

Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure



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Policy and Purpose

Cornerstone Church Grays understands that employees may need to be absent from work from time to time due to sickness. This policy covers employees and the Trustee responsible for HR in handling time off from work where the reason for absence is sickness. Cornerstone Church Grays aims to have as many employees as possible in attendance at all times during the working week and sickness absence needs to be managed so that an acceptable level of absence can be permitted, and any problems resolved.

If anything in this policy contradicts an employment contract between Cornerstone Church Grays and an employed individual, the employment contract takes precedence..

PROCEDURE

Notification

If employees are unable to attend work due to sickness absence, they must notify the Trustee responsible for HR by 10:00am by either phone/text/email on the first day of the absence. They will need to explain why they are unable to attend and indicate when they intend to return to work.

If the period of sickness absence lasts for longer than 7 days employees will be required to contact the Trustee responsible for HR each week to notify them of their continued absence. At this point it may also be appropriate to discuss the situation with the church elders and one of our bishops.

Certification

Absences should be certified by a fit note from a GP, however if the employee is absent for seven calendar days or less in each instance, the employee may instead self-certify their absence.

For absences of seven consecutive calendar days or less, upon their return to work, a self-certification form should be completed and passed to the Trustee responsible for HR.

For absences of eight days or more, a fit note is required. Fit notes are issued by the employee's GP and should be passed to the Trustee responsible for HR upon their return to work. The fit note should cover each day of absence and, if multiple fit notes are issued, they should be posted to the Trustee responsible for HR with a brief

explanation of their absence, the condition and, if known, their expected return to work date or next GP appointment.

Failure to follow the certification process outlined above may be considered misconduct and may be dealt with under Cornerstone Church Grays disciplinary process. Church sick pay and SSP (statutory sick pay) may be withheld during this time.

Private medical certificates

A private fit note may be considered necessary by Cornerstone Church Grays if there is a history of unusual absences or if the Trustee responsible for HR believes the employee may benefit from an intervention by a medical practitioner. The cost of obtaining a private fit note will be reimbursed by Cornerstone Church Grays. A private fit note may be requested by Cornerstone Church Grays regardless of the duration of the actual period of sickness absence.

Return to work

A fit note may make a recommendation for temporary changes to be made to an employee's working environment or conditions to facilitate a return to work.

Where the fit note contains recommendations for changes to be made to working conditions or practices, Cornerstone Church Grays will consider those recommendations and try as far as possible to accommodate those changes, where permissible in accordance with the needs of the business.

For extended periods of absence, Cornerstone Church Grays may require the employee to meet with a medical practitioner, of Cornerstone Church Grays choosing, to have the fitness to work arrangements of the employee assessed and confirmed.

If necessary, a return to work interview may be arranged by the Trustee responsible for HR for the employee.

The return to work interview will confirm the employee's fitness to return to work, update the employee on any changes that may have taken place in the workplace during their absence, and confirm whether any necessary support is required and make arrangements for this as appropriate.

Fit notes

Where a fit note is marked as "may be fit for work" by the employee's General Practitioner, the GP usually sets out the possible alternations or amendments that could be made to the employee's working practices to facilitate their fitness for work. Examples of the options available are:

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

A meeting will be arranged for the employee to meet with the elders and the Trustee responsible for HR to discuss the arrangements recommended in their fit note and how best Cornerstone Church Grays can facilitate a return to work.

In the event that adjustments and amendments cannot be made, the employee will not be able to return to work and will need to remain on sickness absence. However, where adjustments and amendments can be facilitated, regular reviews will be undertaken with the employee to confirm that the changes made continue to be adequate. The changes should be temporary and should not be considered permanent changes to the terms and conditions.

Medical examination

If Cornerstone Church Grays believes that a medical opinion is necessary, Cornerstone Church Grays reserves the right to require an employee to be referred to a medical practitioner for an assessment to be undertaken.

Access to medical reports

Cornerstone Church Grays may need to request a copy of an employee's medical reports or medical records to assist in the assessment of the employee's medical condition. The employee's consent, in line with requirements under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, will be obtained prior to Cornerstone Church Grays making contact with their GP and the employee is entitled to see a copy of the documentation provided. In line with data protection legislation, employees will also be given details on the reason for the examination, what Cornerstone Church Grays intends to do with the data obtained and the lawful basis for processing the data.

Long term sickness

Employees should be aware that although Cornerstone Church Grays is sympathetic towards genuine illnesses, it is not realistic for sickness-related absence to continue forever. Cornerstone Church Grays will be eager to get any employees on long-term sickness absence back into the workplace as appropriately and effectively as possible, but the employment may need to be reviewed if this cannot be achieved. There will be a full consultation with the employee, together with a medical investigation and consideration of redeployment or alternative employment.

If there is regular or persistent absence due to long term sickness, injuries etc, the situation is unlikely to be able to continue forever. Ultimately, employment may be terminated after full compliance with Cornerstone Church Grays termination procedures in these circumstances. See the section below in relation to dismissal for more information on this aspect.

Cornerstone Church Grays will usually require employees who have been absent for one month or more or are expected to be absent for one month or more, to return some or all of their church equipment. This may be requested so that the equipment can be redeployed to other employees.

Should a return to work be possible, Cornerstone Church Grays may require the employee's current fitness to be determined and confirmed by a medical practitioner, of Cornerstone Church Grays choosing.

Updates during sickness

Employees are expected to keep the Trustee responsible for HR updated with details of their health and expected date of returning to work.

The Trustee responsible for HR will arrange periodic meetings with the employee to discuss the current situation so that each side is kept up to date with developments.

The location of these meetings will usually be at the employee's usual place of work but, if a home visit is necessary due to serious ill health or being physically unable to attend work, this can be accommodated.

Disability

Cornerstone Church Grays has a duty to make reasonable adjustments where an employee has a disability covered by the Equality Act 2010.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments covers elements, such as making changes and adjustments to working hours, adjusting existing equipment, provision of different equipment and amending workplace practices, if the employee is placed at a substantial disadvantage. It may also involve physical changes, such as to the building entrance points, or alterations to the floor plan, furniture etc.

The employee will be consulted fully on these.

The duty to make the adjustments is 'reasonable' so if the suggested adjustment is not viable it will not be made. It may also be the case that no reasonable adjustments are

possible to facilitate a return. There may be no alternative roles or employment available and if there is no prospect of the employee being able to return to work in the near future, it may be inevitable that a decision to dismiss is the last and only option.

Dismissal and the right to appeal

If long term sickness absence leads to dismissal, the employee will be provided with the reasons for the dismissal in writing.

The reasons for dismissal should set out the circumstances that led to the decision to dismiss. Employees have the right to appeal the decision and they should do so within five working days, to *[insert job title]* setting out the reasons for their appeal.

The appeal itself will be dealt with in accordance with the rules on appeals set out in Cornerstone Church Grays disciplinary process.

Payment arrangements and insurance

Statutory sick pay (SSP)

Employees qualify for SSP on Mondays to Fridays for full time employees and their normal working days for part time employees.

SSP payments are made subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

Church sick pay scheme

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is paid instead of your salary. It starts on the fourth day you are off work (the first three days are unpaid) and can be paid for up to 28 weeks. If you are entitled to SSP, it will be taxed and National Insurance contributions will be deducted. The amount of SSP is set by the government.

Unpaid sickness

Employees who are not eligible for SSP or for payments under Cornerstone Church Grays sick pay scheme will take that period of sickness as unpaid. No variable payments such as commission or bonuses may be paid and no basic pay shall be made.

Employee's annual leave entitlement will only accrue at their statutory entitlement under the Working Time Regulations 1998, ie pro rata up to a total of 28 days per annum. This includes public holidays.

Absences for reasons other than sickness

Long term absences for reasons other than sickness, such as career breaks or time off for long distance travel, will be considered by the Trustee responsible for HR at the request of an employee. The request will be considered in line with business needs and operational requirements prior to being authorised.

Unauthorised absences will be dealt with via Cornerstone Church Grays disciplinary procedure.

Other types of absence from work

Jury service

If you are called for jury service, you must tell the trustee responsible for HR as soon as possible. While you are on jury service, you will be paid in full, however, you are expected to make any allowable claims and expenses received from the jury service , to be given to Cornerstone.

Other public duties

We will allow you time off to carry out duties in some public roles, including magistrate and school governor. As soon as you know what your duties are, and have dates for hearings/meetings you must attend, you should tell the trustee responsible for HR so that we can plan for your absence from work. While you are carrying out these duties, we will not pay you for time taken off work.

Emergency time off to look after dependants

You may take reasonable time off work to deal with emergencies involving your dependants. This does not cover general home issues, like wanting time off to deal with a problem with your boiler. We define a dependant as your spouse, civil partner, child (including adopted children), or a parent. Also included are other people who live in your household or anyone else who relies on you — for example, an elderly family member. You must follow the same procedure as for sickness leave and contact the trustee responsible for HR as soon as you know you will be taking time off.

We always consider the circumstances of each case to allow for some flexibility, but the time you take off must be both reasonable and necessary for you to deal with something immediately and/or respond to an emergency. Normally this means hours, or a maximum of one or two days, and this type of leave is not designed to provide care over the longer term.

We do not pay you when you take time off for dependants.

Other family-related absences

We cover all other types of time off for family-related matters — including maternity, paternity, shared parental, parental and adoption leave — in our separate Maternity and Family Friendly Policy.

Carrying out trade union duties

If you are elected as a trade union official, you are legally entitled to reasonable time off to fulfil your obligations and you will be paid at your full basic rate for all related absences during working hours. We will not pay you for duties carried out outside working hours.

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. Employees may be reminded of the types of data Cornerstone Church Grays holds, including data on health, and our practices in relation to that data by reviewing Cornerstone Church Grays privacy notice which is available at www.cornerstonegrays.org/privacy