



Absence & Attendance Management Policy

1. Introduction

We know that working is an important part of your wellbeing and there will be times when you can't come to work due to illness. Our Absence and Attendance Management Policy helps you to understand what will happen when you're too ill to come to work for a period of time. We also want to support our employees during their absence and their return to work. This policy sets out our approach to managing sickness absence and attendance.

This policy is designed to help all employees achieve good attendance, and to ensure that a consistent and fair approach in managing attendance is adopted throughout the organisation. In turn this will help us ensure the business continues to provide an efficient and effective service to our customers.

This policy and the guidelines it contains work in conjunction with but is not limited to other policies such as discipline & grievance, dignity at work, health & safety and stress, mental health & wellbeing.

This policy doesn't form part of your contract of employment and can be amended at any time.

2. Aims of the Policy

- To manage attendance in a way that reflects genuine concern for employees and to develop a positive attitude towards attendance.
- To set clear expectations for standards of attendance that we require from our employees.
- To separate two processes: attendance and absence management and provide guidelines for employees and managers in how to manage these.
- To identify the causes of absence and, where possible, develop a programme of supportive and preventive measures.
- To ensure training and support is available to both employees and managers.

3. Principles

The Ore Valley Group requires good attendance from all employees to meet its objectives.

- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory you will be informed what improvement is required and possible consequences of failure to do so (which may include disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal).
- The attendance management process is concerned with the number of periods of absence/ days absent (excluding underlying health conditions protected under the Equality Act 2010).
- If you have an underlying health condition causing absence(s), then we will consider reasonable adjustments.
- Managers will conduct "return to work" interviews for every period of sickness absence within the spirit of this policy.
- You need to adhere to our absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and organisational sick pay being withheld.
- Managers will maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff to manage absence effectively.

4. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Ore Valley Housing Association is fully committed to equal opportunities and ensuring equality of treatment for all stakeholders, employees, customers and suppliers without discrimination or prejudice based on an individual's protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act as follows :-

- age
- disability
- gender identity¹
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Association will always seek to follow best practice in order to ensure that the above group needs are understood, considered and accommodated wherever possible.

1. Managing absence and attendance

We treat these two processes differently.

- Managing absence relates to managing a person back to work by making reasonable adjustments where possible and dealing with the ability to carry out your work duties, taking into consideration any medical advice, an employee's comments and our business needs.
- Managing attendance refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of short term, frequent absences, with no reference to any particular absence or medical condition. We will manage this in line with our absence management and disciplinary policies.

Absence Monitoring

A fundamental feature of good attendance management is the accurate and timely recording of all absences. This is essential for processing the requirements of statutory and occupational sick pay arrangements and the process of managing attendance and absence. Good information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health conditions. The sooner these issues are identified and acted upon – the more likely a successful conclusion for both employees and the organisation can be achieved.

Accurate recording is also an essential element in satisfying potential concerns over the fairness of any actions taken by line managers.

Having maintained attendance records, managers will be expected to provide and discuss monthly aggregated statistics at management team meetings and at team meetings with staff. Individual cases will not be discussed as it forms part of your confidential record.

Absence Reporting Procedures

Reporting

If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, you must phone your line manager (or if not available, another manager) as soon as is reasonably possible. You should do this before you are due to start your shift and if not possible, within one hour of your starting time. You must fill in a [self-certification form](#), whether or not you are entitled to sickness allowance and whatever the length or reason for absence.

¹ The inclusion of gender identity as a characteristic goes beyond the confines of the Equalities Act which only recognises gender reassignment as a protected characteristic. This is referred to in our [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#).

Text messages, emails, messages on social media or messages from another person are not accepted unless you really can't contact at all.

If you become ill when you are work and need to leave you need to let your manager or another manager know.

Fit Notes

If you are off due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note as soon as possible to your line manager. Any uncertified gaps may be classed as unauthorised absence.

If the Doctor ticks the 'may be fit for work' box the line manager will arrange a meeting with the member of staff to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although we are not obliged to follow the doctor's advice, we will do our best to help you return to work and maintain a good attendance record. However, if we cannot agree to reasonable adjustments the individual will remain off sick. If this situation arises Managers can provide specific advice.

If we agree to a phased return to work, the days the individual remains off sick within the agreed period will count as one period of absence.

Keeping in Touch

You are responsible for staying in touch during the time you are off so that we can continue to support you. The reasons for any absence, when you expect to return to work and contact details will be discussed. If, in the event of an emergency you cannot get to a phone on day one of your absence, you should make sure, where possible, that someone else calls on your behalf.

After this, you should contact your line manager as soon as you can and maintain regular contact by calling at least once a week.

If you fail to keep in contact as outlined above, we will initiate and maintain contact with you. We reserve the right to withdraw company sick pay if we feel this is appropriate or necessary.

If you feel the reason that your absence is because of work, talk to your manager or another manager immediately so we can try to address any issues and help you get back to work. If appropriate, we will refer you for an Occupational Health Assessment to find out what we can do to support you. We will ordinarily seek your consent before making a referral.

Failure to Comply

Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold company sick pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also lead to disciplinary action against you in accordance with our disciplinary procedure.

Similarly, if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will take disciplinary action against you. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

Return to Work

A thorough return to work meeting will be carried out after every period of unplanned sickness absence and the line manager will discuss an employee's absence record at every return to work meeting. The purpose of a return to work interview is to establish if the employee is fit to return to work and if any support is required. This will be done by the line manager (or another manager if he/she is not available) on the first day of returning to work or as early as possible.

Completed forms will be kept in your personnel file. The return to work interview forms contain confidential information and may only be viewed by authorised personnel, normally a line manager or any other manager who deals with the case.

As part of the return to work your manager will let you know if you have reached an absence trigger and need to attend an Attendance Review Meeting. If you have not met a trigger but your manager is concerned about your attendance, they will discuss this with you informally to identify if there are any adjustments or support you may need.

Company Sick Pay

All employees can benefit from this scheme as long as their absence from work is due to sickness or injury. Employees must not take any other paid work while receiving sickness allowance. Unpaid leave may be requested and it will be considered if it can be accommodated. However, if the employee does not tell the organisation about these instances, we may take disciplinary action, which may lead to dismissal.

Scale of allowances

In any one period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with the following scale.

Continuous service at the date sickness starts	Full allowance paid for:	Half allowance paid for:
Up to 1 year	5 weeks	5 weeks
Over 1 and under 2 years	9 weeks	9 weeks
Over 2 and under 3 years	18 weeks	18 weeks
Over 3 and under 5 years	22 weeks	22 weeks
Over 5 years	26 weeks	26 weeks

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is not a benefit of employment. It is quite different to the sickness allowances mentioned here, and we pay it on behalf of the Government.

The scale of entitlement to SSP is published by the Government and normally changes at the beginning of each tax year.

If you are not entitled to SSP, we will tell you by sending you the appropriate government form. It is then your responsibility to claim any other State Benefit which you may be entitled to.

Working out sickness allowances

We work out your occupational sick pay using your basic pay. We will only consider overtime if this is stated in your employment contract. For further guidance please refer to our Terms and Conditions

Attendance Management

This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of attendance. We will aim to assist the individual in maintaining a good attendance record. This will involve maintaining good records, ensuring return to work meetings are completed and helping investigate, address and support any identified underlying causes of absence.

Where this fails to secure a required improvement, we will invoke the terms of the disciplinary procedure. Unsatisfactory attendance reviews can result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If, at any stage during this process it becomes apparent that an underlying health condition is involved, medical information will be sought, and further discussion will take place prior to deciding on appropriate action, if any.

Attendance Review Triggers

Setting and applying triggers in the workplace can be a successful tool in managing attendance. Any trigger system should specify how unacceptable attendance will be managed.

The below table sets triggers at which the attendance management process is instigated following the basis of the numbers of spells of absence. This means a review will automatically be triggered after an employee is absent 3 times in 12 months.

Triggers have been set against attendance statistics and are clearly linked to the organisation's disciplinary process. Any approach taken should be determined by the business needs and designed to deliver desired results. There are several principles to be followed in the attendance management system:

1. The system needs to be designed to give employees a clear understanding of standards expected and possible consequences of breaching these.
2. Attendance should always be reviewed over the same reference period (e.g 12 months) so that the older absences can "fall off" and the record improves.
3. Employees should never be dismissed at the first attendance review. They should also be informed of the required improvement and possible consequences they may face if they fail to do so.

The absence triggers linked to the disciplinary process can be seen below:

Absence Occurrence	Action	Outcome
1.	Informal Meeting (RTW)	Return to Work meeting with manager to understand underlying reasons for absences and what support can be given for improving attendance and the wellbeing of the employee.
2.	Informal Meeting (RTW)	Return to Work meeting with manager to understand underlying reasons for absences and what support can be given for improving attendance and the wellbeing of the employee.
3.	Informal Meeting (RTW)	Return to Work meeting as above Warning raised on the next absence reaching the 1 st Trigger
4.	(RTW) Management Discussion Formal Meeting	Return to Work meeting with line manager Management to discuss, support and provide guidance on absence situation Formal meeting with line manager and Corporate Support Manager (CSM) to discuss absence with an improvement plan being agreed
5.	RTW Management Discussion 1 st Written Warning	Return to work meeting with manager as above Management to discuss, support and provide guidance on absence situation Formal meeting to be held with line manager and the CSM within 10 working days from RTW with 1 st written warning being issued
6.	RTW Management Discussion Final written warning	Return to work meeting with manager as above Management to discuss, support and provide guidance on absence situation Formal meeting to be held with line manager and the CSM within 10 working days from RTW with final written warning being issued
7	Potential Dismissal	Management team will discuss the absence in full and with the support of EVH look at potential dismissal

Absence Management

Management will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term and/or underlying health condition. If an employee finds themselves in such a position they should be confident that the manager will react in a supportive fashion when approached.

The following points will always be considered in relation to long-term absence:

- The nature of the illness and any contributing factors
- The likely duration and/or frequency of your absence(s)
- Any actions that can be taken by you
- Any reasonable adjustments that we could make
- Any possible redeployment opportunities
- The nature of the duties in relation to your health conditions

- Our business needs and the impact that your absence may have upon these
- Your entitlement to statutory and company sick pay

If a medical professional makes suggestions for any reasonable adjustments, these will be discussed prior to return to work to determine if these can be accommodated, along with any suggestions the employee or employer may also have made. Although we are not bound by the doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to accommodate a prompt return and good attendance. If we agree, any reasonable adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews to assess if they are still required and suitable.

When managing a long-term absence, a termination of employment for the reason of ill health capability may be considered where all other options have been exhausted, and the organisation can no longer sustain the absence.

N.B if this outcome is being considered we will seek professional advice.

Manager Responsibilities

- Ensures employees are aware of the Sickness Absence Policy and what is expected of them via local induction and day-to-day management.
- Address sickness absence issues when they become known and seek to resolve these at the earliest opportunity in a prompt, confidential and sensitive manner and ensuring consistency and fairness.
- Monitor and record employees' sickness absence in a timely manner.
- Conducts and records return to work discussions following a period of absence due to sickness and ensures that employees provide the appropriate documentation.
- Leads and directs informal discussions and formal Stage 1 and 2 Absence Review Meetings.
- Ensures that any reasonable adjustments that are recommended by either the healthcare professional or the Occupational Health Service are given due consideration and implemented (where appropriate) in a timely manner.
- Identifies and investigates unacceptable levels of sickness absence and takes appropriate action.
- Refers employees to Occupational Health as appropriate.
- Seeks HR advice as appropriate.
- Ensures that in dealing with sickness absence cases the Department is complying with the Equality Act 2010 (which incorporates the key provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended in 2005) and the University's wider policies on equal opportunities and dignity at work.
- Ensures that all employees are treated fairly and sympathetically

Employee Responsibilities

- Attends work in accordance with their contracted hours and days unless prevented from doing so due to ill-health (or other reason).
- Understands and complies with the requirement to report sickness absence by informing their manager when they are unable to attend work due to sickness or if they are taken ill or are injured while at work.
- Provides relevant and timely self-certification (CHRIS/62) and/or Statement of Fitness for Work ('Fit Note').
- Answers concerns raised under the Sickness Absence Policy.
- Attends Occupational Health or other appropriate medical specialist if reasonably requested to do so.
- Maintains regular contact with their manager throughout any period of sickness absence, especially if the absence is long-term.
- Makes every effort to attend medical and/or dental appointments outside their normal working hours if possible. Where this is not possible, makes every effort for such appointments to be scheduled for the beginning or end of their working day.
- Understands that not complying with the relevant statutory rules relating to sickness absence may affect eligibility for sick pay and that, following investigation and dependant on circumstances, disciplinary procedures may be instigated.

- Attends return to work discussions and formal Absence Review Meetings as appropriate.
- Accepts reasonable adjustments to working arrangements practices and procedures to deal with the challenges created by disability, ill-health or injury

Supporting Management

All absence will be discussed confidentially at the Management Team meeting (the first meeting held at the beginning of each month).

Dishonest Absence

If you are found to falsify or exaggerate your absence, this will be treated as gross misconduct. An investigation will be carried out in accordance with our disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action may be instigated, including dismissal or future withdrawal of the company sick pay benefit.

Absence and holidays

If you're off sick and have pre-booked holiday that you're too unwell to take, you can ask for the holiday to be cancelled so you can take it another time. If you are already on holiday and you become so unwell that you wouldn't have been able to attend work, you can ask for these holidays to be cancelled if your illness seriously disrupts your holiday. You will need to follow the absence reporting procedure and get a Fit Note from your doctor covering the entire period of holiday you were unwell (including the first seven calendar days).

If you are on sick leave and you want to go on holiday you need to let your manager know. We may want to refer you to Occupational Health to ensure going on holiday will not be detrimental to your recovery. Where an absence is broken by a period of annual leave the sickness before and directly after the period of annual leave will be treated as a single absence. When you are off sick you continue to accrue annual leave.

If you are off sick for an extended period of time and are unable to take all your annual leave before the end of the holiday year, your manager will work with you to arrange for the leave to be taken as soon as possible.

Doctor/hospital/dental appointments

Doctor, hospital and dental appointments should be arranged outside working hours. If it is not possible, time off should be requested from the employee's line manager. Arrangements could include using annual leave, TOIL/flexi or unpaid leave. In some circumstances managers could also use their discretion and consider giving paid time off.

Time off for a hospital appointments will be granted as long as a copy of the appointment letter is provided.

Phased Return to Work

When an employee has a fit note from their GP citing 'fit for work with adjustments' (for example - a phased return) the employee shall work for the period agreed with their manager and sick leave will be provided for the rest of the working week. This sick leave will be added to the employees absence record as one single absence.

If there is no fit note but it is agreed between both parties to have a phased period then the time not working will be managed through any other agreed leave (for example – flexi time, annual leave, toil or unpaid leave).

Disability Related Absence

If you have an underlying medical condition and you have made us aware, we may ask you to attend an Occupational Health assessment so that we can obtain medical advice on how to support your attendance. We will review any recommendations and look at your personal attendance rates considering your medical condition and the advice provided.

Managing absences related to the Menopause

If an employee has menopausal symptoms, provided they're unfit for work because of this, they should be allowed time off. Menopause can cause various significant physical and/or psychological symptoms that can affect a sufferer's ability to work.

Difficult symptoms related to the menopause leading to absence should be recorded as an ongoing issue, rather than as individual absences. As with any long-term health condition or impairment, adjustments should be offered to resolve any barriers that the employee experiencing the menopause encounters.

Managing absences related to pregnancy

When an employee informs her manager that she is pregnant, a risk assessment of her duties/responsibilities, workstation and workplace conditions needs to be carried out, to ensure the environment is not harmful to the expectant mother or her baby.

Any potential hazards must be removed or if it is not possible, the employee is usually put on paid leave for a period that her doctor deems is necessary for the safety of her and the baby (which may be the entire pregnancy). If this situation arises the absence would not be taken into consideration against any attendance triggers and would not be deducted from any sick pay entitlement.

After any absence, the situation should be discussed with the employee, and possible solutions sought. If an employer can make adjustments that would help the employee improve their attendance and sustain a return to work, then these should be made. This may be a simple solution, e.g. starting shifts later to prevent absences caused by morning sickness.

If, in a period of four weeks or less before the expected week of childbirth (EWC), an employee falls ill for a reason solely or partly related to her pregnancy or childbirth, this automatically triggers the commencement of their maternity leave, regardless of what was previously agreed.

Conduct whilst off sick

When on sick leave, employees are still bound by the contract of employment with us and all our policies including Code of Conduct and duty of fidelity. We also expect that employees do not participate in activities that would be at odds with the reason for absence. Any breach in respect of this will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. This includes conduct on social networking sites and any other publicly made remarks regarding our customers, work colleagues, partners and anyone else who is connected with us.

Cosmetic procedures

Absence due to cosmetic procedures (whether carried out in the UK or abroad) will not fall under the sick leave or pay unless it is recommended by health professionals. Employees should therefore request time off and agree with their line manager how the absence will be processed, e.g. annual leave or unpaid leave.

IVF treatment

Absences relating to IVF treatment will not be processed as sick leave or pay. The same applies to a partner of a person that is undergoing such treatment. Instead, you should discuss with your line manager how time off for the treatment could be accommodated, e.g. annual leave, flexi time or unpaid leave. Absences relating to IVF treatment will also not be treated as relating to pregnancy unless the employee actually falls pregnant.

Stress management

Stress can result from an illness or lead to one but it is not an illness itself. The same relates to "nervous debility" or any other diagnosis of that type. If an employee goes off sick with stress, the manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that an appropriate action can be taken (if any) and in particular to determine whether conditions at work cause or contribute to stress and

whether something could be done to help the situation. We will follow procedures as outlined in the stress management policy. If the absence is certified by a doctor, the manager may ask the employee's doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress.

Medical Suspension

If by being at work we believe you pose a risk to yourself or others, we may suspend you on medical grounds. This is to allow us to obtain medical advice to confirm if you are or aren't fit to be at work. This is not a sanction against you, it is a precautionary measure and you will receive your normal pay.

General Data Protection Regulations

The organisation will treat personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy. Information regarding how data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in The Ore Valley Group's [employee privacy notice](#).

Reviewed by:	Maryjane Elder (adapted from EVH Policy)
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