

Absence Management policy

1. Overview

1.1 This policy covers the procedure for reporting and managing absences and sick pay.

1.2 This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

1.3 This policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to self-employed contractors.

1.4 If you are arranging a medical appointment, please do your best to arrange it outside working hours. If it is likely to involve taking most of the day off, please try to use a day's holiday (referring to our Holiday Policy)

2. If you know you will be absent

2.1 You should tell your manager as soon as possible if you know you need time off work — for a medical appointment, for example — and get their permission. We will normally pay you. However, you do have the right to ask us to treat this type of time off as paid holiday, and you should proceed as set out in our Holiday Policy.

2.2 You should tell your manager in person or by telephone. Unless there is a good reason, text or email notifications are not acceptable.

3. If you are sick or injured

3.1 If you are sick or have suffered an injury, you should let your manager know as soon as possible that you will be absent, and no later than 9.00 am.

3.2 You must speak to your manager yourself unless you are medically unfit to do so, in which case you can ask somebody else to make contact for you.

3.3 You should contact your manager on each subsequent day you are off work, unless you have a doctor's certificate, Fit for Work return-to-work plan, or have agreed a different process.

3.4 Always contact your manager by telephone, not by email or text. That is because your manager might want to ask you questions about your absence and how long you are expecting to be off for.

3.5 Your manager may also contact you to ask for updates, or to ask work questions where s/he cannot get the information any other way (although s/he will not contact you for work issues, if you have said you do not want to be contacted, unless it is particularly important).

4. Evidence of sickness or injury

4.1 You must complete a sickness absence self-certification form when you return to work if you are absent for less than a week.

4.2 You must give us a GP's certificate (known as a MED3) confirming that you are unfit for work — and the reason why — if you are off work for more than a week. We will need further certificates if you remain absent beyond the expiry date of the first one, and we will also require a self-certification form from you for the first seven calendar days you are off work.

5. Payment for sickness or injury

5.1 You are entitled to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provided you have reported your absence and produced certificates in accordance this policy. SSP is payable from day four of sickness absence and the first three days of absence are known as "Waiting Days". If Waiting Days are days you normally work then you will be paid your full salary. However, the Company reserves the right to not pay these Waiting Days in cases of persistent, short term illness. If Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is paid instead of your salary, it starts on the fourth day you are off work (the first three days are unpaid), and can be paid for up to 28 weeks. If you are entitled to SSP under the statutory requirements, it will be taxed and NI contributions will be deducted. The amount of SSP is set by the government.

5.2 If you do not provide us with a doctor's MED3 certificate after 7 days' absence, you may lose your right to sick pay.

6. How Fit for Work service operates

6.1 Fit for Work is an occupational assessment service set up and funded by the government to help people return to work. This sometimes involves drawing up a return-to-work plan.

6.2 You may be referred to Fit for Work — by the Company or by your doctor — after you have been off work for four weeks. Sometimes your doctor may begin the process earlier if they think it will be of help to you.

6.3 It will be helpful if you let the HR Manager know if your doctor does refer you to Fit for Work. If your Fit for Work case manager wants to speak to us, please ask them to contact the HR Manager. You can read more about Fit for Work on their website.

7. Returning to work

7.1 If you receive a doctor's certificate saying you may be fit to return to work you must tell your manager this straight away and provide us with a copy.

7.2 We may ask you to come to a return-to-work interview after you have been off work due to sickness or injury. At the interview, we will discuss why you were off work, check you are fit to return and consider any advice from your doctor.

7.3 Occasionally people say they are fit to return to work and we do not agree. If we do not think you are fit to return to work, even when you tell us you are, we might obtain our own medical evidence.

8. If you are off work long-term, or persistently absent

8.1 We may have to take formal steps if you are off work sick long-term, or we are concerned about the number of days you take off for sickness or injury.

8.2 What we will do depends on why you are off work and the pattern of your absences. We may want to talk informally with you (and we may get medical evidence so that we can better understand your situation). We may want formal meetings to review your absence in more detail and to explore whether we need to make reasonable adjustments to help you either return to work, or to work for longer periods.

8.3 If we want medical evidence, we will usually ask you to be examined by an occupational health expert, or another specialist of our choice. We will pay for this and all reports will be kept confidential. We will ask for your consent for us to have full access to medical reports and to discuss the contents with the relevant medical practitioner. You do not have to consent, but if you do not we will make decisions based on existing medical and other information. We will consider making reasonable adjustments to your role and/or work space if you are found to have a disability.

8.4 We understand that this process is difficult and upsetting if you suffer from a serious health condition, and you might feel as if you are being pressured into returning to work before you are ready. We do not want to make you feel that way and we want to treat you fairly. But no business can continue employing people indefinitely if they are not able to work. We feel it is better to keep you fully informed of our thought processes (than the alternative of not communicating with you and perhaps eventually deciding to dismiss you, without having told you in advance what the consequences of continued absence would be).

8.5 We will write to you before we hold a formal meeting and explain when, where, and why it is taking place. You must let us know as soon as possible if you can't attend and we will try to find a mutually acceptable alternative date.

8.6 At the meeting, we will want to discuss why you are off work, how long you expect to remain off work, and whether you are likely to be off work for the

same reason in the future. We will also review medical evidence, and explore whether further reports are needed and if there is anything the Company can do to help improve your health and/or make it easier for you to attend work. If you have been off work long-term, we may suggest you take part in a return-to-work programme. If you are persistently absent, we may set you targets to improve your attendance against a deadline. We may warn you that you may face dismissal if your attendance does not improve.

8.7 Should you be unable to return to work, or you fail to meet the deadline set for improved attendance, you will be asked to attend another meeting. Our aim at this meeting will be to find out if the situation is likely to improve. If it seems to us that you are either unlikely to return to work, or your attendance will not improve in the short term, then we may decide to issue you with notice of dismissal. Before doing so, we will also explore redeploying you elsewhere within the Company (if there are any suitable roles available) and we will consider any other issues you want to discuss.

8.8 You may face action under the Company's disciplinary procedure if we conclude that you are not off work for a medical condition and you are unable to offer any other satisfactory explanation and/or have falsely claimed sick pay. This may lead to your dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct.

8.9 You have the right to appeal if we dismiss you on the grounds of your long-term absence. To do this, you need to respond within a week of being told you have been dismissed by writing directly to whoever is named in the letter you received. In your response to that letter, you must explain exactly why you are appealing.

8.10 Wherever possible, the appeal hearing meeting will not be led by the manager who took the decision to dismiss you. The Company's final decision will be sent to you in writing and we try to do this within two weeks of the appeal hearing. You do not have any further right to appeal against your dismissal.

8.11 You have the right to take a colleague with you to any formal meeting called under this procedure, including the appeal meeting. You should tell us as soon as possible who will accompany you and it is your responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If you choose a work colleague, we will not prevent them from attending, but we may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work causes operational problems.

8.12 Your colleague can, if this is your preference, explain the key points of your case to the meeting and can respond on your behalf. You can also confer with them during the meetings. They must not however answer questions put directly to you or try to prevent the Company asking questions or outlining its arguments.

9. Other types of absence from work

9.1 If you are called for jury service, you must tell your manager as soon as possible. While you are on jury service, you not be paid and should therefore claim all allowances made available by the court.

9.2 We will allow you time off to carry out duties in some public roles, including magistrate and school governor. As soon as you know what your duties are, and have dates for meetings you must attend, you should tell your manager so that we can plan for your absence from work. While carrying out these duties, we will not pay you for time taken off work.

9.3 You may take reasonable time off work to deal with emergencies involving your dependants. This does not cover general home issues, like wanting time off to deal with a problem with your boiler. We define a dependant as your spouse, civil partner, children (including adopted children), or a parent. Also included are other people who live in your household or anyone else who relies on you — for example, an elderly family member. You must follow the same procedure as for sickness leave, and contact your manager as soon as you know you will be taking time off.

9.4 We always consider the circumstances of each case to allow for some flexibility, but the time you take off must be both reasonable and necessary for you to deal with something immediately and/or respond to an emergency. Normally this means hours, or a maximum of one or two days, and this type of leave is not designed to provide care over the longer term.

9.5 We do not pay you when you take time off for dependants.

9.6 We cover all other types of time off for family-related matters — including maternity, paternity, shared parental, parental and adoption leave — in our separate Maternity and Family Friendly Policy.

January 2018, to be reviewed next January 2020.