be sent to the employee by the People Manager which will include details of any improvements required, an action plan, the monitoring period and how progress will be monitored. Any reasonable adjustments that are to be made and any available support.

15.15 The employee should be notified by the People Manager in writing of the date of the 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting'.

15.16 If a Second Formal notification of concern about the level of absence from work due to sickness is issued by the People Manager, an appeal against this outcome may be submitted in writing to the Head of HR and Organisational Development at PSPS via the HR@pspsl.co.uk , within 10 working days from the receipt of the outcome letter.

16. Stage 3 – Managing Short Term Absence

Invite to Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

16.1 The 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting' should be scheduled to be held at the end of the review period which was set out at the Stage 2 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting.

- 16.2 Where a 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting' is to be held, the People Manager will notify the employee in writing of the details of the 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting'; normally giving 5 working days' notice and set out the reason for the meeting.
- 16.3 At the meeting the employee is permitted to be accompanied by a Trade Union official or a workplace colleague of their choice and will be advised of their right to do so.
- 16.4 A note-taker and a member of the PSPS HR Team will attend the 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting' and will record in writing the main points of the meeting.

Conducting the Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

- 16.5 At the meeting the People Manager will discuss the employee's level of absence during the 'Formal Review Period'.
- 16.6 Where the employee's attendance at work has improved then the People Manager will discuss the importance of the employee maintaining an acceptable level of attendance in the workplace.
- 16.7 The People Manager should discuss with the employee that should their sickness absence levels meet the short term 'Sickness Absence Trigger' of 3 occasions of sickness absence within any 12-month rolling period or 7 calendar days which include non-working days and weekends within a rolling 12-month period in the future then the People Manager may invite the employee to a further 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting'.
- 16.8 If following the review period an employee is unable to demonstrate a clear and sustained improvement in their attendance, then the People Manager should discuss with the employee the issues that have already been raised and that their level of absenteeism is no longer sustainable.
- 16.9 Where a 'Second Written Warning' has already been issued and no further improvements have been made then it is likely that this will lead to dismissal.

Outcome of the Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting

- 16.10 The People Manager should confirm the outcome of the 'Stage 3 – Formal Short Term Sickness Absence Meeting' in writing, to the employee; within 5 days of the meeting.
- 16.11 If the outcome is a Dismissal, an appeal against the outcome must be submitted in writing to the Head of HR and Organisational Development, within 10 working days from the receipt of the outcome letter.

17. Stage 1 – Managing Long Term Absence

- 17.1 A single period of sickness absence that lasts more than four weeks is normally considered to be a period of long-term sickness absence.
- 17.2 It is the People Manager's responsibility to maintain regular contact with an employee throughout the entire period of absence, to understand the nature and progress of the absence, and to provide the appropriate support, information, and advice where necessary.
- 17.3 During periods of long-term absence, employees should, if appropriate, be kept informed of any key issues or developments within their service area
- 17.4 If the employee is absent for several periods of long-term absence (whether for the same reason or not) consideration needs to be given to the services's ability to sustain the level of non-attendance.

Invite to Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

17.5 If an employee has been absent from work for 4 weeks and it is clear that the employee is unlikely to return to work within a reasonable period of time, then the People Manager should invite the employee to a 'Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting' to discuss the nature of their absence.

17.6 At the 'Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings' the employee is permitted to be accompanied by a Trade Union official or a workplace colleague of their choice and will be advised of their right to do so.

Conducting the Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

17.7 During the 'Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting' it may be appropriate to discuss with the employee referring them to Occupational Health.

17.8 The focus of the 'Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting' should be on the wellbeing of the employee and should be conducted in a sensitive, sympathetic, and supportive way.

17.9 Depending on the nature of the illness it may be appropriate to visit the employee at a mutually convenient meeting place.

17.10 Where the employee is likely to return to the same job in the near future then the People Manager should discuss with the employee whether they will require any particular support or reasonable short-term adjustments to assist in their return.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- phased return to work;
- the use of ergonomic equipment;
- a change in working hours or the pattern of work

17.11 If the prognosis of the employee returning to work is uncertain and it is not possible to take a firm decision on the future position, it may be necessary to continue to monitor the absence and review the situation on a regular basis by inviting the employee to 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings'

Outcome of the Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

17.12 Following the 'Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting' the People Manager should write to the employee within 5 working days confirming what was discussed and what measures will be put in place to enable the employee to return to work.

17.13 Where the employee is unable to return to work the letter should set out the review period and date of the 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting'

18. Stage 2 – Managing Long Term Absence

Invite to a Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

18.1 Where following the 'Stage 1 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting' the employee is unable to return to work then the People Manager should invite the employee to regular 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings' usually every 4-6 weeks.

18.2 At the 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings' the employee is permitted to be accompanied by a Trade Union official or a workplace colleague of their choice and will be advised of their right to do so.

18.3 Up to date medical advice should be sorted from the employee and/or Occupational Health where appropriate.

18.4 In these circumstances it continues to be the responsibility of the People Manager to maintain regular contact with the employee.

Conducting a Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

18.5 The focus of the 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings' is on the wellbeing of the employee and should be conducted in a sensitive, sympathetic and supportive way.

18.6 Depending on the nature of the illness it may be appropriate to visit the employee at a mutually convenient meeting place.

18.7 Where the employee is likely to return to the same job in the near future then the People Manager should discuss with the employee whether they will require any particular support or reasonable short-term adjustments to assist in their return.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- phased return to work;
- the use of ergonomic equipment;
- a change in working hours or the pattern of work

18.8 If the prognosis of the employee returning to work is still uncertain and it is not possible to take a firm decision on the future position, it may be necessary to continue to monitor the absence and review the situation on a regular basis by inviting the employee to further 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings'

Outcome of the Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

18.9 Following each 'Stage 2 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings' the People Manager should write to the employee confirming what was discussed and what measures will be put in place to enable the employee to return to work.

19. Stage 3 – Managing Long Term Absence

19.1 Where the employee's absence lasts 6 months or more and the prognosis is still unclear, appropriate timescales should be considered by the People Manager and a member of the HR Team to bring matters to a resolution.

Invite to a Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

19.2 The People Manager should invite the employee to a formal hearing known as the ‘Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting’. The employee will be given 10 working days’ notice and the invite will set out the reason for the meeting.

19.3 At the ‘Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings’ the employee is permitted to be accompanied by a Trade Union official or a workplace colleague of their choice and will be advised of their right to do so.

19.4 A note-taker and a member of the PSPS HR Team will attend the ‘Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings’ and will record in writing the main points of the meeting.

Conducting the Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

19.5 During the ‘Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings’ the People Manager should discuss the employees continued absence and the prospect of returning to work in the near future. The People Manager should also consider any reasonable adjustment or redeployment opportunities that may be available.

19.6 If following the ‘Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meetings’ the prognosis is still unclear, and the employee is not fit to carry out their role in the foreseeable future e.g., 3-6 months, it will be necessary to discuss this with the employee.

19.7 It may be appropriate to discuss the possibility of redeployment into a suitable alternative role, and, where necessary and appropriate, advice should be sought from Occupational Health.

19.8 Where such action is necessary, it will be conducted supportively, sympathetically and with full information and advice to help the employee to make an effective transition.

19.9 If there are no suitable opportunities for redeployment, or redeployment is unsuccessful, subject to consultation, it may be necessary for the People Manager and a member of the HR Team to consider ill-health retirement or termination of employment on the grounds of medical incapability.

Outcome of the Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting

19.10 Following the ‘Stage 3 – Formal Long Term Sickness Absence Meeting’ the People Manager should write to the employee confirming the outcome.

19.11 If the outcome is the Dismissal, an appeal against the decision must be submitted in writing to the Head of HR and Organisational Development at PSPS within 10 working days from the date of the outcome letter.

20. Occupational Health

20.1 If it is considered appropriate to refer an employee to Occupational Health, then the People Manager should make this referral through the HR & Payroll Services portal.

20.2 Upon receipt of the Occupational Health report, the People Manager should invite the employee to an ‘Occupational Health Review Meeting’.

20.3 Where an Occupational Health referral has been made as part of a formal stage of Managing Sickness Absence then the ‘Occupational Health Review Meeting’ should be conducted as part of the ‘Formal Absence Review Meeting’.

20.4 During the ‘Occupational Health Absence Review Meeting’ the People Manager should review the current level of absence and discuss the Occupational Health report with the employee in order to seek their views.

20.5 Where the employee is likely to return to the same job in the near future then the People Manager should discuss with the employee whether they will require any particular support or reasonable short-term adjustments to assist in their return. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Phased return to work;
- the use of ergonomic equipment;
- a change in working hours or the pattern of work.

21. Appeal Procedure

21.1 An employee has the right to appeal against the outcome following each stage of the formal short-term and formal long term sick absence meetings.

21.2 An appeal can be submitted using the Appeal Form which is available on the HR & Payroll Services Portal via HR@pspsl.co.uk

21.3 The Appeal Form should be submitted to the Head of HR and OD, PSPS HR Team within 10 working days from receipt of the decision letter confirming the outcome.

21.4 The appeal Hearing will normally be carried out as soon as practicable after receipt of the Appeal.

21.5 An appeal against the outcome will be heard by an Appeal Panel that has not previously been involved in the matter, comprising:

- usually, a more senior manager who will act as the Chair and decision-maker about the grounds of the Appeal.
- a representative from HR to provide advice and guidance to the Chair

21.6 The Appeal Panel will consider the findings and outcome from the formal stage Absence Meeting.

21.7 The purpose of the Appeal is not to reinvestigate the case but to establish the grounds for appeal:

- the original decision was reached in a procedurally correct way
- the action taken was reasonable
- ensure consideration of any new relevant evidence or mitigating circumstances that may not have been previously disclosed.

21.8 The Chair of the Appeal Panel will write to the employee notifying them of the time date of the Appeal.

21.9 The Chair of the Appeal Panel will send, without undue delay, copies of any written submissions and documentary evidence.

The Appeal Hearing

21.9 The purpose of the Appeal Hearing is for the Appeal Panel to listen to the employee's concerns and determine whether the outcome of the Absence Meeting was procedurally correct and to decide whether the outcome of the Absence Meeting was appropriate to the facts of the case.

21.10 The Appeal Hearing should proceed in a formal, polite, and respectful manner.

21.11 The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or Trade Union Representative.

21.12 The members of the Appeal Panel may put questions to the employee.

21.13 The employee should present their final submission to the Appeal Panel.

21.14 The Appeal Panel will consider its decision in private.

21.15 The Chair will notify the outcome to the employee on behalf of the Panel, as soon as possible after the Appeal

Following the Appeal Hearing

21.16 Notification of the outcome of the Appeal Hearing will be sent to the employee's home address, the employee's work email if available and personal email, after provision of written consent from the employee.

21.17 The decision of the Appeal Panel will also be conveyed to the employee's People Manager.

21.18 Where an appeal against an outcome is successful and the decision is not to terminate the employment, then reference to the action concerned will be removed from the employee's file and the employee will be notified accordingly in writing by the Chair of the Appeal Panel.

21.19 Where an appeal against an outcome is not successful, there will be no change in the level of action previously decided at the conclusion of the formal stage Absence Meeting and the formal Absence Management procedure will continue.

21.20 The employee who appealed will be notified as soon as possible in writing by the Chair of the Appeal Panel following the Appeal Hearing.

Appendix 1 :

South Holland District Council's (SHDC) Occupational Sick Pay Scheme

Sick Pay Entitlements

Continuous Service	Sick Pay Entitlement
During 1 st year of service	One month full pay and, after completing four months service, two months half pay
During 2 nd year of service	Two months full pay and two months half pay
During 3 rd year of service	Four months full pay and four months half pay
During 4 th year of service	Five months full pay and five months half pay
During 5 th year of service	Five months full pay and five months half pay
During the 6 th year of service, or more	Six months full pay and six months half pay