

Company Name:

Staff Absence Policy

1. Policy Statement

We are committed to improving the health, wellbeing and attendance of our employees and this policy sets out what we expect from managers and employees when handling absence.

This policy has been introduced in consultation with employees and we welcome the continued involvement of employees in implementing this policy

You should familiarise yourself with this policy so that you know what is expected of you should you become ill or injured.

This policy and the procedures in it do not give contractual rights to you and we reserve the right to make amendments to it from time to time.

This policy applies to all employees.

2. Key Principles

Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of your contract of employment – we ask you to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.

We will pay you if you are unable to work due to sickness or injury in accordance with your contract.

It is recognised that most employees will occasionally have genuine and acceptable reasons to be absent from work but any absence has an impact on the business. The aims of this policy are to set out what we will do and what we expect you to do.

The company disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for an absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.

We respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness and this policy will be implemented in line with the Employee Privacy Notice issued to you and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988. A further copy of the Employee Privacy Notice is available on request.

3. Notification of Absence

If you are absent from work due to sickness or injury you must notify us by ringing [.....]
] or [.....].

Where due to sickness or injury you are personally unable to ring in, then you should arrange for a relative or friend to ring in. You should ring in by [.....].

Texting is not acceptable.

You should:

- Give a clear indication of the nature of the illness or injury
- A likely return date
- And whether you are intending to seek medical advice.

If you do not contact us by the required time, we will attempt to contact you at your home number or address.

If you do not feel able to discuss your medical problems with [.....] or [.....], we will be sensitive to individual concerns and make alternative arrangements where appropriate, for example you may prefer to discuss health problems with a person of the same sex.

4. Evidence of incapacity

For any absence of up to seven days you must self-certify using the company's self-certification form which is available from [.....]. A form will be sent to you upon request.

For any absence of over seven days a doctor's note in the form of a Statement of Fitness for work (Fit Note) must be provided to [.....].

We reserve the right to require you to provide a medical certificate, at your own cost, to cover an absence lasting less than eight days. You will be told in writing if this applies to you and company sick pay will not be payable without one. A medical certificate is always required if you intend to postpone a period of holiday due to sickness.

5. Keeping in touch

There is a shared responsibility for you and us to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

You should telephone [.....] once a week unless we agree with you a different arrangement as to how frequently you need to contact us to keep us informed of your progress. We may also arrange to meet you periodically either at work or home

Any day where you have not complied with your obligations under this procedure on notifying us of your absence, keeping in touch or providing medical certificates, will be treated as a day of unauthorised absence under the disciplinary procedure.

6. Sick Pay

The provision regarding sick pay is set out in the National Joint Council agreement on minimum terms and conditions of employment from time to time in force

The company sick pay under the Agreement is inclusive of SSP or any state incapacity or industrial benefits you are entitled to.

Your eligibility for company sick pay will be lost:

- if you fail to follow the rules set out above on notifying us of your absence
- if you fail to co-operate with us throughout your absence
- if you fail to co-operate with us in providing further medical information
- and for any day not covered by a certificate

7. Sickness absence and holidays

If you fall ill immediately before or during a period booked off as part of your holiday entitlement, you will be able to postpone the holiday until a later date provided:

- you comply with normal notification and keeping in touch rules set out in paragraph 3 and 5
- you provide a medical certificate to cover each day of absence. You will not be able to self-certify your absence even if it is for less than eight days. The medical certificate must be at your own cost.

These requirements apply even if you are abroad although in such instance we may agree with you a different reporting structure.

Days converted from a period of holiday to sickness absence count in the normal way for any absence review.

Requesting paid holiday during sickness absence

If you are absent on long term sick leave, you can apply to take some or all of your statutory holiday entitlement. You must complete a holiday request form in the normal way. We reserve the right to refuse your request. We will not normally accept a request where you have time left in the holiday year on your return to take outstanding leave entitlement.

When you take a period of paid holiday at a time when you are absent on sick leave, SSP is still payable if the usual qualifying conditions apply. This means your holiday pay is inclusive of any SSP due to you. Your period of holiday and your period of SSP will run concurrently. You will not be entitled to company sick pay and holiday pay for the same period of time.

Company notification of holiday during sickness absence

If you have exhausted your entitlement to company sick pay and it is clear to us that you are unlikely to return to work before the end of the company's holiday year, we may nominate days of your sickness absence as a period of your outstanding holiday entitlement.

If we choose to do this, we will give you advance written notice of at least twice the number of days of holiday we are nominating (so two weeks notice for one week's holiday). If you do not wish to take the period of holiday at the nominated time, you should let us know within 7 days of receiving our letter to confirm that it is your wish.

8. Working whilst signed off

If you are absent on sick leave, you are not expected to do anything that is inconsistent with being unfit for your duties or which would delay your return to work. This includes working for another employer without our prior permission and taking part in inappropriate activities likely to aggravate your condition. If it is found that you have done something inconsistent with your absence on sick leave, this may result in the suspension of sick pay (other than statutory sick pay) and/or disciplinary action.

9. Further medical information

We may at any time ask you to attend a health professional (doctor, specialist or occupational health practitioner) or we may ask your permission to seek a medical report from your own doctor or other medical professional. This is to enable us to get a clear picture of the way your condition is affecting your ability to work, whether there is anything the company can do to help you return to work and to ensure that we are meeting our health and safety obligations. The medical report may also be taken into account when making decisions about your future employment.

10. Injury at work

All accidents and injury which occur whilst at the company premises or on authorised company business must be reported as soon as possible to [.....]. Full details must be given as to how the injury happened together with its nature and extent.

Failure to report that an accident or injury at work has occurred may affect any RIABS claim or sick pay (other than SSP).

11. Phased return or amended duties

May be fit for some work

If your doctor advises on the Fit Note that you may be fit for some work, we will discuss with you ways of helping get you back to work such as a phased return to work or amended duties.

If it is not possible to provide the support you need to return to work – for example by making the necessary workplace adjustments – or you feel unable to return then the Fit Note will be used in the same way as if the GP had advised that you were not fit for work.

Pay during a phased return

If your doctor or an occupational health adviser or a return-to-work plan indicates that a temporary adjustment including a phased return that enables you to return to work and we can accommodate the suggestion, then:

- *you will not suffer any financial penalty by returning to work under temporary adjustments, which means in practice you will be paid a normal day's pay for any day that you work, even if it is not a normal full working day or your normal duties,*
or
- *you will be paid your normal pay for any hours worked even if you are not carrying out your normal duties or are working them at a different time**

****employer to delete as appropriate.***

If you are eligible for company sick pay and have not yet exhausted your entitlement you will be paid company sick pay for the days or part days you are not working and for which company sick pay would have been payable if you had not returned under a phased return.

If you are off because of an accident at work you should advise RIABS that you are returning on a phased return and of your earnings so that RIABS benefit can be adjusted accordingly.

If by returning to work on temporary adjustments you lose your entitlement to SSP, the company may in its absolute discretion pay a sum equivalent to it assuming that all the normal qualifying conditions are met.

12. Return to Work Discussions

Unless it has been agreed with you otherwise, we will discuss with you upon your return to work:

- the reason for and cause of your absence
- if there is anything the company can do to help
- that you are well enough to work

If you do have any underlying problems or reasons that are causing you to take time off, this is a good opportunity to discuss them as we may be able to help you.

If there are exceptional circumstances and you do not wish to discuss the reason for your absence with the person nominated to do so, then please advise us and we will arrange for you to discuss with another senior person within the company

13. Absence reviews

13a. We recognise that employees will sometimes be too unwell to work and need time off to recover but there are unfortunately limits to the amount of absence that the business and your colleagues can sustain. Therefore we will monitor absence and where there is a cause for concern or an unacceptable absence pattern such as regularly off ill on a Monday, we will hold a formal attendance review meeting to bring about an improvement. Before any formal action is taken we will send you a letter setting out your attendance record and informing you of the possible outcomes of the meeting and the letter will also tell you that you have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a co-worker or trade union official. At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record and the impact it is having on the business and you will be given the opportunity to explain the reason for the absence. You will be given the right to appeal against any decision.

If you have a long lasting illness this will normally be managed in the way set out below at 13b. However, we may at our entire discretion deal with any kind of absence under either 13a or 13b or both where appropriate.

Management of Longer Term Conditions or Injuries

13b. This paragraph normally applies where you have an underlying medical condition or injury that is preventing you from working normally perhaps causing you to have frequent short term absences or a single lengthy absence.

We are committed to helping employees return to work from long term sickness absence. As part of our absence review meetings procedure, we will, where appropriate and possible, support a return to work by:

- obtaining medical advice
- making reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices and working hours
- considering re-deployment and/or
- agreeing a return-to-work programme with everyone affected.

Where it is appropriate we aim to help employees overcome the problems they have which are stopping them from working normally. In practice this means we will

Keep your absence under review

Maintain contact with you as and when appropriate, which may include periodic case meetings, either at work or home, to help you keep us informed of progress. We can also let you know what has been happening in your absence.

Ask your permission to obtain medical reports which may also involve you attending one or more medical examinations with a doctor or other health professional appointed by us.

Where appropriate identify and consider with you measures which might help you return to work earlier than might otherwise be possible including, where applicable, taking into account any comments made by your GP on your medical certificate

Keep any measures we have put in place under review

Research shows that the longer an employee is off sick, the less likely they are to return to work. The steps set out above are designed to help us prevent that happening and so are in everyone's interest. Therefore, we expect you to co-operate fully with us in managing this kind of absence. If, in our view, you do not co-operate fully then it may affect your continued employment and may affect your entitlement to sick pay.

Should the situation arise where because of your continuing absence it becomes necessary to consider whether your employment should be terminated, we will invite you to a formal meeting before a decision is made to consider all the circumstances and probable future pattern of absence, taking into account any medical advice and the likely success of any adjustments that could reasonably be made. We will also take into account the needs of the business. You will be informed of your right of appeal.

14. Reminder of time off for family emergencies

You have the legal right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to deal with an unexpected or sudden family emergencies and to make necessary longer term arrangements. This right applies in the following circumstances:

- If a dependant falls ill or has been involved in an accident or assaulted
- If the dependant is having a baby
- To make longer term care arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured
- To deal with the death of a dependant, for example to make funeral arrangements or to attend a funeral

- To deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown in care arrangements for a dependant, for example, when a childminder or nurse fails to turn up
- To deal with an incident involving your child during school hours

A dependant means your spouse or civil partner, child or parent, or someone who lives with you as part of your family or anyone else who reasonably relies on you to provide assistance, make arrangements or take action of the kind referred to above. In case of illness, injury or where care arrangements break down a dependant may also be someone who reasonably relies on you for assistance.

If you do need to take time off for a family emergency, you must notify the company as soon as possible that you need time off, the reason for the absence and when you expect to return. You may be required to provide evidence of the reason for your absence.

No-one who takes time off in accordance with this paragraph will be subjected to any detriment.

The NTF/NARS have agreed that stable employees shall be granted paid absence for up to five days in the event of the death of a spouse, civil partner, child, brother, sister or parent or other relation for whom they provide care at the discretion of the employer. In the event that the five days is insufficient or that a serious family event has occurred which has not resulted in bereavement, we may at our discretion negotiate a period of unpaid leave to enable that outstanding personal matter to be dealt with. Employees are also entitled to statutory Parental Bereavement Leave where the employee has suffered the death of a child or lost a baby to a stillbirth after 24 weeks.