



CLERGY  
ILL-HEALTH  
AND  
INCAPACITY

# **CLERGY ADVICE NOTE**

## **CLERGY ILL-HEALTH AND INCAPACITY**

Ill-health and absence due to ill-health is a common problem in most organisations. It is a problem that needs to be dealt with continually and consistently. The Church in Wales is no exception. However within the Church in Wales dealing with clergy who are ill and the resultant needs of parishes is made more complex because in some cases clergy have not notified their Bishop or Archdeacon that they are ill and unavailable for duty.

The Church in Wales recognises that clergy are its most valuable resource and when clergy are ill and unable to fulfil their duties it has a direct effect on the local church community, the Deanery and the Diocese. Management of absence is therefore essential to ensure the effective work of parishes and in developing fair and consistent practices for all clergy.

The Church in Wales in introducing the following arrangements is seeking to ensure that all clergy are treated sympathetically and equitably.

### **Notification of absence**

If you are unable to fulfil your duties because of illness you (or someone acting on your behalf) should telephone the Area Dean at the earliest opportunity. This will allow the Area Dean to make practical arrangements for covering duties during the period of ill-health.

It would be helpful as far as you are able to do so to let your Area Dean know the:-

1. The reason for the absence.
2. The likely date of return to work.
3. Whether the absence is attributable to an injury sustained whilst at work.

The Area Dean will record the information you give on the sample form (*Annex 1*) attached and will send this to the Archdeacon where it will be held on a confidential personal file.

All absences due to ill-health of between 1 and 7 days must be recorded using a Self Certification of Absence. This is in line with the requirements of the Department of Health and affects the provision of statutory sickness benefits. A sample self-

certification of absence form is attached (*Annex 2*) further copies can be obtained from the Stipends Section at 39 Cathedral Road, Cardiff.

## **Continued sickness absence - of more than 7 days**

If your ill-health extends beyond 7 days then you must inform your Archdeacon. It would be helpful as far as you are able to do so to let your Archdeacon know:-

- The reason for the absence.
- The likely date of return to work.
- Whether the absence is attributable to an injury sustained whilst at work.

The Archdeacon will record the information you give on the sample form attached (*Annex 3*) and will retain on a confidential personal file. For absences that extend beyond 7 days a Medical Certificate signed by your doctor will be required. Usually such certificates indicate that you should refrain from work for a given period. This will be sufficient to confirm your fitness to return to work when the medical period has expired. If the Medical Certificate does not indicate a date for return to duty then you will be required to obtain a "signing off certificate" from your doctor before you can re-commence duty. This requirement is to ensure that you do not return to duty before your doctor has judged you are medically fit to do so. Medical Certificates must be returned to the Stipends Section at 39 Cathedral Road, Cardiff.

## **Return to duty - following 7 or more days absence**

When you are able to return to duty you will be expected to contact your Archdeacon. Your Archdeacon will ascertain whether any assistance can be afforded you in your return. If you are returning to duty following a lengthy period of absence then it is absolutely essential that this is managed properly. The last thing the Church in Wales would want is for you to be ill again as a consequence of not taking sufficient care to ensure an appropriate return to normal duties. The Archdeacon will be required to complete a short report using Annex 4 which will be retained on a confidential file retained by your Archdeacon. The report will indicate what arrangements have been agreed between you to accommodate your return. This may include one of the following recommendations: -

- Referral to the Church in Wales Occupational Health Service
- No further action

- Referral to the Church in Wales Medical Board for advice
- Consideration of counselling support
- Referral to the Churches Counselling Service
- Any other support requirements

It is accepted that there may be circumstances when the nature of the illness may make it preferable for you to discuss your return to duty with someone of the same sex. Appropriate arrangements will be made in such cases through your Archdeacon.

## **Occupational Health Services**

The Church in Wales has arrangements with Occupational Health Services across Wales. You may be referred to the Occupational Health Services at any time during your period of ill-health. This may be to ascertain an independent view as to your medical fitness to undertake particular duties or, if you have a condition which renders you disabled, to identify appropriate measures for assisting you in your duties.

Referral to the Occupational Health Services will take place in full consultation with you and will normally be considered where sickness extends beyond 28 consecutive days or 28 days during a period of 3 months. You will be referred to Occupational Health Services at the latest following a period of 6 months sickness absence.

If the Occupational Health Services prognosis of your condition is good and a return to duty is likely then suitable arrangements for your return to work will be made.

If however you are deemed to be unfit to continue in your duties then following consultation with you your licence may be terminated on the basis of permanent incapacity. If you and your Bishop are not agreed that you are permanently incapacitated, then your case will be referred for consideration by the Church in Wales Medical Board. The Board will advise on the most appropriate course of action, including: -

- Permanent incapacity
- Review to allow for recovery
- Return to duty
- Referral to the Churches Counselling Service and further review

Where permanent incapacity is established immediate steps will be taken to terminate your licence with notice and to access as appropriate the Clergy Pension Scheme.

Where it is determined that full recovery is likely the Medical Board will identify a likely timescale for return to duty. Should you be unable to return to duty within the specified timescale then the Medical Board will require a further

occupational health report to assist the Board in determining your case.

Where it is determined that an immediate return to duty can be effected the Medical Board will require the Diocesan Bishop to undertake the necessary return to duty interview.

Where a cleric fails to co-operate with the decision of the Medical Board the matter will be considered a breach of conduct and your case will be referred to the Disciplinary Tribunal.

## **Welfare and contact**

Archdeacons have been advised that they must maintain contact with you during any period of absence and similarly you should also maintain contact if only to assist in ensuring that your duties continue to be covered during your absence. The purpose of keeping in touch is as much about seeing if there is anything the Church in Wales can do to help as well as an opportunity for communication between colleagues.

## **Occupational sickness payments**

The introduction of this procedure does not affect entitlement to clergy sick pay (details of which are set out in the Maintenance of Ministry Scheme).

- Full stipend and any regular payments made in respect of expenses, less any statutory sickness benefit entitlement for 26 weeks.
- For any continuing period of absence beyond 26 weeks one half of the stipend less any statutory sickness benefit to which he/she would have been entitled.
- Beyond 52 weeks there is no entitlement to stipend payments although the Bishop will have discretion to extend half stipend in very exceptional circumstances.

## **Recording of absence**

All absences will be recorded at the Representative Body utilising the self-certification and medical certificates. As part of the on-going commitment for monitoring and supporting clergy when they are ill a six monthly report is prepared for each Bishop on levels of sickness in the Diocese and an annual report is prepared for the Maintenance of Ministry Sub-committee on levels of absence due to illness.

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ANNEX 1

**Managing Absence and Incapacity  
of Clergy**

**ABSENCE NOTIFICATION DAY 1**

Deanery:

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Message received from :

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Re : Absence of :

Name :

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Parish :

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(a) Reason for absence (*please be specific*) :

Date on which sickness began :

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*(this need not be a working day)*

Likely date of return :

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(b) If this absence is due to an injury sustained in the course of duty please provide full details of incident :

Date of Incident :

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Signed :

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Date :

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ANNEX 3

# Managing Absence and Incapacity of Clergy

## ABSENCE NOTIFICATION AFTER 7 DAYS

Archdeaconry \_\_\_\_\_ :

Message received from :  
\_\_\_\_\_

Re : Absence of :  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Parish :  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason for absence

: \_\_\_\_\_

Likely date of return :  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date on which sickness began :  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(this date may be different from the first date of absence and need not be a  
working day)*

Any other comments :

**N.B.** Please remind the cleric of the requirement to return a self  
certification form to the Stipends Section,

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

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

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ANNEX 4

# Managing Absence and Incapacity of Clergy

## RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW

Archdeaconry :

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Name :

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Parish

: 

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(a) What was the reason for the absence?

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(b) How long was the cleric absent from work?

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\_\_\_\_\_ days

*(Please state number of days including days off and holidays)*

(c) Did the employee comply with the notification procedure? Yes / No

*(if no, please state reason(s) and indicate what action has been taken)*

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(d) Was this absence related to a previous absence? Yes / No

*(if yes, please give date / nature of previous absence(s))*

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(e) Is there any likelihood of a recurrence? Yes / No

(f) Did the cleric seek advice from their Doctor/Consultant? Yes

/ No

(g) What was the advice?

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(h) Does the cleric require further medical treatment?

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(i) Did the Doctor / Consultant give any advice in respect of the cleric's work / work pattern?

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(j) Are there any underlying problems relating to the absence (*personal, work or domestic*) and can any assistance be given to the cleric by the Archdeacon, Area Dean, Occupational Health or some other agency?

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(k) What advice has been given to the cleric?

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(l) Is there any further action required?

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

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

Signature of Cleric :

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