

Absence & Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

This policy is to ensure any member of staff who has genuine reasons for absence are treated fairly, reasonably and consistently whilst ensuring continued service provision.

This policy clarifies the difference between absence and attendance with absence being the reason for not attending work and attendance being the number of occasions of not attending work.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, the process will be conducted remotely. The organisation will ensure staff and their representatives have access to the necessary technology for participating. Staff rights will not be affected, and the organisation will ensure the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

This document forms part of a contract of employment and will be changed from time to time in line with current best practice and statutory requirements and to ensure business needs are met. Staff will be consulted in advance of any proposed changes with those required by law being implemented with or without staff consent.

2. Policy Aims

To manage attendance in a way that reflects genuine concern for staff and to develop a positive attitude towards attendance.

- To set clear procedures for reporting of sickness/absence and attendance issues.
- To set clear procedures for the management of attendance issues.
- To set clear procedures for the management of short term, repeated and long term absences.
- To ensure all management of attendance and absence comply with relevant legislation and best practice.

3. Responsibilities

Staff Responsibilities

Absence/Attendance Reporting

If staff are going to be late to attend work for whatever reason, they must inform their line manager before the shift is due to start to ensure continued service provision.

Regular or consistent late attendance will not be tolerated and may invoke the Disciplinary Policy. Alternatives to formal disciplinary action may be considered such as altering working patterns, altering working hours or any other such reasonable adjustment which can be made to continue to support continued employment whilst meeting business needs.



If unwell and unable to attend work, staff must contact their Line Manager by telephone by 8am on the day they were due to attend work. If unable to telephone due to the reason for absence or hospitalisation, someone must telephone on behalf of the staff member.

Telephone contact must be made with the line manager on day one of absence and each day during the first week of absence. If the absence continues for longer than one week, a minimum of weekly contact must be made during each week of absence.

Failure to comply with any aspect of this policy may result in formal disciplinary action being taken.

Self-Certification & Fit Notes

If the period of absence lasts for seven or fewer calendar days, a self-certification of sickness/absence must be completed. For any absence lasting eight or more calendar days, a GP Fit Note must be obtained and provided to the line manager as soon as possible. For extended periods of absence, the Fit Note can be posted or scanned and emailed.

The reason for absence should be clearly stated on the self-certificate or Fit Note to ensure the organisation can support staff during absence and returning to work.

Staff have the right to return to work prior to the expiry of a valid Fit Note, if they choose to do so. In this circumstance, the line manager will meet with the staff member to discuss the return prior to any work commencing. A medical report or consultation may be required to ensure fitness to return to all normal duties.

If a phased return to work is required such as, working reduced hours or reduced days over the working week, staff are only entitled to be paid for the hours worked. The line manager will discuss the options available such as unpaid leave, sick pay, annual leave, TOIL etc. to cover the hours not worked.

Return to Work Interview

Following any period of absence, regardless of length of absence and prior to any work commencing, the line manager will arrange a Return to Work Interview. This is an informal meeting to discuss the reason for absence, ensure fitness to return to normal duties and offer any support and consider any temporary or permanent reasonable adjustments which could be made to ensure continued attendance at work.

Unauthorised Absence

Any period of unauthorised absence including failure to comply with the reporting of absence procedure will not be tolerated, may result in unpaid leave and be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy.

Manager Responsibilities

To support and manage all absence and attendance matters relating to all direct reports. To ensure accurate recording of all absences and attendance issues including reason for absence, return to work interview forms, any support or reasonable adjustments requested, any medical reports obtained from the GP or any other health professional.

If the Fit Note states “may be fit for work”, the manager should discuss what, if any, duties the member of staff may be fit for. The manager is not obliged to let staff return to work if they are unable to fulfil all duties. Any reasonable adjustments whether temporary or permanent will be considered.

The manager will conduct a return to work interview after every period of unplanned absence to discuss the reason for absence, any support required, ensure fitness for duties and discuss any concerns with the number of absences, absence triggers reached or breached.

The manager may consider requesting a GP medical report, Occupational Health referral or input from any other medical professional, depending on the reason for absence.

Every manager has a duty of care to support the physical and mental health, safety and wellbeing of staff. By complying with the terms of this policy, the manager is meeting this duty of care.

Organisation Responsibilities

To ensure fair, equal, reasonable and consistent treatment of all staff regarding any aspect of the implementation of this policy.

To ensure all those with line management responsibility are reasonably trained in the practical application of this policy.

To regularly review and update this policy in line with legislation and best practice.

4. Medical Suspension

If at any point during absence, return to work or active duty the organisation becomes concerned about physical or mental wellbeing or the health and safety of others is affected, the organisation may choose to suspend staff on medical grounds. During any period of medical suspension, staff are entitled to full pay and all other contractual benefits.

Medical suspension will only be considered if absolutely necessary and in order to obtain information from medical professionals, implement reasonable adjustments and/or during any medical incapability dismissal process.

5. Repeated Short Term Absences

The organisation cannot reasonably sustain regular or consistent short term periods of absence which have a detrimental impact on service provision, customer satisfaction as well as increased demands on colleagues.

Underlying Health Conditions

If the organisation is made aware any member of staff has one or more underlying health conditions which may be covered by the Equality Act 2010, all reasonable steps will be taken to support continued employment.

Medical professional advice may be required to ensure any and all reasonable adjustments are considered. If the organisation cannot reasonably continue to support ongoing employment, termination of employment by reason of medical incapability dismissal may be considered.

No Underlying Health Conditions

Where repeated, consistent, regular absences occur or where there is a pattern to absence, an absence review meeting will take place. Where no underlying health conditions have an impact on the reason for absence, the manager may consider disciplinary action for attendance.

If the organisation cannot reasonably continue to support ongoing employment, termination of employment by reason of medical incapability dismissal may be considered.

6. Long Term Absence

Welfare Meetings

During any period of long term absence which the organisation deems to be four weeks or longer, a welfare meeting will be arranged.

The meeting can occur at a time and place to suit the staff member including the organisation's premises, the member of staff's home or a neutral location. Whilst staff do not have the right, if they wish to bring someone to the meeting, they should discuss this with the manager who will reasonably consider the request.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss your wellbeing and what support, if any, the organisation can offer to facilitate your return to work.

During any period of long term absence, the organisation reserves the right to reduce any contractual annual leave entitlement to the statutory minimum of 28 days.

7. Medical Incapability Dismissal

Regular or prolonged periods of absence cannot be sustained by the organisation indefinitely. The organisation will reasonably take whatever steps necessary to facilitate good attendance and return to work following any period of absence.

Under the circumstances of continued regular absence, resulting in significant attendance concerns or should a long term absence of more than six months or one which is likely to last for at least six months, termination of contract may be considered.

Prior to any termination being considered, the manager will obtain at least two medical reports, consider any reasonable adjustments and discuss your personal circumstances with you.

At least two formal meetings will be arranged before any decision is made. Staff have the right to be accompanied at these meetings by either a work colleague or Trade Union representative, should they wish to do so.

All alternatives to dismissal will be considered including, alternative employment, reduced duties, altered working pattern, reduced working hours, working from home and any other reasonable adjustment suggested in a medical report.

If the decision is made to terminate on the grounds of medical incapability dismissal, entitlements will include notice at full contractual pay which may be paid in lieu of notice, all annual leave accrued to the date of termination but not yet taken and all other contractual rights and benefits to the date of termination.

The right to appeal the decision will be given, the process to appeal will be confirmed in the termination letter and must be submitted in writing within five working days of the date of the termination letter.

8. Sickness/Absence and Annual Leave

Whether on short term or long term sickness/absence, annual leave will continue to accrue subject to the organisation exercising its right to restrict leave entitlement to statutory minimum for long term absence periods.

If a bank holiday falls during any period of sickness/absence, this will be added to the remaining annual leave entitlement balance.

If staff wish to take annual leave during a period of absence, they should contact the line manager who, if appropriate, will stop any sick leave, authorise full pay for the leave period and then, recommence sick leave.

If a member of staff becomes ill or are injured whilst on annual leave, they have the right to request the leave be considered as sick leave. This should be discussed

with the line manager who will require either a self-certification or Fit Note. Any abuse of this right will be considered gross misconduct and could result in dismissal. Staff should carefully consider using this right as it may reach or breach an attendance trigger.

9. Working During Sickness/Absence

Whilst absent, no duties, activities, tasks or otherwise on behalf of the organisation should be performed. The organisation may temporarily restrict all access to systems including email to support recovery.

The line manager may keep staff informed of organisational information and updates, if appropriate to do so.

Staff may retain contact with colleagues for social interaction purposes only.

If employment is held with another organisation which this organisation is aware of, it may or may not be suitable to continue the other employment. This is dependent on the reason for absence.

10. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Regardless of length of service, if absent from work due to ill-health or injury, staff may be eligible to receive SSP. Eligibility for SSP is conditional upon: -

- The period of absence being for at least four consecutive days
- Earning at least the minimum for National Insurance Contributions

The first three days of any absence are not eligible for SSP. If eligibility is met and compliance with the absence reporting procedure outlined in this policy, staff will receive SSP from the fourth day of absence to a maximum of 28weeks.

SSP entitlement is set and restricted by the government to a maximum of 28week entitlement in any three year rolling period. Absences may be considered linked if they occur within 56days of each other. In order for the absences to be unlinked, a period of 56days between each absence must occur, regardless of reason for each absence.

If the absence is as a result of injury caused by a third party and compensation is received, any SSP paid during the period of absence must be repaid to the organisation.

If the full entitlement to 28weeks SSP is paid, staff may be entitled to other benefits and should speak to their local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The organisation will support any claim made by providing any necessary information.

11. Organisational Sick Pay (OSP)

Entitlement to OSP is calculated over a rolling 52week period by taking the date of day one of the current absence and taking into consideration any absence over the previous 12month period.

Length of Service	Pay
Less than six months	SSP only
Six months to 1 years	One month full pay
One to two years	Two month's full pay
Two years+	Three month's full pay

The organisation reserves the right to withhold OSP under any of the following circumstances:

- Injury or illness is as a result of own behaviour, actions, participation in dangerous activities or where actions impede recovery.
- Failure to comply with the absence/attendance reporting procedure outlined in this policy.
- During any disciplinary action, process or procedure which may only be superseded by way of suspension.
- Deliberate failure to comply with the terms of this policy and if found to have deliberately misled the organisation or made a fraudulent claim of sickness/absence.

12. Attendance Review Triggers

If the organisation has a trigger system for reviewing attendance, explain in detail how it is structured including possible consequences for the staff who have reached triggers.

For example:-

Attendance Concern	Potential Action
Two periods of lateness in one week	Informal Action Note
Two further periods of lateness in one month	First Written Warning
Two further periods of lateness in three months	Final Written Warning
Two further periods of lateness in six months	Dismissal
Attendance Concern	Potential Action
Three periods absence in any six month period	Informal Action Note
Two further absences in three months	First Written Warning
Two further absences in three months	Final Written Warning
Two further absences in three months	Dismissal

13. Authorised Absence

There may be periods when time off work for appointments is required. Any appointments should be made outwith working hours whenever possible or at the start or end of the day,

As soon as staff become aware of an appointment day and time, they should inform their line manager who will either authorise paid leave, unpaid leave, annual leave, TOIL, flexi-time etc.

Appointments may include: -

- GP
- Hospital
- Consultant
- Dental
- Counselling
- Optical
- Physiotherapy
- Dietary*

*This list is not exhaustive.

14. Elective Procedures

If staff undergo any cosmetic or elective procedure which is recommended by a medical professional, they will be entitled to SSP and OSP. If the procedure is purely elective, in that, staff choose to have it, they will not be entitled to any SSP or OSP for the day of the procedure. SSP may be provided following the procedure if advised by a medical professional to take time off to recover.

15. IVF Treatment

There is no entitlement to SSP or OSP for women or their partner during any IVF treatment unless they become pregnant.

16. Data Protection Act 2018

The organisation will treat all personal data in line with obligations under the current data protection regulations.