



Central England Area Quaker Meeting (CEAQM)

Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Central England Area Quaker Meeting (CEAQM) aims to minimise the disruption caused by employee absence and secure the attendance of all employees by setting clear guidelines on absence notification, encouraging regular communication between employees and their managers and assisting managers to handle absences in a fair and consistent way.

We are sympathetic to genuine cases of illness or injury which might make absence unavoidable. However, excessive or unauthorised absence causes disruption to CEAQM, lowers morale of colleagues and makes us less able to accommodate genuine cases of long-term illness. Therefore all absences are treated seriously, and excessive or unnecessary absence is likely to lead to informal or formal action under our Disciplinary Procedures.

This policy and procedure is not contractual but sets out the way in which CEAQM will manage absences from work. We reserve the right to vary, replace or terminate it at any time.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all employees although we may not apply the full procedures to those in their probationary period. It does not apply to self-employed contractors, volunteers, casual or agency workers although we ask everyone who works with us to comply with the principles of this policy, as appropriate.

Time off for medical and dental appointments

Subject to prior agreement with your manager, reasonable time off to attend doctor, dentist or medical appointments will be authorised. Such time off will normally be paid but we request that time is made up. Ideally appointments should be made outside normal working hours or on non-working days wherever possible. However if they cannot be, then they should be made at the beginning or end of your working day to minimise disruption. Where appointments are not at the end of a working day, you will normally be expected to return to work following the appointment.

We request that you give us as much notice as possible of such appointments, particularly when these are routine checks. Failure to give reasonable notice when this is possible may result in disciplinary action, or the absence being regarded as unauthorised, and therefore unpaid, leave. We reserve the right to ask employees to reschedule a routine appointment if its timing causes disruption to the service delivery or organisation.

Please note that different rules apply to time off for ante-natal appointments.

Absence Notification

If you are unable to attend work, you must notify your line manager by telephone, at the earliest opportunity and no later than two hours after your start time on the first day of absence. If your line manager is unavailable, you should speak to another member of your team or leave a message for your line manager. We normally require you to make personal contact with us; in exceptional circumstances if you are unable to notify us personally you can ask a relative, friend or neighbour to contact us on your behalf.

If you have attended work but are unable to remain due to your illness or injury you should inform your line manager before leaving work. Leaving without prior authorisation from your line manager will result in disciplinary action. Sickness absence that begins part way through the day will count as one full working day's sickness absence if you leave before completing 50% of your working day. Where sickness absence begins after you have completed 50% of your working day, this will be recorded as half a day's absence. If you are unable to return to work the following day you should follow our notification procedure.

It is essential that you comply with our notification requirements so that we can make arrangements to cover your duties and responsibilities, thus minimising the disruption to our service delivery and maintaining a reasonable workload for your colleagues.

You will be required to provide us with information about the reason for your absence and an indication of its likely duration. The reason for your absence will be kept confidential from your colleagues if you request this.

It is then your responsibility to keep us informed of your situation on a regular basis; should you be away from home at any time during your absence, you are to provide us with alternative contact details. You may be contacted by us during your absence, and in addition we may visit you at home to discuss your health and progress towards returning to work.

Failure to comply with our notification procedures could affect your entitlement to sick pay, and could result in disciplinary action being taken.

Absence Certification

You are required to provide self-certification/medical certificates as follows;

- If you are absent for 7 calendar days or less, you will be required to complete a self certification form on your return to work (Appendix 1).
- If you are absent for more than 7 calendar days, you must obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work ("fit note") from your GP and forward it to your line manager. The name of the doctor, the surgery and its contact information should be clearly stated. You should also complete and forward to your line manager the self-certification form (Appendix 1) on your return to work.

- If a period of medically certified absence is extended by a further fit note, you must inform your line manager on the same day and advise us of the extension of the absence. Fit notes should be sent to us on a regular basis until you are able to return to work.
- When you return to work after absence, you will be required to complete a self-certification of absence form. Your line manager will discuss the details with you and will counter-sign the form, provided the information that you have supplied is satisfactory. This form will then be retained on your personnel file, and a copy provided for payroll purposes if there are payment implications.

If you do not comply with the above it could affect your entitlement to sick pay and, in some instances, could warrant disciplinary action.

Organisational sick pay

CEAQM operates an organisational sick pay scheme.

You will normally be paid organisational sick pay for absences owing to your illness or injury, up to a maximum period of 12 weeks per year. This is a total maximum, which may be made up of one or more periods of absence. Your entitlement to occupational sick pay will be calculated over the calendar year. Thereafter, any further payments (other than any SSP to which you are entitled) will be made on a discretionary basis only.

Full sick pay will be paid at your full basic rate and will include any SSP payable for that period. The maximum period of entitlement will be calculated on a rolling 12 month basis. If you exhaust organisational sick pay you may still be entitled to receive SSP (see below). We aim to let you know if you are about to exhaust any entitlement to organisational sick pay/SSP.

Payment of organisational sick pay depends on us being satisfied that the sick pay system is not being abused. Failure to report the reason for your absence or to maintain regular contact could result in us withdrawing or suspending sick pay, as could repeated instances of short term absence (where there appears to be no underlying medical reason for these). We may also withdraw or suspend organisational sick pay if you refuse or fail to attend a medical examination that has been reasonably requested of you.

Organisational sick pay will not normally be paid during any absence due to sickness during the course of disciplinary proceedings or during investigations into alleged breaches of our rules, procedures or your contractual obligations, or during your notice period (irrespective of whether the notice has been given by you or us).

You will normally still receive SSP even if organisational sick pay has been withheld or suspended, unless we are not reasonably satisfied that you are ill, and no evidence of sickness is provided.

In the event of the self-certification of absence form not being countersigned by your line manager, the days of absence will be treated as uncertified and you will not receive payment. If you are not satisfied that your claim has been fairly handled, you should use our Grievance Procedure.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

All employees are entitled to SSP, payable for up to 28 weeks, provided they meet the detailed requirements of the scheme. SSP is paid from the fourth qualifying day in a 'period of incapacity for work' (PIW). The first three qualifying days are known as 'waiting days', and there is no entitlement to SSP for these days. The Government fixes the rate of SSP, which is normally reviewed annually.

To qualify for SSP you must:

- be classed as an employee and have done some work for us under your contract of employment
- have been ill for at least four days in a row (including non-working days)
- earn at least the lower earnings limit for National Insurance contributions, and
- have followed the absence notification procedure outlined above.

You won't qualify if you:

- were not entitled to SSP the last time you were sick, and this spell of sickness links to that one
- have received the maximum amount of SSP (28 weeks) and this spell of sickness links to the last one
- have taken 3 years or more 'linked periods' of sickness - where four or more days of sickness happen within eight weeks of each other, or
- are receiving Statutory Maternity Pay.

Additional eligibility criteria may be applicable in some circumstances. Further guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview>

Return to work

If your fit note indicates that you may be able to do some work even if you are unable to undertake the full duties of your normal job, your manager will discuss this with you and consider any recommendations or suggestions which may enable you to return to work sooner. However, if we cannot accommodate the recommendations, you will remain on sick leave until you are able to return to your full duties.

When you return to work, your manager will arrange an informal meeting with you, which should be recorded on the form at Appendix 2. At the meeting your manager will:

- welcome you back
- establish the reason for your absence
- check on your fitness to return
- discuss any advice and recommendations from Occupational Health or any other related healthcare professional
- ensure that all the support you need is in place
- bring you up to date on any changes or developments within the team and organisation.

Where you are approaching or have reached the trigger points (pages 6-7 below) for frequent short term or long term absences your line manager will also discuss with you about measures to help you improve your attendance as appropriate, including: -

- Details of any requirement or agreement to reduce absences
- Any support your line manager or CEAQM have agreed to provide
- Any timescales for the improvements in levels of absence, including details of any review dates.

Phased return to work

In some instances e.g. returning to work after a long-term absence, or after an operation or injury, or where your GP has assessed it appropriate, a phased return to work plan may be discussed and agreed with you. This may involve a gradual increase in the number of days and/or hours worked over a defined period of time with the aim of achieving full working hours by a specified end date.

Payment will be no less than your entitlement to sick pay at that point. SSP will be the minimum rate of pay whilst on a phased return to work programme, unless SSP is exhausted in which case payment will be made for the actual hours worked. Consideration may be given to requests to take annual leave during a phased return.

Any amendments made as part of a phased return to work are not permanent changes to your contract of employment. If you wish to continue with the reduced or revised hours indefinitely you would be required to submit a flexible working request for a permanent change to your terms and conditions of employment. We will give all requests consideration but cannot guarantee that your request will be granted.

Medical advice

During your employment we may require you to be referred to an independent Occupational Health or medical practitioner for an assessment to be undertaken.

We may also need to request a copy of your medical reports or records to assist in the assessment of your health/medical condition. You will be asked to give your prior written consent before we approach your GP or consultant who is treating you, and you will be given a form to sign which explains your rights and obligations under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988. You are entitled to see a copy of the documentation provided to us.

In line with data protection legislation, we will inform you about the reason for the referral or request, what we intend to do with the data obtained and the lawful reason for processing the data.

We would normally request such a report in the following circumstances: where you complain of an ongoing health problem which is affecting your ability to do your job; where you complain that any aspect of your job is creating a health problem; where your absence gives us cause for concern; where you have been absent for some time and there is doubt about when you may be able to return to work.

We may also request a medical report if we are considering dismissal for either a long term health problem or unsatisfactory attendance made up on repeated short

absences. In addition, if you have any health problem that could be considered a disability we would wish to seek a report in order to obtain guidance on what, if any, reasonable adjustments should be made to assist you in performing your duties satisfactorily.

Frequent short term sickness absences

Short term absence is defined as a one-off absence or a series of short term absences, for either the same or different reasons.

Absence triggers are in place in order to help line managers address absence appropriately and ensure that absence is managed consistently and fairly across the organisation. The absence triggers for employees who have completed their probationary period are:

- 3 separate occasions of absence in a rolling 12 month period.
- Over 9 continuous calendar days of absence.

Your manager will also monitor any unacceptable patterns of absence, such as regularly taking the same weekday(s) off, or absences falling before or after non-working days.

If you have a number of short term absences that reach one of our trigger points, your manager will meet with you informally in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure to review your sickness record and discuss what action is required. We anticipate that the majority of attendance concerns will usually be successfully resolved through informal sickness review meetings.

Examples of actions that may be considered if you reach an absence trigger are:

- Referral to Occupational Health or a request for a medical report from your GP or consultant
- Implementation of reasonable adjustments (see the section on Disability below)
- Agreement of an Attendance Improvement Plan.

Where appropriate, you will be informed that any further occurrences could lead to our Disciplinary Procedure being invoked.

If, despite warnings, your attendance remains unsatisfactory, you may ultimately be dismissed. This will be done on the grounds of unsatisfactory attendance, and will apply irrespective of whether the absences are believed to be genuine or not. If a decision is taken to dismiss, we will confirm this in writing.

Long term sickness absences

If you are absent from work for a period in excess of 4 weeks we will normally make arrangements to see you. This will usually be at a mutually convenient location, which may be your home, to update ourselves on your progress and to ask for your permission to obtain a GP or consultant's report, or refer you to Occupational Health. You have the right to refuse this permission, but it should be emphasised that the reason for this request is to help us manage the situation and it will usually be to your

advantage to enable us to get further information about your likely date of return to work, whether any medical restrictions should be placed on your activities, and whether you have any condition which would be classed as a disability under the Equality Act. On receipt of the report your manager will then meet with you to review the medical advice and determine the appropriate course of action.

If your absence continues at a level we deem unacceptable, or if it becomes evident that there is little likelihood of a return to work, we may take a decision to dismiss on the grounds of ill health, in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. We reserve the right to implement the procedure at any stage.

Before reaching a decision, we will take into account the nature of your illness, any advice we have received from your doctor or consultant as to your return to work and future capabilities, your length of service with us, previous absence history, and performance. If your absence is for a reason related to a disability, we will also wish to explore any ways of accommodating this. Alternatives to dismissal may also be considered, as relevant.

If a decision is taken to dismiss, this will be confirmed to you in writing together with your right of appeal.

Health concerns and contact with infectious and contagious diseases

If you are taking any medication that may affect your ability to work safely, or which causes drowsiness or fatigue, you should notify your line manager immediately to ensure that any necessary adaptations are required to enable you and your colleagues to be safe at work

If you have been in contact with an infectious or contagious disease (including covid-19, diphtheria, typhoid, paratyphoid, polio or tuberculosis, measles, mumps, whooping cough, German measles (rubella) or chicken pox) you should report this fact to your line manager immediately and then consult your doctor to obtain advice as to whether it is necessary to remain away from work.

With certain contagious diseases you may need to remain at home to ensure you do not infect other vulnerable individuals e.g. pregnant women, elderly individuals and people with conditions affecting their heart or lungs.

If you are required to remain at home for a period of self-isolation or shielding due to covid-19, you will be entitled to claim SSP from the fourth day of your self-isolation or shielding. In the event that you are deemed ineligible for SSP or, if SSP is not available, you will be paid half pay, for the days or hours you would have worked in first 14 days of your period of self-isolation or shielding. The half pay will be calculated on the basis of sums earned by you over the previous 28 working days. You should supply proof of self-isolation or a fit note from your GP (if shielding) from the fourth day of self-isolation or shielding. Proof of self-isolation can be obtained here: <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>. If you develop any illness yourself, you will be entitled to organisational sick pay or SSP as appropriate. Any additional continuation of pay beyond 14 days will be paid entirely on a discretionary basis.

Any required period of self-isolation or shielding will not count towards the 12 week period for which you are entitled to receive organisational sick pay (see p.3 above).

Accidents whilst at work

If your absence is related in any way to an accident at work, you are reminded of the need to report this in the accident book. The location of the accident book will vary depending on the particular Meeting House or Branch Premises. You will be advised of the location of the accident book for the location(s) where you are based.

Disability

If you have a condition that means you might be considered disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, CEAQM has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to any elements of the job which place you at a substantial disadvantage. You will be fully consulted at all times.

Reasonable adjustments to be considered may include an adjustment to working hours or working equipment being adapted (or special equipment to be provided) as appropriate to assist you in continuing in your role. Physical adjustments may also be considered i.e. a ramp being required for entry to a building; moving furniture or widening doors.

If there are no reasonable adjustments that can be made, or if alternative employment proves not to be a viable option, and there is no likelihood of a return to work in the near future, a decision to dismiss may be the inevitable outcome.

Absence and holiday leave

Statutory leave will continue to accrue during periods of long term absence.

You may, if you choose, request to take some of your annual leave during periods of long term sickness absence, or prior to returning to work, or during a phased return to work. If you are unable to take at least the basic four weeks' statutory holiday entitlement during the holiday year (including any bank/public holidays taken as paid leave) the shortfall may be carried forward into the next holiday year; any annual leave not taken within 18 months of the end of the holiday year in which it is accrued will normally be lost.

If you fall sick either prior to commencing planned holiday absence, or during a period of paid holiday, and would otherwise be unable to take at least the basic four weeks' statutory holiday entitlement during the holiday year (including any bank/public holidays taken as paid leave), you may request that the period of illness during your authorised holiday is converted to sick leave and the holiday be taken at a later date. In this case you are required to contact your line manager in the usual way to inform them that you are ill.

Return of the organisation's equipment

If you do not return to work following a period of sickness absence, you will be required to return all outstanding work equipment on or before the termination of employment date.

Absences for reasons other than sickness

Requests for time off for reasons other than sickness will be considered by your line manager in the light of the individual circumstances, legal requirements and operational needs.

Unauthorised absence

If you are absent from work without prior notification, we will attempt to contact you by telephone to establish the reason for your absence. If we are unable to contact you, we will send a letter to your last known address (and/or email address) requesting you contact us immediately to give an explanation for your absence and the date of likely return. If you fail to contact us, we reserve the right to stop your pay from the first day of unauthorised absence from work. Failure to provide an explanation for your absence may result in disciplinary action, which could ultimately end in dismissal.

Protecting your data

All personal data obtained during sickness absence procedures will be handled with the utmost integrity and confidentiality and in line with our Data Protection Policy. Further details about the types of data we hold, the basis for processing data and our practices in relation to that data can be found in our Employee Privacy Statement which is available on our website.

Your manager will keep confidential local records of all absences, including discussions and will ensure that the records clearly identify the reasons for absences.

Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with our Data Protection Policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

This policy will take effect from 11th June 2020. The Governance and Compliance Committee has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation and may be changed from time to time.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to your manager.

Policy prepared by	Sophie Garner
Approved by Employment Committee	May 2020
Approved by Trustees	June 11 th 2020
Next review	2023

Appendix 1 – Self Certification Form

This form should be used to record Self Certificated Sickness Absence for periods of absence of less than 7 calendar days. For periods of sickness absence exceeding 7 calendar days, a medical certificate(s) must be provided, and this Self Certification Form should be completed for the entire period of absence on return to work. When completed, this form and medical certificate (if required) should be forwarded to your line manager before your return to work meeting.

To be completed on the first day back by the employee and countersigned by the line manager. **ALL SECTIONS MUST BE COMPLETED.**

Employee Name				
Dates your sickness began and ended <i>The dates you give may not be days that you normally work</i>	From		To	
Dates absent from work	From		To	
Total number of working days absent				
Reason(s) for Absence				
Did you consult a medical practitioner during your absence?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are you continuing to undergo any treatment or taking any medication that may affect your ability to do your job?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you consider yourself to have a disability (Please ✓)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the absence because of your disability?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the absence due to an accident or incident at work? (Please ✓)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Employee Signature				

I understand that if I knowingly provide false information about my absence, it will result in disciplinary action and may affect any entitlement to SSP and Organisational Sick Pay. I certify that the above information is true.	Date:
Line Manager Signature	
I certify that the employee was absent on the above dates.	Date:

Appendix 2 – Return to Work Meeting Record

The employee must have completed the self-certification form (Appendix 1) and given a copy to their line manager either before, or at the beginning of their return to work meeting.

The return to work meeting should take place within a week of the employee's return to work, and may take place by telephone/other electronic means if agreed.

Employee:	
Manager's name:	
Date of return to work:	
Date of this meeting:	

Current state of health: the manager should discuss the following points with the employee-
Whether they feel fit and able to return to work? <i>(This should include consideration of any occupational health report that has been prepared, or any advice from the GP e.g. on the fit note.)</i>
Whether their medical condition has cleared up and/or whether it is likely to recur and if so, how often/over what period?
If the employee considers they have a disability or an ongoing medical condition, are there any adjustments that could be made to their work or workplace to assist with them returning to, or remaining at work? (please detail these if possible)
Does the line manager or employee think that an occupational health report (or a further occupational health report) is now necessary?
Has the line manager brought the employee up to speed with any relevant matters that have taken place at work in the employee's absence?

If the employee is approaching or has reached the trigger points, set out at pages 6-7 of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure(SAPP), for frequent short term or long term absences, the following points will also be discussed to assist the employee in improving their attendance

What concerns are there about the employee's attendance levels: e.g. the extent to which they may be approaching or have reached the limits set out in the SAPP?

If actions have already been taken to get the employee's attendance back on track, what are they?

What were the results of that action?

What steps or further steps is the employee now required to take to improve their sickness absence?
(list agreed improvements, e.g. no further unplanned absence expected in the next 3 months; no more than 1 instance in the next 12 months)

What will be the next date at which the employee's absence levels will be reviewed?

Employees should note that excessive short term, or long-term absences may lead to steps being taken under the capability or disciplinary procedures.

Signed (manager):

Signed (employee):

Date:

Date: