



FALKIRK COUNCIL  
**CALLING IN SICK**

A Guide to the Sickness Absence Procedures for all Employees



## What you need to know about Falkirk Council's Policy on Managing Sickness Absence:

It is YOUR responsibility to:

- Attend work unless unfit to do so
- Advise your manager of any illness which affects your ability to attend for work or to undertake the duties of your post to a satisfactory level
- Raise concerns with your manager if you believe that your job is making you ill or contributing to your illness
- Report sickness absences promptly to your manager and ensure that the appropriate certification is provided in accordance with the procedure
- Maintain contact with your manager during periods of sickness absence and communicate effectively about your sickness absence
- Co-operate fully with the Occupational Health Unit and other organisations that provide support to the Council and its employees
- Ensure that medical advice and treatment, where appropriate, is received and followed as quickly as possible in order to facilitate a return to work
- Ensure that, where required, medical reports are made available to Occupational Health from your GP, as soon as possible
- Not participate in any extra-mural or sporting activities which may be detrimental to your health or recovery
- Not abuse the sickness absence procedures or sick pay scheme.

## What you need to know about your responsibilities when you are off sick:

It is your responsibility to phone in to report your absence as outlined below. It is not acceptable to ask someone else to make the call for you unless there are specific reasons why it is impossible for you to make the call and these reasons are fully explained to your manager/nominated contact. Sending a text message or email is not acceptable

### Short term sickness absence [up to one week - 7 calendar days]:

#### Day 1

- Phone your manager/nominated contact as soon as possible but within an hour of your agreed start time. If you work shifts, or jobshare, call as soon as you become aware that you are unfit for work. If your manager is unavailable leave a message, along with a telephone number so that they can ring you back
- When you make contact you should explain briefly what is wrong, and give some indication of how long you expect to be absent.
- If your absence continues, keep your manager/nominated contact informed. If, for example, you have suggested that you might be off 2 days, and on the third day you are still unfit then you should phone in.

#### Day 4

- If you are still unable to come to work, you should phone your manager/nominated contact again

#### Day 7

- If you are still unfit for work on day 7, you are expected to call on day 7 to let your manager know [or first thing on day 8 if day 7 is not a work day].

If your absence is of less than 7 days duration, you will be asked to complete a Self Certificate on your return to work.

### What happens if your absence continues after the first week:

If your absence continues into a second week, you will need a medical certificate [Med 3] signed by your GP to cover the period of absence beyond the first week. Your manager will send you a self certificate and you should complete both certificates and send them to your manager as quickly as possible.

The Med3 certificate will state that you are either **unfit** for work, or **may be fit** for work taking account of advice provided such as a phased return, altered hours, amended duties and/or workplace adaptations.

If the Med3 states that you are **not fit for work**:

- Your GP will indicate whether or not you will have to see them again before returning to work. If they do not need to see you again, you will be expected to return to normal duties at the end of the certified period.
- If you feel well enough and ask to return before the end of a “not fit” Statement period, you do not have to return to your GP however your manager will generally consult Occupational Health (OH) in relation to your fitness to return to work. If OH do not authorise a return to work, you will still be covered up to the end date of the certificate.
- If your GP needs to see you again and then decides that you can return to normal duties your GP will not issue a new Statement.

If the Med3 states that you **may be fit for work** and recommends adjustments for a specific temporary period:

- Your manager will consider the adjustments suggested and may contact OH for guidance. If appropriate your manager will discuss adjustments with you and make every effort to accommodate them.
- If adjustments can be accommodated the period of time given on the Med3 relates to the need for adjustments.
- If it is not possible to accommodate adjustments, you may remain on sick leave up to the end date of the Med3 without obtaining a further certificate.
- If the GP has recommended an OH assessment, your manager will contact OH for guidance and will process an OH referral if necessary.
- If you feel able and ask to return to full duties before the end of the certificate period, and OH are in agreement, your manager may allow this. If OH are not in agreement, you must remain on restricted duties or on sick leave as appropriate.

If your absence continues, you must make sure that you send medical certificates to your manager on the due date. You should also telephone your manager weekly to let them know how you are progressing. Call your manager each time you see your doctor for a new medical certificate, so that you can report the outcome of that visit.

## What happens if you do not follow the procedures:

If you do not follow the procedures for notifying absence or fail to provide the necessary certificates on time, your manager may consider your absence unauthorised, and may withhold pay. If you repeatedly fail to comply with the procedures, provide false information about your absence, there is evidence that any sickness absence is not genuine or there is falsification of official sickness absence documentation, this matter may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy.

## What happens when you return to work:

### Return to Work Interview

When you return to work, your manager will arrange to meet with you to discuss your absence and any issues arising from it at a Return to Work Interview. After a longer absence, it may be a more in-depth meeting, but still informal. A record will be made of the Return to Work interview.

If you believe your absence was work-related you should discuss this with your manager. In this context, 'work-related' means something arising as a direct result of the work that you do. Where absence is as a result of an accident or incident at work, you should complete the appropriate section of the self certificate form, and make sure the incident is properly reported on an HR14 Accident/Incident Report Form.

If your absence has exceeded a trigger level, your manager will discuss your attendance with you in more detail and will look to find ways to support you in improving your attendance, including a referral to OH or Physiotherapy.

The trigger levels are:

- Three absences of any length in three months;
- Four absences of any length in 12 months;
- 10 days or more absence in 12 months;
- Two or more absences equating to more than 15% absence in any 2 out of the previous 3 years

Services may however adjust trigger levels in consultation with relevant Trade Unions.

## Monitoring Procedure

### Stage One - Informal Absence Review

If your sickness absence becomes more frequent, and meets or exceeds a trigger level then your manager will discuss this at the Return to Work Interview or at a separate Stage 1 review meeting as appropriate. After the meeting, your level of sickness absence will be monitored informally for 6 months and if there are any absences in this monitoring period then a Stage 2 review meeting will be convened. Managers do not have to wait until the end of a review period to proceed to the next stage of the monitoring procedure if a trigger continues to be met and your absence level remains above the agreed target.

### Stage Two - Formal Absence Review Meeting

You will receive written notice of any Stage 2 review meeting, including details of your absence record. You have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a representative of your choice, but it should be emphasised that this is not a disciplinary matter. You should be advised that your absence will be closely monitored and reviewed at regular intervals and given a clear target. The Stage 2 review period will be driven by Service needs, but should be up to a maximum of 6 months.

If you subsequently fail to maintain the required level of attendance, your absence may be progressed in line with Falkirk Council's Capability Procedure.

Your manager should write to you after each meeting confirming all the points raised and actions or timescales agreed.

## What support is available to you:

### Occupational Health (OH) Service

OH provide advice and guidance on the impact of ill health on work, and what steps the Council and/or you may take.

Your manager is expected to refer you to Occupational Health quickly, particularly if you have any condition which would benefit from physiotherapy, or if you are suffering from depression or anxiety. Your manager may also refer you to Occupational Health for other reasons relating to long term sickness absence or repeated short term sickness absences.

If your manager wishes to refer you to Occupational Health, they should discuss this with you in advance and provide you with a copy of the guidance on the medical referral process.

## Physiotherapy Service

An early referral to the Occupational Health Physiotherapy Service should be made for any musculo-skeletal problem, whether work-related or not, as early treatment of such conditions can greatly reduce painful symptoms and help promote an early recovery.

## Wellbeing

There are also resources on the Wellbeing section of the Council's Intranet site for you to access. If you do not have access to a PC at work you can contact HR Helpdesk on 01324 506222.

*If you have any questions about these guidelines, you should contact your line manager in the first instance, or your Service Human Resources Adviser.*



**Both copies of form to be completed and signed by the employee, and then countersigned by the line manager. One copy will then be detached by the manager and filed in the employee's personal file.**

**EMPLOYEE TO SIGN**

I confirm that I have received a copy of the booklet entitled Calling in Sick – A Guide to the Sickness Absence Procedures for all Employees, and that I have read it and understand my responsibilities.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee No: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Service: \_\_\_\_\_

**LINE MANAGER TO SIGN**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Service: \_\_\_\_\_

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Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Service: \_\_\_\_\_

**LINE MANAGER TO SIGN**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Service: \_\_\_\_\_