



## **Central England Area Quaker Meeting**

### **Management of Sickness Absence and Long-Term Ill-health**

#### **1. *Policy Statement***

1.1. Central England Area Quaker Meeting (CEAQM) acknowledges and will observe its legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 as amended together with relevant regulations and codes of practice issued under this Act, to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to preserve the health of its employees.

1.2. CEAQM accepts and will observe the obligations of a reasonable employer towards any of its employees who suffer illness or incapacity whether temporary or permanent. It is therefore CEAQM's aim to reduce the causes of ill health to staff in the workplace, thereby reducing or preventing absence.

1.3. CEAQM also has a responsibility to ensure and maintain quality service provision for its service users and to comply with its obligations under Charities and other legislations. In order to achieve this, it needs to ensure that appropriate levels of staff attendance and capability are maintained.

1.4. It is the policy of CEAQM that no employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, caring responsibilities, religion, or HIV status.

#### **2. *Responsibility for implementation***

2.1. All employees, on returning from sick leave of whatever duration, are required to complete and sign Form SAF1 stating the reasons for absence. The information collected will be used not only to monitor absences but also to identify any patterns or trends relating to working conditions etc. Following each absence, the Line Manager will meet the employee to discuss the reason for sickness absence and whether there are any work-related causes of this absence. The Line Manager will also welcome the employee back to work and discuss any work issues that have affected the employee's work area in their absence.

2.2. For absences of seven days or more, these meetings will take place, whenever possible, on the employee's first day back at work. For shorter absences, these issues will be discussed at the next available supervision.

2.3. Line Managers will be responsible for logging all absences for their staff on Form SAF1, including GP and Dental appointments, and referring information to the Clerk of the

relevant Local Meeting or Branch<sup>1</sup>.

2.4. It is initially the responsibility of Line Managers to discuss concerns about sickness and absence with the staff they manage. Concerns identified by Line Managers should be raised by them with the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch<sup>2</sup>. Ultimate responsibility lies with CEAQM Trustees.

### **3. Procedure to be followed: persistent short/medium term absence**

3.1. Where there is persistent short or medium term absence, which is defined as:

- a) 3 separate occasions within a year in any rolling 12 month period or
- b) more than 9 consecutive working days in any rolling 12 month period,

the Line Manager will **informally** investigate the reasons for the sickness/absence. He/she will advise the Clerk to the relevant Local Meeting or Branch that an investigation is taking place. **During the investigation, s/he will be fair, equitable and sympathetic in her/his approach, and will consider measures which may reduce the level of absences.** S/he will explain the effect of the staff member's absence on the Local Meeting's or Branch's work. The staff member will be given the opportunity to explain the reasons for the absences.

3.2. If the situation does not improve (i.e. the worker again attains the benchmark figure for absence within 6 months) the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch will ask the staff member to give written consent for CEAQM to request a medical report from the staff member's own GP, or from an independent medical practitioner or OH provider nominated by CEAQM (see Access to Medical Reports Act 1988). The staff member should be given a copy of this report, and any costs incurred in obtaining it should be met by CEAQM.

3.3. Once the report is received, the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch may decide to convene a formal meeting with the staff member, who has the right to be accompanied by a union (or other) representative. Depending on the medical report and the outcome of the discussion at the meeting, the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch will determine whether the employee's case is an issue of medical capability and should be dealt with under Sections 4 and 5 below, or whether it needs to be dealt with under CEAQM's Disciplinary Procedure.

### **4. Further action in cases of ill-health causing persistent short term absences**

Options open to CEAQM where there is ongoing ill-health are:

4.1. *Where the staff member's work may be affecting their medical condition, or their condition is affecting their ability to work*, to make adjustments to the workplace such as modifications to equipment, hours or work location. However, such adjustments will only be made where it is reasonable to do so, ensuring that a balance is struck between the needs of the staff member and the employment, technical or operational needs of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch and of CEAQM.

4.2. *Where a staff member's persistent absences due to illnesses have a significant detrimental effect on CEAQM's ability to meet its employment, technical or operational*

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<sup>1</sup> Branch refers to CEAQM "projects", such as the Northfield Ecocentre, Peace Hub and the West Midlands Peace Education Project.

<sup>2</sup> Where the Clerk to the relevant Local Meeting or Branch is also the employee's line manager, the actions here and in Section 3 will be undertaken by the Clerk to the Employment Committee.

*needs*, which cannot be remedied as indicated at 4.1 above, then the procedure outlined in 4.3 to 4.6 below will be followed.

4.3. The Clerk to CEAQM's Employment Committee<sup>3</sup> must ask the staff member for her/his written permission to contact her/his G.P. for a medical report (see Access to Medical Reports Act 1988) asking for information about the staff member's medical condition, including diagnosis and prognosis. Any report produced should be shared with the staff member, and CEAQM should cover any costs incurred.

4.4. If, following receipt of the report, it is concluded by the Clerk to CEAQM's Employment Committee that the staff member will not be able to resume normal working within a reasonable time period, the Clerk to CEAQM's Employment Committee will discuss with her/him the possibility of termination of employment on grounds of incapacity due to ill health. The staff member has the right to be accompanied by a union (or other) representative at this meeting.

4.5. Before recommending termination of employment to CEAQM Trustees, the Clerk to CEAQM's Employment Committee must demonstrate that s/he has acted reasonably in reaching this decision. S/he must show that s/he has:

- i) Consulted with the employee.
- ii) Advised her/him of the likely consequences to CEAQM of continued absences due to ill health.
- iii) Sought medical advice, particularly in relation to possible disability issues.
- iv) Considered alternative employment or any other reasonable adjustments by CEAQM.

And then taken into account:

- a) The nature of the job with respect to the nature of the illness.
- b) Whether work can be covered without significant detriment to the employment, technical or operational needs of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch or of CEAQM.
- c) The nature, length and effect of the illnesses or disabling events and whether, in all the circumstances, it was unreasonable to expect the employee to work his/her contracted hours.

4.6. A decision to terminate employment for persistent short term absences can only be taken by CEAQM Trustees after following the above procedure. Any decision to terminate must be based on up-to-date medical opinion and should take into account all the other facts and information known to the CEAQM Trustees at the time of their decision.

## **5. Long-term absence**

5.1. If the staff member is absent due to long-term illness or incapacity for 4 weeks or more, and it is anticipated s/he will not return to work within a further 4 weeks, this procedure will apply.

5.2. Where a staff member is absent for more than 4 weeks, the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch<sup>4</sup> will seek to arrange an informal discussion (at the staff member's home if necessary) to discuss the nature of the illness and its likely duration,

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<sup>3</sup> Where the Clerk to CEAQM's Employment Committee has already been involved in the procedures in Section 3, the Clerk to Trustees will appoint a Trustee to implement the procedures set out in 4.3 to 4.5.

<sup>4</sup> Where the Clerk to the relevant Local Meeting or Branch is also the employee's line manager, the actions here and in Sections 5.5 and 5.6 will be undertaken by the Clerk to the Employment Committee.

and offer help or advice as appropriate. The staff member has the right to be accompanied by a union (or other) representative at this meeting.

5.3. It is essential that regular communication (at least monthly) is maintained between the Local Meeting or Branch and the staff member throughout her/his absence, and that it is made clear to the staff member that there is no intention to pressure her/him to return to work prematurely. Such communication will be by phone call from the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch to the staff member at agreed times and dates, unless an alternative method of communication has been agreed.

5.4. The staff member will be kept informed of any arrangements for covering their work during her/his absence.

5.5. The Clerk of relevant Local Meeting or Branch must ask the staff member for her/his written permission to contact her/his G.P. for a medical report (see Access to Medical Reports Act 1988) asking for information about the staff member's medical condition including diagnosis and prognosis. Any report produced should be shared with the staff member, and CEAQM should cover any costs incurred.

5.6. If the staff member is able to return to work within 13 weeks of their first day of absence, the Clerk of the relevant Local Meeting or Branch and the staff member's Line Manager will offer support to ensure that s/he will be able to perform the full range of her/his duties. A phased return to work will be agreed if necessary, with adaptations, or alterations to the job as are necessary and reasonable. The relevant Local Meeting or Branch will also give consideration to requests for job-sharing or working a reduced number of hours, provided this does not seriously affect the Local Meeting or Branch's work and day to day operations. The staff member has the right to be accompanied by a union (or other) representative at this meeting

5.7. If the staff member is not able to return to their post within 13 weeks or s/he is incapable of carrying out her/his duties, the matter will be referred to the Clerk of CEAQM's Employment Committee<sup>5</sup>, who will discuss with the staff member the likelihood of termination of employment on grounds of incapacity due to ill health. The staff member has the right to be accompanied by a union (or other) representative at this meeting. A final decision on whether to take this action will be made by the CEAQM Trustees.

5.8. Before recommending termination of employment the Clerk of CEAQM Employment Committee must demonstrate s/he has acted reasonably in reaching this decision. S/he must show that s/he has:

- i) Consulted with the employee.
- ii) Advised her/him of the likely consequences to the relevant Local Meeting or Branch of continued absences due to ill health.
- iii) Sought medical advice, particularly in relation to possible disability issues.
- iv) Considered alternative employment or any other reasonable adjustments by the relevant Local Meeting or Branch or by CEAQM.

And then taken into account:

- a) The nature of the job with respect to the nature of the illness.
- b) Whether work can be covered by the employee without significant detriment to the employment, technical or operational needs of the relevant Local Meeting or

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<sup>5</sup> Where the Clerk to CEAQM's Employment Committee has already been involved in the procedures in Sections 5.1-5.6, the Clerk to Trustees will appoint a Trustee to implement the procedures set out in 5.7 and 5.8.

Branch or of CEAQM.

- c) The nature, length and effect of the illness or disabling event and whether, in all the circumstances, it is unreasonable to wait for the employee to return to work.

5.9. A decision to terminate employment because of long term absence can only be taken by CEAQM Trustees after following the above procedure. Any such decision to terminate must be based on up-to-date medical opinion and all other facts and information known to the CEAQM Trustees at the time.

## **6. Disability**

6.1. Where there is information that leads the Clerk to the Employment Committee to believe the employee may be disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, the Disability Procedure will be referred to and full consideration will be given to CEAQM's duties and responsibilities under that Act.

## **7. Appeal**

7.1. An employee who wishes to appeal any decision made under this policy shall do so in writing within 5 days of being informed of that decision. The Appeal shall be in writing and shall set out the grounds upon which the decision is challenged. Any appeal will be heard by a sub-committee of Trustees as soon as practicable after the appeal is received. The appeal decision shall be given to the employee, normally within 48 hours, but as soon as possible after the appeal hearing.

September 2015

<b>Sickness absence and long term ill-health policy</b>	
Approved by CEAQM Trustees	November 2015
Dated:	08:12:2015
Version	Version 1
Review due:	2019
<b>Other relevant policies:</b>	
Health and Safety at Work Disciplinary Procedure Disability Policy (in preparation)	