

CHR015

Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure

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Introduction

The company aims to encourage all its employees to maximise their attendance at work while recognising that employees will, from time to time, be unable to come to work for short periods due to sickness. We value the contribution our employees make to our success. So, when any employee is unable to be at work for any reason, we miss that contribution.

If an employee is frequently and persistently absent from work, this can damage efficiency and productivity, and place an additional burden of work on the employee's colleagues. By implementing this policy, the company aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of its business needs and the genuine needs of employees to take occasional short periods of time off work because of sickness.

This policy explains:

- What we expect from managers and employees when handling absence
- How we will work to reduce levels of absence
- Sick Pay entitlement

We respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness. This policy will be implemented in line with all data protection legislation and the Access to Medical Records Act.

Guidelines for employees, including notification requirements

Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment, and we ask each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.

An employee who needs to be absent from work due to sickness must comply with the following rules:

- Notify the office or the works supervisor if they are ill or unable to attend work for any other reason. Notification should be as early as possible, and in any event no later than 30 minutes after the employee's start time. The employee should be prepared to state the reason why they cannot attend work, and how long they think the absence will last.
- This notification should be made every day on which the employee is absent or until a medical certificate has been provided.
- Provide any information that the manager may need about their current work.
- If the employee does not contact the office or works supervisor by the required time, the manager will attempt to contact the employee.

- Following submission of medical certificates, the employee should keep in touch with the office or the works supervisor on a regular basis to provide an update on their condition together with a likely timescale for a return to work.
- Complete and submit a self-certification form on return to work for all periods of sickness absence.
- Provide a doctor's certificate or 'fit note' for a period of sickness absence exceeding seven days.
- Provide a doctor's certificate or 'fit note' for a period of sickness absence not exceeding seven days if the company specifically requests it. In these circumstances, the company will reimburse the employee for the cost if this is incurred (amount to be agreed in advance).
- As requested, attend an interview with their line manager on return to work to discuss the absence and the reason for it. One of the purposes of this interview will be to establish whether or not the line manager can provide any support to the employee that could facilitate attendance at work in the future (for example, if the employee's absence was in any way work related).
- Co-operate with the employer with regard to the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, resulting from recommendations made by their doctor, notwithstanding the fact that the advice on a "fit note" is not binding on the employer.
- As appropriate, the manager may also request that the employee attend an Occupational Health appointment at the employer's expense. If the employee refuses to attend an Occupational Health assessment, or they do not consent to a report being sent to the employer, then the company may have to make decisions about their future employment without the benefit of medical advice.

Note: The company's disciplinary procedures may be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.

Managing sickness absence

In managing and controlling employees' attendance and absence, as a matter of routine, the following actions will be taken by management each time an employee has been absent from work for a short period (i.e. a period of up to one working week):

- Create a record whenever an employee reports that they are unable to come to work due to sickness. This includes recording when the contact was made, the stated reason for the absence and how long the employee expects to be absent.
- At the manager's discretion, conduct 'return-to-work interviews'. This can be in the form of a very informal chat or a more formal meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to provide an opportunity to speak to the employee about the absence and the reason for it in a fair and factual way. This approach will alert the employee to the fact that the situation is being monitored (as is all staff sickness absence) and will potentially deter casual absences and provide support if needed, or an opportunity to discuss any issues confidentially. The manager will be supportive towards the

employee and, where appropriate, seek to identify ways in which to assist the employee to improve their attendance in the future.

- Require the employee (on return to work) to complete a self-certification form. The form will then be placed in the employee's personal file.
- Be alert to patterns, for example the persistent Monday or Friday absentee. If a pattern is identified, the manager will put their observations to the employee directly so that the employee has the opportunity to provide an explanation. The manager will, however, remain open minded and not jump to any hasty conclusions about the employee's absences.
- Try to establish, through investigation and discussion with the employee, the underlying reasons for frequent absences. Until the underlying cause is identified, an appropriate and effective remedy will be impossible to identify.
- Check whether or not absences are in part because of personal or family problems. If this is the case, a reasonable degree of tolerance and sympathy will be shown towards the employee, as the problems may be unavoidable. Whilst we wish to be supportive, at the same time frequent absences from work are unacceptable.
- Check whether the employee's absences are in any way work related, for example as a result of workplace stress. If the problem is work related, the manager will take prompt steps to remove or reduce the factor that is causing the employee's problem, taking external medical or other advice as appropriate.
- Seek medical advice, if appropriate, to determine whether there is any underlying medical cause for the employee's frequent absences.
- Set reasonable targets and time-limits for improvement in attendance and ensure that the employee is committed to achieving them.
- Warn the employee of the consequences of continuing unsatisfactory attendance, ie that they may eventually be dismissed.
- Keep confidential records of all absences, discussions and medical certificates and make sure that the records clearly identify the reasons for an employee's various absences.
- As appropriate, schedule a follow-up meeting at an agreed time to monitor the ongoing situation.
- Act reasonably towards the employee at all times.

Note: Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to a pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records.

Formal disciplinary action

Short and long term absence levels will be reviewed periodically and ultimately it may become necessary from a business perspective to consider disciplinary action which may lead to termination of employment.

Short term absence

Before taking any formal action in respect of an employee who has had frequent absences from work, the manager will:

- Check the employee's absence record to gain an accurate assessment of the number of days' absence that they have had, and the number of separate occasions that they have been absent.

Absences from work will be regarded as frequent if, during any period of 12 consecutive months, an employee is absent from work for 10 or more working days, or on three separate occasions. This will be discussed with the employee at the early stages of sickness management.

If the level of sickness absence does not improve, the formal disciplinary process will be implemented.

Long term absence

In the case of long term sickness absence, the manager will:

- consult and support the employee;
- seek up-to-date medical advice;
- meet with the employee to discuss the options and consider the employee's views;
- review if there are any alternative jobs or adjustments that may support a return to work or improved attendance
- implement disciplinary procedures on grounds of capability as appropriate (following a review of absence records and medical information)
- act reasonably towards the employee at all times.

Sick Pay

The company does not have an occupational sick pay scheme. However, employees will be entitled to be paid Statutory Sick Pay provided they meet the eligibility requirements of the scheme. This includes adherence to the company's notification of absence timescales (see guidelines for employees above). Medical certificates or 'fit notes' are also required for periods exceeding seven calendar days.

Further information regarding the Statutory Sick Pay Scheme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview>.

Review

This procedure will be periodically reviewed and made available to all staff (on the Works Canteen Noticeboard and via the QR code link displayed in the Canteen). Any amendment to it will be notified to employees by memo / noticeboards.

Self-Certification of Sickness Absence Form

Name		Job Title	
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Sickness Details

First day I was unfit for work (including weekends)	First day I was absent from work	Time I finished work
Date on which I was fit to return to work (including weekends)	Date on which I returned to work	
My absence was caused by the following illness / injury (Details relating to the reasons for absence will be treated as confidential information)		
If an injury, specify how it occurred, eg motor accident		
I have sought medical advice	I have consulted my doctor	I have visited a hospital or clinic
Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No

Employee declaration

I certify that the information provided on this form is true and accurate. I understand that to give false information could result in a disciplinary action, which may lead to dismissal. I agree for this information to be recorded for monitoring purposes.

Employee's signature		Date	
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Return to Work Interview Form



Name		Job Title	
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Date absence started			
Date returned to work			
Number of absences/days in last 12 months	No. of Absences	Total Days absent	
Reason for this absence			
Did they consult their GP?	Yes	No	
How is employee feeling now?			
Does employee have any concerns about work/workload?			
Is there anything Catena can do to help the employee/support them going forwards?			
If appropriate – discuss any patterns in absences and Catena’s approach to these			
Update on workload/other changes during absence			
Any other issues discussed			

This is an accurate record of our discussion. The employee has been provided with a copy and a copy is kept on their file.

Employee's signature		Date	
Manager's signature		Date	