

## **GUIDELINES ON SICK LEAVE FOR CLERGY**

Current diocesan policy is to follow the guidelines as set out by the Church Commissioners, i.e. a certificate must cover all days of absence through sickness, although for the first seven days a “self certificate” is acceptable.

If the absence is to be for a period longer than seven days, then you must consult your doctor and obtain a medical statement giving the reason for your absence from work.

This statement should be sent to the Finance Department at St. Mary’s House who will forward it to the Church Commissioners. Once the Commissioners have received the statement you will receive a letter of acknowledgment from the Clergy Pay Department.

### ***Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)***

SSP applies in respect of periods of absence of four days or more for a total of 28 weeks in one period of incapacity for work. It is payable to any member of the clergy under the age of 65 who earns more than the National Insurance threshold (currently £82 per week/£356 per month gross) in both of the preceding two months.

Entitlement to SSP depends on: -

- (a) the number of days of sickness - there is no entitlement for the first three qualifying days;
- (b) proper notification to the Diocese and Church Commissioners of absence through sickness
- (c) provision of medical certificates, i.e. a self-certificate for the first seven days of illness and a doctor’s certificate thereafter.

For clergy all days are treated as qualifying days for SSP. For Lay staff on the Church Commissioners payroll, qualifying days for SSP are those the individual normally works. A period of entitlement is either one continuous absence or a series of absences separated by no more than eight weeks. A new period of entitlement to 28 weeks starts whenever the absences are separated by more than eight weeks.

Any clergy who do not qualify for SSP under DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) regulations or who have exhausted their period of entitlement can claim sickness benefit direct from the DWP.

### ***Procedures***

- a) For the first seven days of absence you must send a self-certificate to the Diocesan Office
- b) For day eight to twenty eight weeks you must obtain a medical certificate from your Doctor and send it to the Diocesan Office for onward submission to the Church Commissioners

- c) After the twenty third week of absence the Church Commissioners will issue a “SSP 1”. This form gives you information on the action needed when SSP ends after the twenty eighth week. Such as state benefits, invalidity allowances.
- d) The minimum allowances are currently £68.20 per week (as from 06 April 2005), although certain individuals may receive more by way of allowances for their spouse and dependents.
- e) Throughout the period of absence you will receive your current stipend rate, plus any increases due. After the twenty eighth week of absence the Diocese (i.e. the Area Bishop and/or Divisional Chair) has the following discretion: -
- (i) To reduce the stipend by up to 50%
  - (ii) To reduce the stipend by £3,546.40 per annum to take into consideration the £68.20 per week Incapacity Benefit you will receive from the DWP
  - (iii) To reduce the stipend as above and take into consideration any other allowances the DWP has awarded to you,
  - (iv) To make no deductions and allow you to receive the Incapacity Benefit and any other allowances in additional to your current rate of pay.

**It is therefore important that medical certificates are received by the Diocese as soon as possible and in the case of renewed certificates within seven days of the previous certificate expiring.**

**If any other sickness benefits are being received, particularly after the twenty eighth week, the Diocese must be informed immediately.**

September/December 2005

## **NOTE FOR BISHOP STAFF – PROCEDURES**

- 1. To receive a list of those currently on sick leave at each meeting. Individuals will only be removed from the list once they have returned to work for at least eight weeks**
- 2. At a meeting prior to the 23 week date, the staff to decide on which of the options under section e above to implement at week 28. Any decision may be deferred if an independent medical report is required. The diocese needs to give a months notice before alteration to a stipend, although the individual concerned can still be informed of the process at week 23.**
- 3. The decision of pt 2 to be communicated by the Diocesan Office at Week 23 of the absence**
- 4. The situation to remain under review at Staff Meeting**