

Short Term Absence Management Policy

Purpose

We aim to encourage you to maximise your attendance at work while recognising that you will sometimes be unable to come to work because of ill health.

Although sickness absence may be unavoidable, we also need to consider operational needs. Persistent absences impact efficiency and productivity, as well as placing additional burden upon co-workers. A reasonable balance must be struck between our operational needs and genuine absences due to illness.

Scope

This policy covers short-term sickness absences. For absence lasting more than 28 days we operate a long-term absence management policy.

Alternative policies are in place to cover other forms of time off work, such as compassionate leave, time off for dependants, etc.

Disciplinary action may be taken if misconduct is suspected, i.e.,

- absence is not genuine or not for the stated reason
- unsuitable activities are taking place while off sick, i.e., working for another company

Notification and evidence of sickness absence

If you are unable to attend work you must telephone your manager **1-2 hours prior the start of work** on your first day of absence, indicating the nature of your illness and your expected return date.

If you do not follow this procedure, you may be subject to disciplinary action and SSP may be withheld.

If you come to work but need to leave during the day because of ill health, you should inform your manager before leaving work. When you leave before completing 50% of your working day, it will count an occasion of absence.

If sickness is for seven calendar days or less, you must obtain, complete, and sign a self-certification form, setting out the dates of absence and the nature of the illness or injury. Such a form can be found under appendix 1 of this policy.

If sickness lasts longer than seven days, a fit note, also called a "statement of fitness for work" is required.

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Fit notes can be issued by doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and physiotherapists who have assessed your fitness for work. Fit notes issued on request or via over-the-counter services without an assessment will not be accepted.

Company trigger points

If your sickness absence reaches **3** periods of absence in a rolling **12** month period or a total of **8** or more days within the same period or repetitive single day in a calendar month of 3 or more days, your absence will be referred for management under the absence review process.

Statutory sick pay (SSP)

Your SSP qualifying days are either Monday to Friday or, in the case of part-time employees, those days that you normally work.

You should note that during periods of unpaid sickness you will not receive basic salary or variable payments and holidays will only accrue at a rate in line with statutory entitlement i.e. pro rata up to a total of 28 days per annum, including public holidays.

Medical appointments

We recognise you may need to attend medical appointments. These should be arranged during your own time. If this is not possible, reasonable unpaid time off will be given with your line manager's approval. You may be asked to provide evidence of your medical appointment and where appointments become frequent or regular you can be asked to make the time up or granted unpaid leave.

Employees who are pregnant have the statutory right not to be unreasonably refused paid time off work for antenatal appointments. Refer to our maternity policy for details.

A prospective father, or partner of a pregnant woman, has the statutory right to take unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments.

Return to Work

Regardless of your length of absence, you will be asked to attend a return to work (RTW) meeting with your manager on your first day back to work to discuss your absence. If this is not possible the meeting will take place on the first day that operations allow.

During the meeting your line manager will:

- Welcome you back to work

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- Check your fitness to return to work
- Ensure you have submitted the required notification/documentation
- Discuss your reasons for sickness and if you have consulted with a doctor or medical specialist and the outcome of that consultation
- Understand if you have long-term conditions that may amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010
- Discuss any patterns of sickness i.e. Fridays or before or after public holidays
- Discuss your absence against our trigger points, and if you hit a trigger point the consequences of doing so
- Bring the employee up to date on any changes within the business

If your absence is due to difficulty managing both work and home responsibilities, we will give serious consideration to more flexible ways of working.

If your absence is because of temporary problems relating to dependants, you may be entitled to unpaid leave under time off for dependants.

Notes of the RTW meeting will be taken and may be used to support the investigation stage in any absence review process.

Fit Notes

Your medical professional may indicate you "may be fit for work" by selecting from one or more of the following:

- Phased return to work
- Amended duties
- Altered hours
- Workplace adaptations.

We are not legally required to follow recommendations but will fully consider any suggestions put forward. Any recommendations actioned should not be viewed as a permanent change to your contract of employment.

Special cases

Pregnancy-related absences

If you are off work because of pregnancy-related ill health, you must still follow the absence reporting procedure.

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However, any pregnancy-related absence should not be included when reviewing trigger points that may lead to formal absence management.

Disability-related absences

Where your reason for absence is due to an underlying health issue that could amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010, you would be referred for an occupational health review and may be managed under our long-term absence policy.

[Part-time workers]

For part-time workers, the trigger points set out in this policy will be pro-rated and rounded up to the nearest day.

Medical advice

We may request your permission to obtain a report from your GP or refer you to an occupational health practitioner for advice on your fitness to attend work.

If you refuse permission, the reasons for the request will be explained and you will be informed that decisions relating to your future employment may be made without access to your medical records.

Informal absence management

If you reach or exceed the trigger points outlined in this policy you will be asked to attend an informal attendance review with your line manager.

The review will give you and your manager a chance to discuss your absence record, the reason for any absences, and what acceptable attendance looks like. A decision will be reached, preferably jointly, on targets to support an improvement in your attendance levels.

Notes of the meeting will be taken and will be kept on your file for a period of 6 months. You may be referred to the formal absence management process if your attendance does not improve following any actions put in place.

Formal absence management procedure

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If you do not meet the targets set out in the informal absence management process and no alternative solution has been mutually agreed upon, it will be necessary to implement the formal absence review procedure. At each stage of the procedure, you will be:

- Asked to attend a formal meeting and be given the opportunity to bring along a work colleague or TU rep
- Given **2** days' notice that the meeting will take place

The invite will contain evidence including:

- dates and reasons given for your absence
- any outcome letters from the previous stage of the absence review process
- any other medical evidence i.e., occupational health reports or GP reports

What to expect at formal attendance review meetings

Your line manager will:

- explain the meeting is to discuss your unsatisfactory attendance in the past 12 months
- make it clear that the meeting is about improving attendance
- give you the opportunity to share your views
- establish any underlying reasons behind your poor attendance level, such as health problems or personal issues
- discuss and agree steps that can be taken to help you improve your attendance
- remind you of any support available including your GP [occupational health/employee assistance programme / first aid mental health advisor]
- after adjournment, inform you of the outcome of the meeting and state that the outcome will be confirmed in writing to you within five days

When deciding whether formal action is necessary, consideration will be given to:

- action taken in similar cases in the past
- the nature of the attendance issue
- any mitigating circumstances
- whether the proposed warning is reasonable
- no warning will be given without first having investigated the issues including evidence gathering

Stage 1 formal absence review

On breaching the targets set out in the informal absence review meeting, you will be invited to a formal stage 1 absence review meeting. You will be provided with the documents relevant to your absence to date and given **5** days' notice of the meeting.

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The letter will inform you that a possible outcome of the meeting is that you may be given a written warning.

The meeting will be chaired by your line manager. The content of the meeting will follow bullets covered in the 'what to expect at the formal absence review meetings' detailed above.

Stage 1 outcome

Once the formal absence review meeting has ended, the line manager will adjourn the meeting, consider the evidence, and put the outcome in writing. You will receive this letter within five days of the meeting. The outcome of the meeting may be that no further action is taken or it may be that you are given a formal written warning, set targets and given support to help you to improve your attendance. You will be informed of the next stage in the absence management review process if you do not meet the targets set.

The meeting will be chaired by your line manager and [another] will be present to take notes.

You will be given the right to appeal the outcome of the stage 1 absence review process.

Stage 2 formal absence review

On breaching the targets set out in the outcome of the stage 1 absence review, you will be invited to a formal stage 2 absence review meeting. You will be provided with the documents relevant to your absence to date and given **2** days' notice of the meeting.

The letter will inform you that a possible outcome of the meeting is that you may be given a final written warning.

The content of the meeting will follow bullets covered in the 'what to expect at the formal attendance review meetings' detailed above.

The meeting will be chaired by your line manager and another person will be present to take notes.

Stage 2 outcome

Once the formal absence review meeting has ended, the line manager will adjourn the meeting, consider the evidence, and put the outcome in writing. You will receive this letter within [five] days of the meeting. The outcome of the meeting may be that no further action is taken, or it may be that you are given a final written warning, set targets and given support to help you improve your attendance. This letter will inform you of the next stage in the absence review process.

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You will be given the right to appeal the outcome of the stage 2 absence review process.

Stage 3 formal absence review

On breaching the targets set out in the outcome of the stage 2 absence review, you will be invited to a final formal stage 3 absence review meeting. You will be provided with the documents relevant to your absence to date and given 2 days' notice of the meeting.

The letter will inform you that a possible outcome of the meeting is that you may be dismissed due to high levels of sickness absence.

The content of the meeting will follow bullets covered in the 'what to expect at formal attendance review meetings' detailed above.

The meeting will be chaired by an independent manager to your line manager and [a HR professional / another] will be present to take notes.

Stage 3 outcome

Once the stage 3 formal absence review meeting has ended, the line manager will adjourn the meeting to consider the evidence and put the outcome in writing. You will receive this letter within five days of the meeting. The outcome of the final stage meeting could be;

- a decision to take no further action
- a decision to dismiss you due to poor absence attendance levels

Stage 3 improvement

If your sickness absence levels improve by the end of the formal review period, no further action will be taken. If during the twelve months following the achievement of the targets set, your absence levels relapse, you will be referred back to the final stage of the process and may be dismissed due to poor absence attendance levels.

You will be given the right to appeal the outcome of the decision taken at the final stage of the absence review process.

Appeal

If you are given a warning or dismissed under this procedure you have the right of appeal.

Your appeal should be in writing to a senior manager and set out the grounds why you believe the decision taken was flawed or unfair.

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Your appeal should be received within five days of you receiving your outcome letter.

An appeal hearing will be held within a reasonable period and chaired by a senior manager. You will be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by a colleague or a trade union official.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to you in writing, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

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Appendix 1 Self-Certification Form

Name of employee		
Department		
Date of birth		
First day of absence	Date	
Last day of absence	Date	
Date of return to work	Date	
Total time absent	days	hours
This form must be completed by each employee on return to work following an absence of less than seven days.		
Please give details of the reason for your absence:		
When did you notify the Company of your sickness?	Date	
Whom did you notify?		
Did you consult your doctor?	Yes / No	
Did you obtain a medical certificate? If yes, please attach	Yes / No	
Please provide any further relevant information:		

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Do you believe, following medical recommendation if applicable, that you are fit to return to full duties?	Yes / No
If no, please arrange a return to work meeting with your manager	
The following information is required to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of yourself and others.	
Are you taking any medication that could cause side effects that could affect your work or may be a safety hazard? If yes, please provide details below:	Yes / No
Declaration	
I declare that all the information I have given in this form is true and that I have not withheld any material fact. I understand these details will be held in confidence by the Company and may be used for the following purposes in compliance with GDPR 2018: • Ensuring the health, safety and welfare at work of myself and other workers. • The avoidance of discrimination on the grounds of disability. • Maintaining SSP and SMP records. • Supplying information on accidents where industrial injury benefits may be payable. • Ensuring the Company is able to monitor and deal fairly with attendance and absence issues.	
Full name (please print)	
Signature	

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Date	
Office Use Only	
GDPR 2018 When completed, this form may contain sensitive personal data as defined by the GDPR 2018. It must be kept secure and confidential.	
Date received	
Manager's name	
Signature	