

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Sickness Management Policy & Procedure

Short-Term Sickness

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that sickness is both reported correctly and managed correctly.

2. Applicability

2.1. This policy and procedure apply to all ministers in pastoral charge within the denomination.

2.2. The sickness absence reporting procedure should be followed by a minister whenever they are unable to carry out their normal duties due to personal sickness or injury.

2.3. Unauthorised absence, failure to observe the requirements of the sickness absence reporting procedure, or misuse of the sick pay arrangements will be regarded as possible misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the Constitution and Code of Discipline of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland

3. Roles & Responsibilities

3.1. The Clerk of General Synod has overall responsibility for ensuring that absence reporting is managed appropriately in accordance with this policy and procedure.

3.2. The Clerk(s) of Presbytery have responsibility for ensuring that all ministers and churches shall be made aware of this policy and procedure and that all churches within the denomination appoint a member of the church to be their 'designated person' and shall make this appointment known.

3.3. The designated person may be the Church Secretary, or Clerk of Session or Church Elder or another responsible office holder within the church.

3.4. All ministers are responsible for familiarising themselves with and ensuring that they comply with this procedure.

4. Sickness Absence Reporting Procedure and Stipend Payment

4.1 A minister who is unable to report for normal duty should as soon as possible on the first day of their sickness report (save in exceptional circumstances) their unavailability to carry out their duties to the designated person (or persons in the event of a minister covering for more than one church).

Where the designated person is not available to take the call, the minister should, where possible, leave a message (where appropriate) and a contact number so that the designated person can contact them.

4.2. The minister will normally inform the designated person of the reason for the absence and its estimated duration.

4.3. If a minister is unable to personally report their sickness absence they should, where possible, ensure that someone else notifies the designated person on their behalf and within the same timeframe.

4.4. Where the sickness absence is expected to last between 1 and 3 days but the absence continues the minister will contact their designated person again on the 4th and 8th day of absence, and thereafter at intervals agreed between the minister and their designated person to keep them informed of the situation.

4.5. For sickness periods over seven days a doctor's Certificate (Statement of Fitness for Work) should be sought and passed on to the designated person as soon as is reasonably possible. The Clerk(s) of Presbytery shall also be informed by the designated person of sickness periods over seven days.

4.6. Where the minister fails to contact the designated person as stated in this procedure, then the designated person may contact the minister.

4.7. The following self-certification arrangements apply:

On return to normal duties the minister and the designated person should complete a return-to-work interview for all absences exceeding seven calendar days. All absence, in excess of seven calendar days must be covered by a doctor's certificate or hospital certificate where the minister is an in-patient which shall be provided to the designated person. A return-to-work interview should be held with the Clerk(s) of Presbytery in attendance. The designated person should discuss with the minister whether they feel able to return to work. This discussion shall be supportive.

The minister does not necessarily need to have a statement from the doctor that they are fit to work, although where there are concerns, the Clerk of Presbytery may through the Clerk of General Synod refer the minister to an Occupational Health provider.

Alternatively, the Clerk(s) of Presbytery may advise the minister to obtain a private medical note from their GP (or another GP). The General Synod will pay for this private note, and/or the cost of referral of a minister to Occupational Health.

4.8. The designated person will ensure that sickness absence is reported to the Clerk(s) of Presbytery or (in the event of the sickness affecting to Clerk (s) of Presbytery) to the Clerk of Synod as appropriate.

4.9. Where sickness absence is due to a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended (hereinafter "the Disability Discrimination Act"), the designated person should seek advice from their Clerk of Presbytery in the first instance about how this should be managed. This may give rise to the need for reasonable adjustments to ensure compliance with Disability Discrimination Act.

4.9 Where sickness absence is due to pregnancy, the designated person should seek advice from their Clerk of Presbytery about how this should be managed.

Long Term Sickness - for periods exceeding one month

5.1 Where there is a continuous period of absence through sickness of more than one month, or where there are discontinuous periods of absence through sickness of six months in twelve, then this matter should be reported to the Church Session, and through them to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall ensure that pastoral support will be offered as appropriate and on an ongoing basis, and that assistance is provided for ministerial duties for the church or churches concerned.

In addition, the designated person should discuss with minister whether, they feel able to return to work. This discussion shall be supportive.

5.2 Where there is reasonable cause for concern that a minister remains unable to return to their duties then the church may seek a referral to Occupational Health (as per paragraph 4.7).

Alternatively, the Clerk(s) of Presbytery may advise the minister to obtain a private medical note from the GP (or another GP). The General Synod will pay for this private note and/or the cost of referral of a minister or employee to Occupational Health.

5.3 Where sickness absence is due to a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, or is due to pregnancy, the designated person should seek advice from their Clerk of Presbytery in the first instance about how this should be managed.

Absence due to disability may give rise to the need for reasonable adjustments to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

It should be noted that where a person does not declare a disability, or if they state that they wish information to be kept confidential, the assistance or adjustments which can be put in place may be restricted.

The designated person shall inform ministers of the sickness payment arrangements:

5.4 Sickness payment arrangements shall be made in writing, when sickness seems likely to exceed one month in duration. The Stipend shall be continued to be paid during sickness at full rate for a period not exceeding six months. There shall be one clear month's notice given of termination of full Stipend. Statutory Sick Pay shall apply thereafter. Ministers may wish to consider Income Protection Insurance in respect of longer periods of sickness absence. Reasonable adjustments as to sick pay arrangements will be considered, where appropriate, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.

5.5 The minister or the Church can at any time seek a referral to occupational health or another medical referral (always subject to their consent) if it may assist the minister's health or wellbeing or to recommend reasonable adjustments.

This policy should be reviewed bi-annually by the General Purposes Committee.

Footnote taken from the coversheet when the Policies and procedures were in one document:

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland Policies & Procedures for Ministers within the NSPCI As adopted by the General Synod originally in 2013, amended in 2016 and reviewed, expanded, adopted by Pro Renata General Synod in January 2026.

Preface to supplementary policies and procedures for Ministers

The law of the church is the Code of Discipline of the General Synod.

It is intended that the Code of Discipline shall provide the principles and procedures which shall guide and govern the administration of the church and relations between ministers, people and the courts of the church.

Nevertheless, it is understood that for greater clarification and for further guidance in proceeding regard shall be had to the following policies and procedures, which are supplementary to the Code of Discipline, though not integral to it.

It should be noted that the ministry of this denomination is understood to be a vocation. That is, those entering into it should demonstrate a sense of calling; and all parties involved, whether ministers, congregations, or courts of the church, shall give full regard to the values of Christian Service, Christian Fellowship, and Christian Endeavour, as indicated in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

With regard to the profession of the Christian ministry, it is noted that while the nature of this work may not be physically demanding, it is however, highly demanding in intellectual and emotional terms. The hours can be lengthy and unpredictable. There are many challenges in supporting, comforting, and assisting a broad range of people; and the minister will carry the burdens of those people on his/her shoulders. While the ministry does bring deep spiritual satisfaction, it presents a challenge of life and work which is continuous.

Therefore, the minister must at all times seek the blessing and strength of the Holy Spirit, as should all who feel obliged to apply the following policies and procedures.