Sickness absence policy

Should you be unable to attend work due to illness or injury, you must comply with the following Company sickness absence policy:

1. On the first morning of your sickness absence, you must personally contact the Company by telephone and speak to your line manager at the earliest possible opportunity and as close to your normal start time as possible. In any event, your contact must be no later than two hours after your normal start time. If you are unable to speak to your line manager personally, you should speak to *(names)*. You should give details of the nature of your illness. If the illness is of a minor nature, you should indicate when you believe you will be fit to return to work. You must inform your line manager as soon as possible of any change in the date of your anticipated return to work. Contacting your line manager by text message, e-mail or online or mobile phone instant messaging is not acceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances. It is also unacceptable for a third party to contact the Company on your behalf to report your sickness absence, other than in exceptional circumstances (for example, where you have been unexpectedly admitted to hospital and you are not in a position to make the telephone call yourself). If you have been diagnosed as having contracted an infectious or contagious disease, such as measles or chicken pox, or a pandemic virus, you must inform your line manager as soon as possible after your diagnosis.
2. For an absence of seven consecutive calendar days or less, you are required to telephone your line manager on a daily basis in accordance with the reporting procedure set out above. However, the Company may relax this requirement in exceptional circumstances, for example, in the case of a pandemic virus affecting a large percentage of the Company’s employees. You will be advised about any modified sickness absence reporting requirements at the appropriate time. You must also complete a self-certification of sickness absence form immediately on your return to work. Self-certification forms are available from *(name).* On completion, the form should be forwarded to *(name).* You are reminded that it is a serious disciplinary offence to knowingly provide false information on a self-certification form.
3. Should your sickness absence be for a period in excess of seven calendar days, you are required as an absolute minimum to contact your line manager on a weekly basis in order to provide an update on your illness or injury. A doctor’s certificate (called a statement of fitness for work or ‘fit note’) must also be obtained. A new statement of fitness for work must be submitted to cover each continual week of sickness absence. The statement of fitness for work must be forwarded to *(name)* as quickly as possible and, in any event, no later than the end of the calendar week in respect of which the statement applies. Each subsequent statement of fitness for work must be forwarded in the same manner.
4. You must always provide certificates (either self-certification forms or statements of fitness for work) to cover the entire period of your sickness absence (subject to paragraph 7 below on return to work plans under the Fit for Work scheme).
5. The Company reserves the right to request a statement of fitness for work for any period of sickness absence even though this may be less than eight calendar days. If you incur costs in relation to obtaining a statement of fitness for work, the Company will reimburse those costs upon the production of a receipt.
6. Where a statement of fitness for work indicates that you may be fit for work and the doctor has suggested ways of helping you get back to work, such as a phased return to work, altered hours, amended duties or workplace adaptations, your line manager will discuss the advice on the statement of fitness for work with you and will consider any functional comments made by the doctor, any of the return to work tick boxes and any other action that could help you return to work despite your illness. The various options will be discussed with you and if a return to work is possible, your line manager will agree with you a return to work date, any temporary adaptations or adjustments that are to be made and for how long and will set a date for review. If you disagree with the Company’s proposals to support you to return to work, you will be asked to confirm why you believe you cannot return to work despite your doctor’s suggestions and the Company reserves the right to obtain further medical evidence as necessary, such as a medical report. If the Company is not able to make any adaptations or adjustments to help you return to work, your line manager will explain the reasons for this to you and will set a date for review. You may then use the statement of fitness for work as if the doctor had advised ‘not fit for work’.
7. You may also be referred by your doctor to the Fit for Work service, which is a referral service providing an independent occupational health assessment and a return to work plan for employees who have been off sick from work, or who are likely to be off sick from work, for four weeks or more. If you are referred, you will then be contacted by an occupational health professional who will become your case manager to the end of the process. You will receive an assessment which will seek to identify all potential obstacles preventing you from returning to work and involve agreeing a plan designed to address each obstacle to enable a safe and sustained return to work. The resulting return to work plan will reflect the assessment and will, with your consent, also be sent to the Company and to your doctor and it will provide advice and recommendations on steps that the Company may take to get you back to work. In this case, the discussion procedure as set out at paragraph 6 above will then apply. You will be discharged from Fit for Work when you have returned to work (including a phased return to work), or at the point when Fit for Work can no longer provide further assistance or if a return to work has not been possible after three months. The Company may also make a Fit for Work referral if your doctor has not already done so, provided that you have been absent from work due to illness for four weeks or more, you have a reasonable likelihood of making at least a phased return to work, you have not previously been referred for a Fit for Work assessment within the last 12 months and have not received a return to work plan as a result and you give your consent to being referred. Please note that a return to work plan will remove the need for you to provide a statement of fitness for work as evidence of incapacity, unless you still remain off work when you are discharged from Fit for Work.
8. For all periods of sickness absence, your line manager may require you to attend a ‘return to work’ interview on your return to work to discuss the reason for your absence and whether it was work-related. In particular, return to work interviews may be conducted by line managers each time an employee returns to work following a period of short-term sickness absence of up to one working week. At the interview, you will be advised that your absence record is monitored and recorded in order for the Company to manage performance, to identify any problem areas and to offer support where appropriate, you will be asked to explain the reasons for your absence and whether you consulted a doctor or attended hospital and you will be requested to complete a self-certification form for the period of your absence. In the case of frequent or repeated absences, your line manager will discuss whether there are any underlying reasons for the regular absences (and, in particular, whether they are in any way work-related) and will explore with you whether there is any apparent pattern of absence. You may also be set reasonable targets and time limits for improvement in your attendance and warned that a failure to improve may result in disciplinary action.
9. For long-term sickness absence, your line manager may request to visit you at home but you are under no obligation to agree to this type of request.
10. For long-term sickness absence or frequent periods of sickness absence, the Company may request a medical report from your GP or consultant or alternatively request that you visit a doctor selected by the Company to undergo a medical examination and you also agree to authorise the medical practitioner responsible for the medical examination to prepare a medical report detailing the results of the examination. The cost of any such examination will be met by the Company and you are required to co-operate in the disclosure of all results and reports to the Company. The Company will only request such an examination where reasonable to do so. This provision applies whether or not you have been referred under the Fit for Work service.
11. The Company reserves the right to withhold sick pay in circumstances where the certification procedure described above has not been followed or it has reason to doubt the validity of your sickness absence claim and may request you to undertake a medical examination by a doctor selected by it.
12. It is Company policy that any employee in receipt of sick pay (including SSP) is prohibited from undertaking any form of paid alternative employment or self-employment. Depending on the circumstances of the particular case, any breach of this rule may be regarded as gross misconduct under the Company’s disciplinary procedure and may result in your summary dismissal.
13. On being fit to return to work, you must contact your line manager and let them know as far in advance as possible of the proposed date of your return.
14. If you have been suffering from an infectious or contagious disease, or a pandemic virus, you must not report for work until you are medically fit to do so. This is to prevent spread of the disease in the workplace.
15. Persistent short-term sickness absence is, in the absence of any underlying medical condition or other reasonable excuse, a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with in accordance with the Company’s disciplinary procedure. If it is subsequently discovered that your sickness absence was not genuine, this will also be treated as a disciplinary matter.