



Sickness absence policy

Summary

This policy explains your obligations during a period of absence and the procedures that we will follow.

Reporting your absence

You need to personally telephone your manager on the first day of your absence. A minimum of one hours' notice is expected. Frontline colleagues should follow local reporting procedures.

Welfare meetings will be held with you during your absence. We may also request that you attend an occupational health appointment or provide a GP's report.

Providing certification

You can self-certify for the first 7 calendar days of absence. From day 8 onwards you will need to provide a GP's fit note so that we can pay your sick pay. We reserve the right to request fit notes for absence of less than 7 days.

Payment during sickness absence

You are entitled to 28 weeks statutory sick pay (SSP) if you meet the following conditions;

- You are absent for 4 days in a row
- You earn at least the lower earnings limit (a weekly minimum earnings limit set by the Government)

You may also qualify for discretionary Occupational Sick Pay (OSP) if this is stated in your employment contract.

OSP may be withdrawn in the following circumstances; for the duration of a short term absence warning (unless you have a disability), if you fail to report your absence, provide medical certificates, attend welfare meetings and/or occupational health appointments.

Sickness during annual leave

If you become sick during annual leave you will need to telephone your manager as soon as possible. You will also need to provide a fit note to cover all of the dates that you were unwell. Your manager will decide if this period will be reclassified as sickness.

Formal short-term absence procedure

We have set trigger levels to assist managers in identifying when your absence has reached a level of concern. The short-term absence procedure is a 3 stage process where formal action may be taken in line with the following;

| Stage | Absence trigger | Potential Outcome |
|----------------|--|---|
| Stage 1 | 10 or more working days (cumulative or consecutive) or 3 occasions of absence in a rolling 12 month period or an otherwise unacceptable pattern of absence | Review or First written warning lasting 6 months |
| Stage 2 | 5 or more working days (cumulative or consecutive) or 2 occasions of absence in the next 6 months or an otherwise unacceptable pattern of absence | Review or Final written warning lasting 12 months |
| Stage 3 | 5 or more working days (cumulative or consecutive) or 2 occasions of absence in the next 12 month period or an otherwise unacceptable pattern of absence | Review or dismissal |

Under the short term absence procedure your manager has the discretion to;

- Take any period of absence (including periods of long term sickness) into account
- Start this procedure at any stage if you have an unacceptable pattern of absence

Short term absence review meetings

Your manager will invite you in writing to attend a short term absence review meeting. You will have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or TU representative. At the meeting your manager will decide if it is appropriate to issue you with a sanction. You will receive a letter confirming your manager's decision and details of your right to appeal.

Formal long term absence procedure

Any absence of 4 or more weeks is classed as long-term. The formal long term procedure includes 3 meetings held at the following stages; stage 1: after 10 weeks, stage 2 after 16 weeks and stage 3 after 22 weeks.

You will be invited in writing to attend all formal meetings and you will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or TU representative.

Dismissal on the grounds of ill health

At a stage 3 long term absence review meeting you may be dismissed on the grounds of ill health, if medical evidence confirms that you are unable to return to work within a reasonable timeframe. You will receive a letter confirming your dismissal and the details of your right to appeal.

Before making a decision to end your employment we will consider;

- If we are able to accommodate reasonable adjustments to your role to allow you to return to work sooner, and
- Suitable alternative roles that are available

We will not usually end your employment unless the full long term absence procedure has been followed. However, we reserve the right to enter this procedure at stage 3 if medical evidence suggests that there is no likelihood of you being able to return to work in the foreseeable future.

Monitoring and reviewing this policy

The sickness absence policy does not form part of your contract of employment and it may be amended from time to time at our discretion.

Responsibility for this policy: Employee relations team

You can get advice on any part of this policy from **askHR 0845 694 6635**.