

Maximising Attendance Procedure



Dalmuir Park Housing Association can provide this document on request, in different languages and formats, including Braille and audio formats.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with the Maximising Attendance policy, this procedure aims to outline the process by which a sickness absence should be reported, actioned and managed at Dalmuir Park (DPHA). The procedure is also in place to ensure fairness and consistency is applied to all absence cases.
- 1.2 Accompanying both the policy and this procedure is a return-to-work form and process flowchart, both of which can be found in the appendices of this document.

2.0 ABSENCE REPORTING

- 2.1 Should you be too unwell to attend work, we ask that you inform your line manager via a telephone call as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances beyond your control, we do not accept texts, emails, messages on social media or messages from another person. It is important that you call yourself to inform us of the following:
 - why you are absent and how long you expect to be off work
 - your phone number so your manager can keep in touch with you
 - details of any urgent work or meetings that need to be picked up in your absence
- 2.2 If your manager is unavailable to take your call, you may contact their line manager to report your absence. Similarly, if you are feeling unwell whilst at work and need to leave, you are required to let your manager, or their line manager know at the nearest opportunity. If you do not make contact with your manager during the first day of absence, they will attempt to call you to check on your wellbeing.
- 2.3 It is important that you follow the absence reporting procedure for every absence. Failure to follow the procedure, including the level of contact required and the submission of fit notes within a reasonable time frame, may be viewed as an unauthorised absence from work. We hope that all employees will endeavour to follow the procedure but must advise that failure to follow may result in pay being withheld or disciplinary action being taken.
- 2.4 ***Keeping in Touch***

Our culture of open communication at DPHA provides our people with a platform for transparency. It is therefore crucial to stay in regular contact with your line manager throughout any period of sickness absence. The purpose of this is to discuss your health and wellbeing, any progress and to enable us as a business to plan ahead.
- 2.5 During the initial telephone call on your first day of absence, your line manager will confirm with you how often you are required to make contact with them during your

absence. The level of contact will depend on the type of illness and how long it is expected to last. For periods of long-term sickness, it is recommended that you call your manager weekly to provide an update on your health and wellbeing. We do however appreciate that depending on the nature of the absence, this may not be achievable on a consistent basis.

2.6 In general, we ask that you inform your line manager of any new updates such as a change in your symptoms, GP advice or medication. Similarly, you should look to notify your manager of your intentions prior to a fit note or medical certificate expiring, to enable us to prepare for an extended period of absence or potential return to work.

2.7 ***Sickness Certification***

You can self-certify for the first seven calendar days of a sickness absence. All absences lasting longer than this requires you to submit medical evidence to cover from the eighth day onwards. This will normally be in the form of a doctor's fit note, also known as a 'statement of fitness for work'.

2.8 Once received from your GP or medical professional, you should submit either the original fit note or a scanned copy or photograph to your line manager at the nearest opportunity. Should you be issued with any further fit notes in the same absence period, you are required to submit these to your manager prior to the expiry of the previous one.

2.9 Please note that if you submit a scanned copy or photograph, there may be instances where you are asked to send the original copy during your period of absence. You should also retain the original copy in case you require this for any future statutory sick pay claims.

3.0 **RETURN TO WORK**

3.1 Returning to work, especially after a lengthy period of sickness absence, can sometimes be difficult for a variety of reasons. That is why your manager will seek to hold a return-to-work (RTW) meeting with you on your first day back. The purpose of this meeting is to find out how you are feeling, whether any support or adjustments are required and to update you on anything important you may have missed whilst absent.

3.2 A RTW meeting will be held after every period of absence and is intended as a support mechanism whilst identifying potential issues relating to attendance and how these can be addressed. It involves two-way discussion and is in place to tackle any concerns you might have regarding your return.

3.3 The Return-to-Work form (Appendix A) will be completed by your line manager during the meeting, providing a summary of the reasons for your absence. Both you and your manager will sign this document.

3.4 Your line manager will also review your absence history with you at the meeting and inform you if you have reached an absence trigger, in line with Section 5.1 of this procedure. 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 required.

3.5 ***Phased Return***

As part of our commitment to supporting you back into work following a period of absence, it may be appropriate for us to consider a phased return to work. This may be discussed with you during the period of 'keeping in touch'. Any agreement to return on a phased basis requires sign off from your GP or medical professional who should provide you with a fit note stating that you are medically fit to return in a phased capacity.

3.6 Should you commence a phased return to work, you will no longer be considered sick for the purposes of absence management. However, you will continue to receive Association Sick Pay (ASP) in line with your entitlement. In other words, you will be paid for the hours you work and have any remaining contractual hours processed as sickness, which will be covered by your sick pay entitlement. If your sick pay has exhausted, you will only be paid for the hours in which you work and receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for the remaining contractual hours however, we will seek to utilise your annual leave entitlement to minimise this possibility.

3.7 All phased returns are to be progressive with respect to working days and hours. The concept of a phased return is that you build up your days and/or hours over a period of time before assuming your contractual hours as normal. As a result, all phased returns should last no more than 4 weeks.

3.8 ***Adjustments***

If any adjustments have been discussed and agreed prior to your return, these should be captured within the Return-to-Work documentation. When considering any potential adjustments line managers should give consideration to:

- The reason for the adjustment
- The duration of the adjustment
- The operational impact of the adjustment
- The potential cost of the adjustment
- Any medical or Occupational Health guidance

3.9 ***Occupational Health***

One way of supporting you during a period of sickness absence is to engage with our Occupational Health provider and subsequently organise a medical assessment. This is often utilised during periods of long-term absence or where there has been frequent, short-term absences for the same reason. For us, it is also utilised in order to support your ongoing attendance at work.

3.10 The purpose of an Occupational Health appointment is to obtain advice on your condition, any adjustments that may help you return to work and to help prevent future occurrences of absence. Occupational Health may seek input from your own medical practitioners in order to provide the Association with more detailed information.

3.11 We anticipate that you are willing to engage with any Occupational Health referrals but should you refuse to participate, please note that we can only support you and make decisions based on the other information we have available.

4.0 ASSOCIATION SICK PAY

4.1 When you are absent from work due to sickness you may be eligible to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Association Sick Pay (ASP), providing you meet the relevant criteria. The allowance is in accordance with length of service, as follows:

| Continuous Service at Commencement of Absence: | Full Allowance Up To: | Half Allowance Up To: |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Up to 1 year | 5 weeks | 5 weeks |
| Over 1 year and under 2 years | 9 weeks | 9 weeks |
| Over 2 years and under 3 years | 18 weeks | 18 weeks |
| Over 3 years and under 5 years | 22 weeks | 22 weeks |
| Over 5 years | 26 weeks | 26 weeks |

4.2 The calculation of Association Sick Pay is based on a maximum rolling 12-month period. Any absences within the preceding 12-month period will be totalled and offset against the full pay entitlement, followed by half pay. Employees will be notified in writing by a member of the Payroll department when they are nearing the point of having exhausted their full and half ASP entitlement.

4.3 Where ASP has been fully exhausted, you must work for a period of 3 months unbroken by sickness absence. If you are absent in this time, you will be paid SSP only and would require a further 3 months free from absence before the ASP is reinstated. Your ASP will then be reinstated on a staged basis, at 1/12th per month.

4.4 The Association also reserves the right to withhold or suspend Association Sick Pay under its contractual sick pay scheme at its discretion. Circumstances in which contractual sick pay may be withheld include but are not limited to:

- You fail to comply with the organisation's sickness absence notification and evidence requirements;
- You refuse to attend a medical examination at the reasonable request of the organisation;
- You make or produce any misleading or untrue statement or document concerning your fitness to work;
- You have given or received notice to terminate your employment

You will normally be entitled to receive SSP when contractual sick pay is withheld or suspended. You will be given written notice if your ASP is being withheld or suspended.

5.0 SHORT-TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 5.1 Short-term sickness can be defined in different ways with regards to the duration of each absence. At DPHA, we consider short-term absence to be a period of sickness lasting up to four weeks.
- 5.2 Without question, we consider most absences in the workplace to be genuine and unavoidable. However, like many other organisations, it is only right that we have a process in place to fairly manage employee sickness absence.
- 5.3 Our Sickness Absence Capability Procedure, as set out in the sections below, is utilised to manage such levels. It allows us to clarify attendance expectations, ensure you are being fully supported to carry out your role and to put reasonable adjustments in place to help you be at work.
- 5.4 Under the Procedure, you may be required to attend Capability Meetings to explain high levels of short-term absence however, you will be provided with every opportunity to improve in line with the procedure.

5.5 *Triggers*

Using absence triggers is an important way of managing attendance fairly and consistently across the Association. We have a set of absence triggers to help us identify short-term and persistent attendance records that give us cause for concern. These are:

| Stage | Trigger |
|-------|--|
| 1 | 3 absences in any 6-month period |
| 2 | A further period of absence in the 6 months after Written Warning issued |
| 3 | A further period of absence in the 6 months after Final Written Warning issued |

- 5.6 It should be noted that the triggers are not in place to question the reasons for absence but rather to manage the volume or frequency of sickness. The framework enables us as an organisation to manage absence fairly and consistently across the business.
- 5.7 The above stages will also be utilised where it is identified that there is a pattern of absences. This may include patterns such as sickness on a particular day, pre or post annual leave, public and school holidays.
- 5.8 Triggers will be adjusted for pregnancy and disability related absence in discussion with your line manager.

5.9 **Formal Capability Meeting**

Should you have 2 absences within a 6-month period, your line manager will advise you at your return-to-work meeting that a further period of sickness in the same period will trigger a Sickness Absence Capability Meeting. If this trigger is reached, the Stages as outlined in Section 5.1 above, will be invoked as follows:

| Stage | Potential Outcome | Length of Warning |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Written Warning | 6 Months |
| 2 | Final Written Warning | 12 Months |
| 3 | Dismissal | - |

5.10 Stage 1

When you return from your 3rd sickness absence in 6 months, your line manager will invite you to attend a Stage 1 Capability Meeting. At this meeting, you will have the opportunity to discuss your reasons for absence and to provide any additional information regarding your absence levels. Based on the information you have provided, you may be issued with a First Written Warning, which would remain on your employee file for 6 months.

5.11 Stage 2

If you have been issued with a First Written Warning and you then have a further sickness absence in the following 6 months, you will again be invited to discuss your current absence levels. This meeting will be pitched as a Stage 2 Capability Meeting and depending on the information provided, including any relevant medical reports, you may be issued with a Final Written Warning. This would remain on your employee file for 12 months.

5.12 Stage 3

If there has been no improvement in your sickness absence levels in the 12 months following the Final Written Warning, a further meeting will be pitched as a Stage 3 Capability Meeting. You will again have the opportunity to justify the reasons for your absence and relevant medical reports may be utilised prior to a decision being made. An outcome of this meeting may result in the termination of your employment with the Association if no alternative options are available.

Please note that live warnings may be extended at any Stage of the triggers listed above.

5.13 **Right to be Accompanied**

As each Capability Meeting is considered part of a formal process, you have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to all meetings held under the Sickness Absence Capability Procedure.

5.14 You will be given at least 5 working days' written notice to attend any meeting and if your companion is unable to attend within this timescale, you should notify your manager of this, and another date will be made within the following 5 working day period.

5.15 ***Appeal***

You can appeal against the outcome of any Stage by submitting the grounds of your appeal in writing, to your line manager, within 5 working days of receiving the outcome. Appeals will be heard by a manager who has not previously been involved in the case and, where possible, will be more senior to your line manager. You will be notified of the appeal meeting in writing and will have the right to be accompanied as outlined above. The decision reached within the appeal meeting will be considered final.

6.0 LONG-TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

6.1 At DPHA, we consider long-term absence to be a period of sickness lasting four weeks or more. When absent for this length of time, your line manager will make arrangements to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the reasons for your absence, how the Association can support you and explore other avenues for facilitating a potential return to work. Such meetings will be scheduled regularly throughout your long-term absence.

6.2 During your period of sickness, you can expect the Association to arrange Occupational Health appointments and to seek other medical advice as outlined in Section 3.3. It is the employee's duty however, to maintain reasonable contact and submit fit notes in a timely manner to cover the whole duration of the absence.

6.3 There are a number of options we may consider to facilitate your return to work, including phased returns, flexible working arrangements and utilising other policies such as hybrid working. However, if it is identified that you are unlikely to return to work within a reasonable timeframe, the Sickness Absence Capability Procedure will be invoked, as set out in Section 5.2.

6.4 Any meeting at this point in your absence will be pitched as a Stage 3 Capability Meeting. The outcome of this meeting may result in your employment being terminated on the grounds of capability.

7.0 ABSENCE AND ANNUAL LEAVE

7.1 There may be occurrences where you are too unwell to work but are due to be on annual leave. If you fall unwell prior to going on leave and wish to cancel your upcoming holiday, you can speak to your line manager regarding the cancellation at short notice.

7.2 If you are unwell during a period of annual leave, this can instead be recorded as sick leave providing you submit a fit note to cover the required period. Please note that this also applies to annual leave periods of 7 days or less.

7.3 You will continue to accrue annual leave whilst off sick from work. However, if you are unable to take your full annual leave allowance due to sickness absence, you will be permitted to carry forward the statutory minimum of 28 days, minus any annual leave already taken, into the next holiday year. This will be pro-rata for part time employees and any additional days will be lost.

8.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Return-to-Work Form

Appendix B – Maximising Attendance Process Flowchart

Appendix A – Return-to-Work Form

This form is to be completed following a period of sickness absence. It should be completed by the line manager during the Return-to-Work meeting, which should be held on the employee's day of return where possible. Following the meeting, the form should be saved in the employee's HR file.

| EMPLOYEE DETAILS | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Name: | Job Title: |
| Department/Team: | Line Manager: |

| ABSENCE DETAILS | |
|---|--|
| First date of absence: | Last date of absence: |
| Working days absent: | Correct reporting procedure followed: |
| Absence reason: <i>Please detail the reason for absence including symptoms experienced.</i> | |

| SUPPORT & ADJUSTMENTS | |
|---|--------|
| Is the employee on a phased return to work? <i>(If yes, please give detail)</i> | Yes/No |
| Is the employee taking any new medication following the absence? <i>(If yes, please give detail)</i> | Yes/No |
| Was this absence related to an underlying condition? <i>(If yes, please give detail)</i> | Yes/No |
| Did the employee complete a Stress Risk Assessment or were they referred to Occupational Health prior to returning? <i>(If yes, please give detail)</i> | Yes/No |
| Does the employee require any other adjustments or support? <i>(If yes, please give detail)</i> | Yes/No |

ABSENCE HISTORY

| | |
|---|---|
| No. of absences in past 6 months: | No. of absences in past 12 months: |
| Triggers reached: | Patterns identified: |
| <p>Action:</p> <p><i>Please detail whether there is to be no action or a Sickness Absence Capability Meeting is to be arranged in line with the procedure.</i></p> | |

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Employee Signature: | Date: |
| Manager Signature: | Date: |

