



Sickness Absence Policy

Introduction

In managing sickness absence, the organisation will be sympathetic in cases of genuine illness but like all employers, has limited resources. The policy is designed therefore to cope with the majority of situations but the organisation cannot undertake to support indefinitely those who need prolonged periods of time off. This policy does not confer a contractual right on the employee and any benefits under it are entirely at management discretion.

Sickness Absence

“Sickness” is defined as an incapacity to carry out the duties and responsibilities which the employee is contractually obliged to do because of his or her own illness or accident.

This policy therefore applies to absence caused by personal illness or accident, not to the need to take time off work because of the illness or accident of others, e.g., children or partners.

The Procedure to Follow

Notification

Should you be too ill to come to work, you should telephone Julie Partridge by 07:30 on the morning of your working day and let her know:

- a. why you are unable to come to work
- b. how long you think the sickness absence might last
- c. what action you are taking to mitigate the effects of the illness, eg visiting the doctor
- d. where you can be contacted during the day should the organisation need to get in touch with you.

If your incapacity lasts for more than one day, unless you have submitted a doctor's certificate, you should telephone every day to keep the organisation abreast of progress.

On your return to work

When you return to work, you should report to Julie before you begin work. She will ask you about your illness and how well you have recovered. She will also ask you to complete a return-to-work form. Julie needs to countersign this if you are to receive any statutory sick pay for which you may be eligible. No matter how short your period of sickness, it must be covered by a self-certificate and/or doctor's certificate.

Please note: the seven days includes those days on which you do not normally work, eg weekends and public holidays.

If you have been absent for more than seven days (including weekends and public holidays), you should bring with you a certificate from your doctor. This should explain the nature of your illness and confirm that you are fit to return to work.

If your doctor provides a certificate stating that you “may be fit for work” you should inform Julie immediately. We shall discuss with you whether there are any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking into account the doctor's advice. This may take place at a return to work interview. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave and we will set a date to review the situation.

If the organisation has cause to be concerned about your health, eg you have had a number of periods of sickness for the same reason in a short period, then your line manager may suggest that you visit your doctor for a check-up. In certain circumstances, especially if your long-term employment is in doubt because of your sickness record, then the organisation may ask you to see a medical practitioner of its choice. It is a condition of your contract that you comply with any request from the organisation to attend an appointment with a medical practitioner of the organisation's choice.

Your sickness absence will be marked on your personnel record.

Pay While Off Sick

Statutory sick pay

All employees have a right to statutory sick pay (SSP) as long as they earn more than the lower earnings level (the Laura Foster can confirm the current rate). SSP is not, however, payable for the first three qualifying days of absence. (A qualifying day is a day on which you are normally expected to work under your contract of employment.)

There is a limit of 28 weeks' SSP in any one period of sickness or linked periods. (Periods of sickness are said to be linked if the second period starts within eight weeks of the end of the first period.)

Long-term Sickness

While the organisation is concerned to assist employees who are sick, it cannot offer indefinite support. Once you run out of sick pay, Julie will come and discuss with you your likely return to work and what you may be well enough to do in the way of work duties. If necessary, she will ask your permission to approach your doctor or ask you to see a specialist of the organisation's choosing. If it appears that it may be a long time before you will be able to work again, the organisation will discuss the situation with you and it is possible that your employment will be terminated.

Should this happen, you will receive pay in lieu of your contractual or statutory notice period, whichever is the longer, and any outstanding holiday pay. You may appeal against the decision to dismiss in writing. This appeal should be made within five working days. You have the right to be accompanied to the appeal hearing.

The organisation will consider in light of GP's fit note which states “you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice” whether any changes can be made to assist your return to work.

You should feel free to re-apply to join the organisation once you are fit to return to work. If there is a suitable vacancy, your application will be given sympathetic consideration. If you re-join within six months of leaving because of ill-health, your employment will be considered to be continuous.

If you fail to comply with notification or certification procedures, or otherwise abuse the organisation's rules on sickness absence, you will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Disabilities

If your absence is because of a disability or your illness leaves you in a mental or physical condition which falls within the definition of a disability, the organisation will do whatever it can to make reasonable adjustments to your job to enable you to carry on working. If effective adjustments cannot be made, dismissal may have to take place.

If you have a disability, time off for rehabilitation will not be counted as sickness absence.

If your absence is because of your association with another person who is disabled, then the organisation will consider reasonable adjustments to enable you to keep your absence to a minimum.