You Absence Management Policy

Applies to	All employees
Does not apply to	Self-employed contractors
Policy owner	HR Manager
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This policy explains how to report absence from work, what you will be paid when you are sick, and how we manage both short-term and long-term absence. We want to be clear and consistent in our approach, and to support you wherever we can.

We recognise that illness is rarely within your control, and we will always aim to treat you fairly and with understanding. At the same time, managing attendance is important for the business and for your colleagues, and we ask for your cooperation with the procedures set out here.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend it.

1. Reporting your absence

If you are unwell and unable to come to work, please contact your line manager and/or the HR Manager by telephone as early as possible and no later than your normal start time. If you are unable to call a text or email is sufficient. Please do not notify absence by social media - your manager may need to speak with you directly to understand your situation and plan for your absence.

If you are medically unable to call yourself, you may ask someone to contact us on your behalf. Please make sure they have the information your manager will need.

We may ask you to confirm the reason for your absence, whether you have seen or plan to see a doctor, and how long you expect to be off. We understand you may not know all of this straight away - please just keep us informed as things develop.

If your absence continues beyond the first day, please contact your line manager each day you remain off work, unless you have a fit note in place or you and your manager have agreed a different arrangement.

2. Evidence of sickness

First seven calendar days

For absences of up to seven calendar days (including weekends, non-working days and bank holidays), you may self-certify. You do not need a fit note from your doctor.

More than seven calendar days

If your absence continues beyond seven calendar days, you must obtain a fit note from your GP or another healthcare professional. Please send this to your line manager promptly. We will need further fit notes if your absence continues after the first has expired.

Understanding your fit note

A fit note will state either that you are 'not fit for work' or that you 'may be fit for work'. If it says you may be fit for work, your doctor may suggest measures that could help you return - for example, reduced hours, amended duties or a phased return. Where this is the case, we will discuss with you whether we are able to put those measures in place. If we cannot, you will continue to be treated as not fit for work.

3. Keeping in contact

We expect you to stay in regular contact with us during any period of sickness absence. We may also contact you - to check on your wellbeing, to discuss the expected length of your absence and to keep you informed of anything relevant at work. We will keep this contact reasonable and considerate of your situation.

We will modify how we stay in touch if the reason for your absence means a particular approach is more appropriate - for example, email rather than phone. If you would prefer us not to contact you about work matters, please let your line manager know, and we will respect that wherever possible.

4. Sick pay

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is payable from the first day of your absence. It can be paid for up to 28 weeks. The rate is set by the government and reviewed annually - current rates are available at gov.uk. Tax and National Insurance are deducted in the usual way.

If your average weekly earnings are below the standard SSP rate, you will receive 80% of your normal weekly earnings as sick pay instead.

Enhanced sick pay may be paid at the company's discretion. Receiving it on one occasion does not mean it will be paid on any future occasion.

To receive sick pay, you must follow the reporting and evidence requirements set out in this policy.

5. Holiday during sickness absence

Your holiday entitlement continues to accrue throughout any period of sickness absence. You can request holiday while you are off sick - if approved, you will receive holiday pay rather than sick pay for those days.

If your absence spans two holiday years and you are unable to take all your holiday before the year end, you may be able to carry it over. Please refer to our Holiday Policy for full details of carry-over arrangements during long-term sickness.

If you become ill during a period of pre-booked holiday, you may be able to reclassify those days as sick leave. See our Holiday Policy for how this works.

6. Return to work

We may hold a return-to-work meeting with you after a period of sickness absence. This is a supportive conversation - not a formal process - and gives us a chance to welcome you back, confirm you are fit to return, understand what happened, and discuss any support you might need going forward. We will make a brief note of the conversation for our records, which you may be asked to sign.

If you have a fit note stating you may be fit for work with certain adjustments, we will discuss those adjustments with you before or at the return-to-work meeting.

On occasion, we may not agree that you are fit to return even if you feel you are. In that case, we may seek our own medical opinion before agreeing a return date. We will always discuss this with you.

If you are returning from a long period of absence, we will support you with a phased return where appropriate and will consider reasonable adjustments to your role or working environment. We may also explore redeployment if your role is no longer suitable.

7. Disability and reasonable adjustments

We recognise that sickness absence can result from a disability, and we take our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 seriously. At every stage of this policy, we will consider whether any reasonable adjustments could be made to support you - whether that is to your role, your working environment, your hours, or the way we manage your absence.

If you believe you have a disability or a medical condition that affects your ability to work, please tell your line manager or the HR Manager. Any information you share will be treated in confidence and handled in line with our Data Protection Policy.

Absences that are connected to a disability or to pregnancy will be treated with particular care, and we will set appropriately higher thresholds before taking any formal action in those cases.

8. Medical evidence and occupational health

We may, at any stage of managing your absence, ask you to attend an appointment with an occupational health specialist or another medical professional of our choice. We will pay for this. All reports will be kept confidential.

We will ask for your consent to access medical reports and to discuss their contents with the relevant practitioner. You do not have to give consent, but if you do not, we will make decisions based on the information we already have. We will always tell you what we are deciding and why.

9. Short-term and persistent absence

Short-term absence can have a significant impact on your colleagues and on the business, and we take it seriously. At the same time, we understand that people get ill and that not every period of absence is within your control.

We may hold a return-to-work meeting after a period of absence. Where we become concerned about the frequency or pattern of short-term absences, we will discuss this with you informally in the first instance to understand what is going on and what we can do to help.

If absences continue to give us concern, we may move to a more formal process. In broad terms, this would work as follows:

First formal meeting

We will write to invite you to a formal meeting to discuss your absence levels. You have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative. We will look at the reasons for your absences, what support is available, and what improvement we would like to see. We may set attendance targets and a timescale for review. If appropriate, we may issue a written warning. You have the right to appeal.

Second formal meeting

If your attendance has not improved by the agreed review date, we will invite you to a second meeting. We will review what has changed, revisit medical evidence where relevant, and consider whether any further support is available. We may issue a further warning. You have the right to appeal.

Final meeting

If attendance has not improved following a final written warning, we may invite you to a final meeting at which dismissal is a possible outcome. Before reaching that conclusion, we will consider all options available, including redeployment. We will always warn you in the invitation letter that dismissal may result. Termination would normally be with full notice or payment in lieu.

Warnings issued under this procedure will normally remain on file for twelve months, although we reserve the right to extend this in appropriate circumstances. We will not operate this procedure mechanically - we will always consider individual circumstances and any underlying health conditions before taking formal action.

10. Long-term absence

We define long-term absence as any continuous period of absence lasting four weeks or more. We will maintain regular contact with you throughout and will discuss the best way to do this given the reason for your absence.

Informal review meetings

Once an absence has reached four weeks, we will usually arrange an informal review meeting to discuss the situation. We may hold these meetings at a location that works for you - at home, at an agreed venue, or remotely. The purpose is to understand your prognosis, explore what support we can offer, and discuss how long you expect to be off.

Medical evidence

We may seek a medical opinion at any point during a long-term absence. We will ask for your consent and will keep all reports confidential. If you do not consent, we will make decisions on the basis of the information we have.

Formal absence management meeting

If it becomes clear that you are unlikely to return to work in the near future, we may move to a formal absence management meeting. We will write to invite you, and the letter will set out clearly that dismissal may be an outcome. You have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative. At the meeting we will cover:

- A review of the meetings and discussions that have taken place
- Any changes in your prognosis or opportunities for return or redeployment
- Whether any reasonable adjustments could enable a return to work
- The impact of your continued absence on the business
- Any further matters you wish to raise
- The likelihood of your returning to work in a reasonable timescale

If, after considering everything, we conclude that a return to work is not likely within a reasonable period, we may decide to end your employment with notice. Before doing so, we will always explore whether redeployment is possible and give you the opportunity to raise anything further. You have the right to appeal.

11. Unauthorised absence

If you fail to attend work without good reason, or without following the notification procedure in this policy, your absence will be treated as unauthorised. This includes absences not covered by a fit note or self-certification where one is required.

You will not be paid for unauthorised absence. We reserve the right to make deductions from your pay in accordance with your contract of employment.

Unauthorised absence is a disciplinary matter and will be handled under our Disciplinary Policy. It may result in dismissal.

12. Other types of absence

Jury service

Please tell your line manager as soon as you receive a jury summons. You will be paid in full for jury services for up to two weeks. After this period, you will not be paid by us - please claim all allowances available from the court.

Public duties

We will grant reasonable time off for certain public duties, including magistrate and school governor roles. Please tell your line manager as soon as you have dates confirmed. Time off for public duties is unpaid.

Emergency time off for dependants

You may take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with genuine, unexpected emergencies involving a dependant. This is intended for immediate crises - normally a few hours or at most one to two days. It is not intended to cover planned or ongoing care arrangements. Please refer to our Family Friendly Policy for full details, including the definition of a dependant.

Other family-related leave

All other family-related leave - including maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental, parental, carer's, neonatal care and parental bereavement leave - is covered in our Family Friendly Policy and Neonatal Care Leave Policy.

Trade union duties

If you are elected as a trade union official, you are entitled to reasonable paid time off during working hours to carry out your duties. We will not pay for duties carried out outside working hours.

13. Right to be accompanied

You have the right to bring a colleague or trade union representative to any formal meeting held under this policy, including any appeal. Please let us know in advance who you plan to bring - it is your responsibility to arrange their attendance. If you choose a colleague, we will not prevent them from attending but may need to rearrange the meeting if their absence from work would cause operational difficulties.

Your companion can help you put your case and can respond on your behalf but may not answer questions directed to you or prevent us from asking questions.

14. Right of appeal

You have the right to appeal any formal decision made under this policy, including a warning or a decision to dismiss. To appeal, write to the person named in the decision letter within one week of receiving it, setting out clearly the grounds for your appeal.

Appeals will wherever possible be heard by someone who was not involved in the original decision. We will write to you with our decision, normally within two weeks of the appeal hearing. The appeal decision is final.

15. Questions and administration

The HR Manager is responsible for administering this policy. If you have any questions, please speak to your line manager in the first instance or contact suebailey@ansteyhorne.co.uk.

Related policies: Disciplinary Policy - Holiday Policy - Family Friendly Policy - Neonatal Care Leave Policy - Data Protection Policy - Flexible Working Policy

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment.