

01 Absence Management

1. Overview

- 1.1. All employees are covered by our policy for reporting and managing absences and sick pay, but it does not form part of your employment contract and we may amend it at any time. Self-employed contractors are not covered.
- 1.2. This Policy provides a framework for absence management however the stages that relate to warnings and dismissal may not be suitable for all employees (particularly those who are in their probationary period or have less than 2 years' service).
- 1.3. 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. If you know you will need time off work you must tell your manager as soon as possible and request their permission to the time off.
- 2.2. We will usually allow paid time off to attend appointments if it is reasonable to do so and you make all reasonable efforts to arrange the appointment outside of normal working hours.
- 2.3. If we refuse to allow paid time off to attend an appointment you may ask us to treat this type of time off as paid holiday, in which case you should proceed as set out in our Holiday Policy.

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 [TIME] OR [not more than [X] minutes after your usual start time].
- 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. Use of emails or text messages are not acceptable save in exceptional circumstances.
- 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 we have agreed a different process.
- 3.4. Always contact your manager by telephone, not by (for example) 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. You are expected to keep your manager regularly informed while you are absent and to let them know when you anticipate being able to return to work.

- 3.6. 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).
- 3.7. During periods of sickness absence you must do all that is reasonable to facilitate and produce your recovery and will refrain from any activity that may prejudice your return to work.

4. Evidence of sickness or injury

- 4.1. You must complete a sickness absence self-certification form when you return to work and send this to your manager without delay. We require this to be completed irrespective of the length of your absence.
- 4.2. You must give us a doctor's certificate 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.

5. Payment for sickness or injury

- 5.1. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is paid instead of your salary. This usually starts on the fourth day you are off work, 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.

6. Sickness whilst on holiday

- 6.1. If you become sick during a period of annual leave the Company may exercise its discretion to allow you additional leave days to compensate for this provided:
 - 6.1.1. You obtain confirmation of your sickness from a qualified medical practitioner (usually your G.P.) and this must confirm that if you been at work it would have been sufficient to justify absence from work;
 - 6.1.2. You report your sickness to your manager as if you were not on annual leave by following the requirements above.

7. Returning to work

- 7.1. 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 and ensure you are fit to return.

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 about why you are, or have been, absent and we may get medical evidence so that we can better understand your situation. We may also 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 a doctor, an occupational health therapist, 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, but no business can continue employing people indefinitely if they are not able to work. We feel it is better that you are fully aware of our thought process and intentions than the alternative, which is us not communicating with you and eventually deciding to dismiss 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. You should also expect to be warned 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 expected to change, and we may have to give you notice of dismissal if it becomes clear you are either unlikely to return to work or your attendance will not improve in the short term. Before issuing notice of dismissal, we will also explore whether redeploying you elsewhere within the Company will address your attendance issues 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 malingering and you are unable to offer any satisfactory explanation for your absence. This may lead to your dismissal for misconduct or gross misconduct.

9. Your right to appeal

- 9.1. 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.

- 9.2. 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.

10. Your right to be accompanied

- 10.1. You have the right to take a colleague or a trade union representative 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.
- 10.2. Your colleague or union rep 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.

11. Other types of absence from work

Jury service

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

Emergency time off to look after dependants

- 11.2. You may take reasonable time off work to deal with emergencies involving your dependants. 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.
- 11.3. 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.
- 11.4. We do not pay you when you take time off for dependants.

Other family-related absences

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

Carrying out trade union duties

- 11.6. If you are elected as a trade union official, you are legally entitled to reasonable time off to fulfil your obligations and you will be paid at your full basic rate for all related absences during working hours. We will not pay you for duties carried out outside working hours.

Weather and disruption to transport

- 11.7. If you are prevented from attending work due to weather or disruptions to transport arrangements you must notify your absence as you would with sickness or injury.
- 11.8. If possible arrangements will be made to allow you to work from home.
- 11.9. If you have tried your best to get to work you will either be allowed to make up any lost hours or take the day as annual leave.
- 11.10. You may be permitted to leave work early if weather and / or disruptions to transport are likely to significantly affect your journey.