

Employee absence has a very visible impact on the company's competitiveness. This company wants to be the best. For the company to provide the highest possible service to its customers it requires careful planning and the best use of all our resources to meet deadlines. The contribution of all our employees is seen as a key factor in reaching this goal. We can all contribute by keeping absenteeism to a minimum and not taking unjustified and unauthorised time off. Taking time off without proper cause affects colleagues, the business, and the individual. It is stressed that the objective of this procedure is to bring about improvement, not to have dismissal as an objective but where an individual will not or cannot improve their attendance record then the Company must act upon this. The aim is to reduce the level of absenteeism of those employees who have above average long or short absences. It is not the intention to penalise employees with a previous excellent attendance record who may infrequently be absent from work due to sickness or injury. If for example, an employee was to come under the procedure for absence on two separate occasions in a six-week period, if that employee had a previously clear record there may be no action taken. However, if that employee had a poor attendance record action may be taken.

The Company acknowledges that absence due to sickness may sometimes be necessary and where justified will be treated sympathetically. Obviously, it is of no benefit to anyone to have genuinely sick employees struggling into work and again this is not the aim of the policy. This procedure seeks to ensure that an employee's absence is monitored and causes alleviated wherever possible.

There are two central features to the company's procedure: strict adherence to absence reporting procedure and the return-to-work interview with the supervisor/manager. The reporting procedure enables the company to monitor absences and identify any problems as well as ensuring the proper functioning of the department and enabling the employee to be correctly paid. The back to work interview enables the company to ensure the employee is fit for work, offer any assistance that might be appropriate and to help employees deal with any outstanding problems they may have.

Reporting procedure.

The purpose of requiring notification of absence is to enable the Company to make the necessary arrangements for job cover. If an employee is absent from work, it is their responsibility to ensure their immediate supervisor/manager is notified before the start of their shift on the first day of absence. Contact details for supervisors and managers will be published on noticeboards and it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure they have the relevant contact details.

When direct contact is made with the supervisor or manager employees are required to give the reason for their absence and if possible, an expected return date. If the supervisor/manager is unavailable, please leave a message and a contact number as our records may not be up-to date. By leaving a contact telephone number it allows your supervisor/manager to return your call if necessary. When notification is made the Company may also be able to offer an alternative job for a short period of time to assist the employee. However, this will be at the discretion of the departmental manager after considering any potential risks.

When absence notification is given, it would be advisable for the employee to make a note of who took the message. When an employee is unable to return to work on the expected date the employee must report in on that date in accordance with the above reporting procedure.

Whenever we need to establish job cover and we have not been informed of an employee's return date we shall need to contact them. Such instances may be where essential job cover needs to be organised on a shift system. Initially the Company will make contact by telephone but if we are unable

to contact or leave an answerphone message the HR Manager may have to visit their home address. When a home visit is to be undertaken the Union Convenor or his deputy will be informed prior to the visit.

Employees are reminded that they are required to notify the Company of any change of address or telephone number in case of emergency. It is vital we have the correct information not only for contacting a relative but also for the Emergency Services should they be involved.

It is not acceptable to get a message to the company through a relative, friend or colleague unless the employee is totally incapacitated. Any days of absence will not be authorised until the employee notifies the company in the correct manner and those days will not count towards any Company sick pay or payment of Statutory Sick Pay.

Checking an employee is safe.

We have a duty of care towards all employees. When an employee does not attend work, we may take steps to check where they are and if they're safe. This may include:

- Contacting the employee using their personal contact details
- Getting in touch with the employee's emergency contact

Overtime Working

Where employees have committed to working overtime shifts, the normal rules apply in relation to reporting any absence or inability to attend.

Medical Certificates

Where an employee's absence is for less than 7 calendar days the employee will only be required to fill in a company self-certification form upon their return at their back to work interview. If an employee's illness continues beyond 7 calendar days, they must provide a fit note from a registered healthcare professional. Healthcare professionals can provide fit notes by e-mail or as a printed copy. The fit note should be sent in any available format to the HR Manager as soon as possible.

Returning to work before the fit note runs out.

Employees can return to work before their fit note has run out if they want to. However, they may be asked to attend a medical examination with the Company Occupational Health specialist to make sure they're not putting their health at risk by returning early.

If a fit note says 'might be fit for work'

A healthcare professional could say someone might be fit for work. They should explain in the fit note what they think the employee is able to do. They might say the employee is fit for work in general, but not for a specific task or they may suggest how we as an employer can support a return to work. For example, an employee with a back injury might be able to do light tasks, but not heavy lifting or a phased return to work may be recommended. We will consider any fit note recommendations but if it is not possible to do what is recommended, the employee will become not fit for work.

Return to Work Interview

On the employee's return to work they must report to their supervisor or manager. The supervisor/manager will arrange to see the employee at the earliest opportunity to conduct a 'Return to Work Interview'.

At the interview the supervisor/manager will discuss with them the reasons for their absence and whether there is anything the Company can do to support them. If the employee has any underlying problems that are causing them to take time off, this is an opportunity to discuss them. If the employee does not feel they can do this with their supervisor/manager, they can request to see the HR Manager.

When a return-to-work interview is conducted any information given by the employee will only be used for the maintenance of sick pay and absence records. The information given is confidential and not to be released to unauthorised personnel without an employee's consent.

The employee will be required to fill in a Company Self Certification Form with the specific reason for their absence. Comments such as 'I was ill' are not acceptable. If the absence falls within one of the trigger criteria detailed below or long-term absence, further action may be necessary.

Absence monitoring

An employee's supervisor/manager together with the HR Manager will regularly review their attendance record.

Trigger levels will identify those employees with attendance records that give cause for concern. The 'trigger levels' are as follows: -

- Two or more separate periods of unauthorised absence in a rolling six-week period.
- Four or more separate absences in a rolling twelve-month period.
- Six or more working days absence in a rolling four-month period.
- An unacceptable pattern of absence, for example regular Monday/Friday absence, additional days before or after a holiday or other regular patterns of absence.
- Any combination of the above.

Where any of the trigger points are activated, the employee's supervisor/manager will initiate an investigation. Trigger levels are not an entitlement, and an employee may be called to account for any level of absence. In the event of an employee being absent immediately before or after an annual leave or bank holiday, for a second instance within a two-year period, they will be required to substantiate the reason for their absence. Where applicable this will be in the form of the original or copies of a holiday or flight bookings with associated dates.

The supervisor/manager's first responsibility is to try and establish any mitigating circumstances such as:

- a serious medical condition
- an injury or illness resulting in hospitalisation.
- an absence following a serious work-related accident.
- a pregnancy related illness
- direct family bereavement
- absence covered by Government legislation.

Where an employee has a previous excellent record of attendance this will be considered.

If no such conditions prevail, disciplinary action will be warranted and this action will follow our agreed Disciplinary Procedure guidelines. i.e.

- Confirmation of Verbal Warning with 3 month linking period.
- First Written Warning with 6 month linking period.
- Final Written Warning with 12 month linking period.
- Dismissal.

When an employee has received a disciplinary letter relating to one of the trigger points, if from the date of the warning they again reach or exceed any of the trigger points within the linking period they may be subject to the next level of disciplinary action.

Long-term sickness absence or where frequent short-term absence is due to underlying illness.

When an employee has been absent for four weeks this is considered a long-term absence. Contact with an employee during the early stages of absence and on a regular basis is very important in the case of long-term absence and can help the prospects of rehabilitation and improve the chances of a speedier return to work.

In the case of long-term absence, it may be appropriate for the HR Manager to make home visits with notification being made beforehand to the Union Convenor or his deputy.

This maintenance of contact is purely to check how the individual is progressing and to establish the next step for recovery and should not be confused with and will be kept separate from a consultation meeting about an employee's continued employment.

If an employee has a long-term absence or frequent short-term absences due to an underlying illness, they may be requested to attend a medical investigation with the Company Occupational Health specialist, or their consent may be required to contact their GP for a report. The purpose of this is to gain a better understanding of their present medical condition.

Where possible, the Company will assess whether there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made, or alternative work offered to help the employee return to work. This step will only be undertaken in consultation with the Company Occupational Health specialist. If the absenteeism is protracted the employee may be required to attend a medical with the Company Occupational health specialist at regular intervals to give the employee advice and monitor their progress.

When an employee's absence (for whatever reason) extends beyond the self-certification period they will be required to comply with the following procedures –

- Ensure that, after the self-certification period, they provide a doctor's/hospital certificate to cover the total period of their absence.
- Keep the Company notified of any changing circumstances regarding their absence.
- At the request of the Company, attend interviews to update their manager of their progress and to be advised if their employment is at risk.

- When required, and under the Access to Medical Reports Act, give their consent to apply for a medical report from their GP/specialist regarding their current state of health and to establish whether they are capable of conducting any type of employment that the Company may be able to offer.
- When required, attend a medical examination with the Company Occupational Health specialist to review any available medical advice and provide a medical opinion regarding their medical condition and establish whether or not they are capable of conducting any type of employment that the Company may be able to offer.

*Please also see the Company Capability Policy.

The Company will not normally consider terminating the employment of an employee who is absent from work due to genuine sickness or injury during the first one month of absence. Thereafter the position will be reviewed every month and ultimately it may become necessary from a business perspective to consider termination of employment. In these circumstances, the company will:

- Review the employee's absence record to assess whether it is sufficient to justify dismissal.
- Consult the employee.
- Obtain up-to-date medical advice.
- Advise the employee in writing as soon as it is established that termination of employment has become a possibility.
- Meet with the employee to discuss the options and consider the employee's views on continuing employment.
- Review if there are any other jobs that the employee could do prior to taking any decision on whether to dismiss.
- Allow a right of appeal against any decision to dismiss the employee on grounds of long-term ill health; arrange a further meeting with the employee to determine any appeal.
- Following this meeting, inform the employee of its final decision.
- Act reasonably towards the employee at all times.

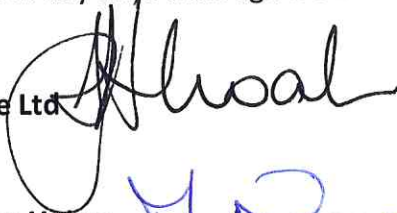
If the length of absence reaches 28 weeks a decision will be made as to whether the employee's return is imminent. If, after taking medical evidence into consideration, there is little possibility of returning to work these individuals would be released from the Company on ill health grounds. Only as a last resort will an employee's contract be terminated and then only after a thorough investigation and discussion within our disciplinary procedure. Should an employee refuse to co-operate in providing medical information any decision regarding termination of employment will be based on the information available to the Company.

Attendance Management Policy

Status of this procedure

This procedure does not give contractual rights to individual employees. The company reserves the right to alter any of its terms at any time although we will notify you in writing of any changes.

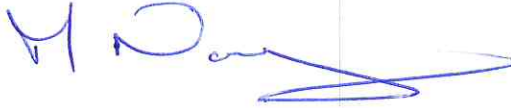
Signed on behalf of Wm. Lee Ltd



DATE:

3 JUN 2024

Signed on behalf of Unite the Union



DATE:

4-6-24

ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL NOTES RELATED TO ABSENTEEISM AGREEMENT

The scheme's aim is to reduce the level of absenteeism of those employees who have above average absences, long or short within a 12-month period. It is not the intention to penalise employees with a previous excellent attendance record who may infrequently be absent from work due to sickness or injury. For example, it is very unlikely that an employee who has a period of say 10 days off sick and previously had an excellent attendance record will be penalised.

The Company must maintain its right to be able to contact employees at home. Whenever we need to establish job cover and we have not been informed of an employee's return date, we shall need to contact them. Initially contact will be made phone but if we are unable to contact or leave an answerphone message, we may have to visit their home address. It is important that employees ensure we have up to date contact details to alleviate the need for a home visit. It is essential in relation to long term absences that contact is maintained to aid recovery and improve prospects of a speedier return to work. Maintaining contact is part of the rehabilitation process and is when assistance and alternatives can be explored. Employees may not be aware that although they are unable to perform their own duties there may be alternatives for a period. Assistance can also be sought through consultations with the Company doctor.

Only in the unlikely event of an employee being absent prior to a holiday for the second time in two years will those days be unauthorised. It is essential that abuse of taking days of to extend a holiday are deterred. Ideally a doctor's note should be provided but where a doctor's appointment cannot be made due to short notice alternative proof will have to be provided. This will be in the form of the original or copies of a holiday or flight bookings with associated dates.

When a return-to-work interview is conducted any information given by an employee must remain only for the maintenance of sick pay and absenteeism records. The information is confidential and not to be released to unauthorised personnel without the employee's consent.

The Company's objective regarding employees with long term absence is to try and help them return to work. Only as a last resort will an employee's contract be terminated due to ill health if after seeking medical advice it is unlikely there will be a return to work in the near future. In most cases it is normal practice that the employee agrees with this decision and has often requested the outcome.

