



Attendance & Absence Management Policy

Introduction

The Ore Valley Group recognises that on occasions it may be necessary for employees to be absent from work. However, we also have a duty to provide a reliable service to our customers and thus we need to ensure that we help you maintain the highest possible level of 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.

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 managing stress.

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 managers and employees.

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 not concerned with reasons for absence but 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 strictly 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.

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.

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](#).

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.

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.

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 phoning your line manager to let them know the reasons for any absence and when you expect to return to work. If, in the event of an emergency you cannot get to a phone on day one of your absence, you should make sure 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.

We expect that you let us know the following information: the reason for your absence, when you expect to return to work and contact details which can be used to maintain contact during your absence. (If this information is not provided we will contact you to find out this information).

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. The purpose of a return to work interview is to establish if the employee is fit to return to work. 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 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.

Company Sick Pay

All employees can benefit from this scheme as long as their absence from work is due to their own sickness or injury. Employees must also 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.

1. 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.

2. 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, with no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition.

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 and address 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 may automatically be triggered when 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	Return to Work meeting with line manager
	Management Discussion	Management to discuss support and provide guidance on absence situation
	Formal Meeting	Formal meeting with line manager and corporate support manager (CSM) to discuss absence with an improvement plan being agreed
5	RTW	Return to work meeting with manager as above

	Management Discussion 1 st Written Warning	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

The Ore Valley Group 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.

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.

Other Provisions

Absence and holidays

If the employee is on annual leave and falls sick or has an accident, this will be discussed and agreed how the leave will be processed.

If an employee is on sick leave and plans to go on holiday, they should contact their line manager to seek authorisation and to let them know how long you will be away for and to ensure communication resumes upon your return.

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.

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 is not an illness. It 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.

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)
Review Date:	24th October 2023
New Review Date Due:	October 2026