

## Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** Absence due to Illness Policy  
**Document No:** 9.1.3 (original)  
**Effective Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
**Written By:** Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor  
**Approved By:** +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



*Operating under the patronage of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the Diocese of Elphin aims to provide staff members with a safe, caring and supportive Christian environment in which to carry out their work. Work objectives are to be advanced with due regard to the needs and dignity of each staff member and with due regard for the individuals and communities the diocese serves.*

*This document outlines the Diocesan policy on Sick Pay. It is applicable to parishes, offices, agencies and any entity operating under the governance of the Diocese of Elphin (hereafter referred to as "the employer"). Line Managers (Bishop, Priests, Deacons, Religious, Lay Personnel who supervise staff members) are responsible for communicating this policy and having it signed off by their staff member(s).*

### Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedure to be followed in absences due to sickness. Entitlement to sick pay (if any), is as outlined in your job offer.

Where your Employer does not make any payment for any day of illness or unauthorised absence that you do not attend for work, you may be entitled to claim social welfare benefit from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Where there is full or partial sick pay available, it is applicable to all staff members with over twelve months' service who have satisfactorily completed their probationary period. It is paid at the discretion of the employer, and "the employer" reserves the right to withhold all or part of the sick pay.

### Definitions

Full net pay: basic pay less PAYE, PRSI and any other relevant deductions. It does not include overtime or any other bonus payment.

Certified illness: any sick leave for which a staff member has a medical certificate from a qualified medical doctor.

Uncertified illness: any day of sick leave for which a staff member has no medical certificate. This leave may not last longer than two consecutive working days.

### Qualification criteria

Where applicable, qualification for sick pay is subject to the following conditions:

- have 12 months continuous service;
- have satisfactorily completed the probationary period;
- contact his or her manager directly, no later than the normal start time on the first day of illness (voice messages or text messages are not acceptable);
- have genuine cause for absence;
- meet with their manager/supervisor on return to work;
- submit a doctor's certificate to your manager when absent for more than two days;
- submit subsequent certificates where the absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial certificate. If the absence is prolonged beyond one calendar week, the staff member must communicate with his or her manager at a minimum of once a week, to inform them of his or her medical status and likely return date;
- return submit social welfare cheques/entitlement to "the employer".

## Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** Absence due to Illness Policy  
**Document No:** 9.1.3 (original)  
**Effective Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
**Written By:** Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor  
**Approved By:** +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



During a staff member's absence, "the employer" has the right to request an independent medical examination and report on the fitness of the staff member. The doctor will forward the assessment report to "the employer".

### Exclusions

Benefit may be disallowed or suspended for one or more of the following reasons:

- a staff member has been absent for periods regarded as excessive by "the employer", including self-certified and medically-certified absence and following examination by a doctor nominated by "the employer";
- failure to provide medical certificates;
- disability arising from injury suffered as a result of failure to abide by safety rules;
- a situation where the illness or injury originates from another paid employment;
- where pre-existing conditions are not disclosed at the time of a pre-employment medical;
- illness during a period of lay-off (except where the illness commenced prior to the announcement of lay-off for circumstances considered, at "the employer's" sole discretion, to be mitigating).

### Benefit level

Sick pay benefit level (if any) is as outlined in your job offer.

To qualify, all absences must be notified in accordance with the stated procedures, and properly authenticated by the completion of a self-certification form and, where necessary, the provision of a valid medical certificate.

- A Self-certification form can only be used for absence of 1-2 days. The form must be signed by the staff member and his/her manager on the day of the staff member's return to work.
- Where sick leave occurs on a Friday and the following Monday, a medical certificate is required for these days.
- Where aggregate absences (of uncertified sick leave) exceed a total of six days in any rolling twelve-month period a medical certificate is required for each additional day of sick leave.
- Where annual leave, Holy Days of Obligation or public holidays fall immediately preceding, within or immediately following sick leave these days also be deemed as sick leave. If this brings total absence to three or more days a medical certificate is required. This will not affect your public holiday entitlements under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

A medical practitioner must certify any periods of sickness exceeding 2 days. The certificate should state the general nature of the ailment, how long you will be unfit for duty and the probable date of return. A social welfare Illness Benefit form should be completed, signed by your GP and then forwarded by you to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. You should then forward the social welfare cheques/entitlement to your Line Manager/Employer.

Failure by a staff member, who is claiming social welfare and receiving sick pay "the employer", to submit the social welfare cheque/entitlement to "the employer" will be deemed a fundamental breach of trust. This may disqualify the staff member from the sick pay scheme and result in disciplinary action. "The employer" retains the right to deduct the equivalent of the social welfare payment.

## Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** Absence due to Illness Policy  
**Document No:** 9.1.3 (original)  
**Effective Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
**Written By:** Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor  
**Approved By:** +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



"The employer" retains the right to deduct the equivalent of the social welfare payment where the staff member fails to submit their social welfare entitlement to "the employer". "The employer" further retains the right to only pay the difference between net pay and the standard rate of illness benefit in respect of those staff members who do not qualify for illness benefit or who choose not to avail of illness benefit in order to retain some other social welfare primary payment.

If your sickness or absence is due to the negligence of a third party and you are successful in recovering compensation for loss of earnings, you are expected to refund the sick pay back to "the employer".

### Medical certification

Staff members are required to submit a doctor's certificate to his or her manager when absent for more than two days. Subsequent certificates must be submitted where the absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial certificate. If the absence extends beyond one week, the staff member must communicate with his or her manager at least once a week to inform them of his or her medical status and likely return date. Follow up certificates should be submitted on a weekly basis.

A medical certificate must include the following information, and all such information will be held in the strictest confidence:

- name and address of the doctor;
- name and address of the patient;
- statement that the patient is, or was, under the doctor's care;
- the opinion of the doctor that the patient is incapacitated due to illness/accident;
- the nature of the illness;
- the expected duration of incapacity;
- the date of issue; and
- the doctor's signature (a rubber stamp is not acceptable).

### Treatment

Where there may be a health and safety implication or risk, a staff member undergoing medical treatment for a condition, must inform "the employer" of this treatment, especially if he or she is required to use prescription medication.

### Return to work

A staff member should signal his/her return to work at the earliest possible opportunity. On return to work following sick leave the staff member must report immediately to his/her line manager. The line manager and staff member must complete the 'return to work interview form'. Following certified sick leave, exceeding two weeks, the staff member may only return to work on submission of a 'fitness to return' certificate to his/her Line Manager. This will normally be from the staff member's own doctor but "the employer" may require a certificate be obtained from a doctor nominated by "the employer".

### Sickness and annual leave

If you are sick on any day of annual leave and a medical certificate is furnished to "the employer" for every day of illness, you may retain that leave day and take it at a later date, to be agreed as per normal annual leave notification procedures. Late notification after the illness or on return from holidays will disqualify a staff member from transferring to sick leave. Your manager must be advised of the illness at the time of the illness.

## Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** Absence due to Illness Policy  
**Document No:** 9.1.3 (original)  
**Effective Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
**Written By:** Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor  
**Approved By:** +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



### Appointments

Wherever possible, medical appointments should be arranged in your own time. Alternatively, and with minimum disruption to the working day, your manager may agree with you that the hours are made up at another time. Where this is not possible, you should notify your manager of an appointment at the earliest opportunity. The manager may request to be given the medical certificate confirming the appointment.

### Abuse of this policy

Staff members found to be abusing their entitlement under this policy will be subject to the disciplinary process and may suffer loss of benefit under this scheme.

### Review

"The employer" reviews sick pay arrangements regularly and reserves the right to change the terms and conditions at any time. Any changes will be communicated to the relevant staff members.

*For further information please contact:*

HR Advisor  
Elphin Diocesan Office  
St. Mary's  
Temple Street  
Sligo F91 KTX2  
Email: [hr@elphindiocese.ie](mailto:hr@elphindiocese.ie)  
Mobile: 087 240 4882

## Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** Absence due to Illness Policy  
**Document No:** 9.1.3 (original)  
**Effective Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
**Written By:** Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor  
**Approved By:** +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



### Appendix 9.1.3(a)

## Self-certification form

Instruction as per policy, eg, This form has to be signed by the staff member and the line manager on the day of the staff member's return to work. It can only be used for absences of one to two days.

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

Position/Location:

I was unable to attend work due to illness (please give details of time and date)  
 from.....to.....

The reason for my incapacity was:

### Notification

I informed..... (Line Manager)

on the first day of absence by (telephone message, etc)  
 at (time).

### If injured at work:

- When did injury happen? (time and date)
- How and where did the injury happen?
- Was the injury reported? To whom?
- Did you consult a doctor or receive treatment in hospital?
- If "yes" give details:

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

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

Signed by supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** Absence due to Illness Policy  
**Document No:** 9.1.3 (original)  
**Effective Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
**Written By:** Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor  
**Approved By:** +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



### Appendix 9.1.3(b)

## Return-to-work interview form

### Strictly confidential

There is no minimum period of sick absence before an interview is needed. Interviews should happen on the day the staff member returns to work. The aim of the return-to-work interview is:

- to bring the staff member up-to-date with reallocation of work during absence;
- to help line the manager identify where they can help or take action to help prevent a recurrence.

Name:

Staff number:

Line Manager:

Date(s) of sick leave:

Total number of days:

Time of notification of illness and to whom:

### Checklist of issues to be discussed

- How are you feeling?
- Is anything we can do to support you? (HR Advisor may also be able to give advice in respect of this.)
- Where appropriate, describe pattern of sick leave to the individual and confirm the absence procedure.
- Where appropriate, remind staff member of requirement to reimburse social welfare payment.
- Update on work during period of absence eg, work transferred to colleagues, new announcements, deadlines, meetings arranged.
- Staff member's comments:

Signature of staff member: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_