



## Absence & Sickness Management Policy

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### **Aim of this policy**

1. This policy is designed to assist Central Employment in effectively managing sickness-related and other staff absence. Central Employment recognises the importance of ensuring that employees are supported through any periods of absence and their subsequent return to work. Through an effective Sickness and Absence Policy, Central Employment will be better positioned to identify any potentially unsafe work practices, any issues affecting employee morale and any other underlying problems employees may be facing.

### **Notification of sickness**

- 2.1 If an employee is unable to come to work for any reason, they must inform the Company by contacting the HR Manager by 8.30am on the first day of absence.
- 2.2 Employees should speak to the office personally i.e. calls on the employee's behalf from a friend/partner/parent and texting or emailing the manager will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.3 The employee should indicate the reason for their absence, its likely duration and when the illness started.
- 2.4 In the event that the employee's absence continues for a number of days or weeks, they must maintain regular contact with Central Employment to keep the Company informed of the reasons for their ongoing absence and the date when they expect to be able to return to work. In such cases the employee should specify how Central Employment can contact them if necessary, ideally leaving a landline number on which they can be contacted.

### **Certification of sickness**

- 3.1 All periods of absence through sickness must be certified by the **Company's Self-Certification of Absence & Return to Work Discussion/Interview Form**. The completed form should indicate actual days of sickness, even if they include days when the employee would not normally have worked (e.g. weekends and public holidays).

- 3.1.1 For sickness absences of up to 7 calendar days, the return-to-work discussion/interview form will be completed by the manager and employee upon their return to work.
- 3.1.2 For sickness absence of more than 7 calendar days, the employee must also provide a medical certificate also referred to as a 'fit note'. This will provide us with more information about your condition and let us know whether your GP or medical provider considers that you are not 'fit for work', or 'may be fit for work taking account of the following advice'. Subsequent medical certificates must be produced as necessary to cover the total duration of the period of absence. As a minimum, employees should contact their manager on a weekly basis to provide an update on the injury or illness.

## **COVID-19**

Self-isolating (staying at home) is not a legal requirement if someone has covid-19 (coronavirus) symptoms or has tested positive. HSE no longer expects businesses to consider COVID-19 in their risk assessment or to have specific measures in place.

As we learn to live safely with COVID-19, there are actions we can all take to help reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 and passing it on to others. These actions will also help to reduce the spread of other respiratory infections. COVID-19 and other respiratory infections such as flu can spread easily and cause serious illness in some people.

Vaccinations are very effective at preventing serious illness from COVID-19, however even if you are vaccinated there is a chance you might catch COVID-19 or another respiratory infection and pass it on to other people.

If you are too unwell to work, then you should follow Central Employment's usual approach to sickness absence. If an employee test's positive for COVID-19 but otherwise feels ok they should work from home when possible. When home working is not possible, they should attend the office & maintain social distancing when possible. If an employee is unable to attend work, they must follow the above notification of sickness procedure.

## **Long-term and persistent absence**

- 4.1 Central Employment will treat as long-term absence any period of extensive absence due to serious or significant illness over a prolonged period of more than 4 weeks. Persistent absence may consist of a series of unconnected short-term illnesses of not more than 3 occasional days off in any one year. Where Central Employment is of the opinion that a period of absence is long-term, it will inform the employee of such and:
  - 4.1.1 require that the employee keep in regular contact with Central Employment, at such intervals as agreed between Central Employment and the employee; and
  - 4.1.2 ensure that the employee is kept informed as to any possible threat to their employment.
- 4.2 Central Employment will treat as persistent absence a series of unconnected short-term illnesses.

4.3 It may be necessary in incidences of long-term or persistent absence to treat the matter as an issue of capability or conduct. In such circumstances Central Employment will:

- 4.3.1 investigate the absence through "Return to Work Interviews" and the obtaining of medical reports;
- 4.3.2 set time limits on the assessment of the employee and keep him or her informed of such;
- 4.3.5 if Central Employment deem necessary will arrange private medical assessment for employee;
- 4.3.3 consider adjustments to the job in order to facilitate a return to work or to allow the employee to do their job more easily, for example the implementation of flexible working arrangements;
- 4.3.4 consider whether the illness amounts to a disability. Where it is found to do so the employee shall fall under the scope of the Company's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and the Company shall make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary; and
- 4.3.5 keep the employee informed in all the circumstance of any threat to their employment.

4.4 Where Central Employment requires medical reports relating to an absence it will either obtain a report from the employee's doctor, subject to employee consent.

In either case the employee may refuse to attend or refuse to consent to the release of a medical report, or request that corrections are made. Employees are reminded however that any decision regarding their future which could result in dismissal will be taken on the basis of the information available to the Company.

4.5 Central Employment will hold all medical reports and related information obtained under Clause 4.5 as private and confidential.

4.6 Central Employment stresses that dismissal will only ever be taken as a last resort. Where however the absence is found to be a matter of misconduct, the employee will be subject to Central Employment's Disciplinary Procedure.

#### **Sickness which occurs whilst the employee is on holiday**

5.1 Where an employee is incapacitated through sickness or injury during any period of prebooked holiday (whether in whole or in part), the Central Employment will, subject to the correct notification and certification, allow the employee to transfer to sick leave and take replacement holiday at a later date. This policy is subject to the following conditions, which will be strictly applied:

- 5.1.1 The total period of incapacity must be fully certificated by a qualified medical practitioner;
- 5.1.2 The employee must contact Central Employment (in person and by telephone if possible) as soon as they know that there will be a period of incapacity during the holiday; and

- 5.1.3 The employee must confirm in writing to the HR Manager no later than 5 days after returning to work how much of the holiday period was affected by sickness or injury and the amount of leave that the employee wishes to take at another time.
- 5.2 Any requests for replacement holiday must be made in accordance with the Central Employment's holiday policy and the employee should try to take the replacement holiday in the holiday year in which it was accrued. Where this is not possible, Central Employment will allow the employee to carry forward the leave into the next holiday year.
- 5.3 Central Employment may require the employee to take all or part of their replacement holiday on particular days to be specified by Central Employment.

### **Bereavement Leave**

#### Parental Bereavement Leave:

Employees who experience the loss of a child under the age of 18 or a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy are entitled to up to two weeks of statutory parental bereavement leave. This leave can be taken as a single block of two weeks or as two separate one-week periods. Eligible employees may also receive statutory parental bereavement pay during this time.

#### Bereavement Leave for Other Relatives:

Employees may have a minimum of one week's unpaid leave grieving the loss of other close relatives such as:

##### Immediate Family Members:

- Spouse or civil partner
- Parents (including step-parents)
- Children (including step-children and legally adopted children)
- Siblings (including step-siblings and half-siblings)

##### Extended Family:

- Grandparents and grandchildren
- In-laws (e.g., mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law)
- Partners (including long-term or cohabiting partners)

##### Dependents:

- Any individual for whom the employee has a significant caring responsibility.

### **Return to Work Interviews**

Central Employment will require, after any absence due to sickness, the employee to attend a return to work interview with their Manager in order to:

- 6.1 ensure the employee's fitness to return to work;
- 6.2 agree any necessary actions required to facilitate the employee's return to work;
- 6.3 ensure the proper certificates have been completed/obtained in respect of the entire period of absence; and
- 6.4 discuss any problems that may exist.

At the return to work interview, employees may be set reasonable targets and time limits for an improvement in attendance. A failure to improve may result in disciplinary action.

### **Statutory Sick Pay ("SSP")**

- 7.1 In order to be eligible for SSP, employees must be ill for four days or longer (this can include weekends and bank holidays) and must have average weekly earnings equal to or more than the lower earnings limit. Please see relevant government websites such as HMRC, Business Link and Direct.gov for details of the current lower earnings limit.
- 7.2 Employees must use the company's Return to Work Discussion/Interview Form to provide the Company with details of their illness.
- 7.3 The present weekly SSP rate can be found on relevant government websites such as HMRC, Business Link and Direct.gov.
- 7.4 The Company will record all details of SSP payments made to employees using Statutory Form SSP2 in conjunction with legal requirements.
- 7.5 Where the Company is not required to pay SSP or SSP comes to an end (employees will be paid SSP for up to 28 weeks) the Company will provide the employee with Form SSP1 to support the employee's claim for Employment and Support Allowance.

### **Company Sick Pay ("CSP")**

- 8.1 CSP will be paid at the discretion of the Company. To qualify for CSP, the employee must have completed 6 months' continuous service with the Central Employment and have complied with Clauses 2 and 3 above. In any event this shall not be paid for more than a total of 5 days in any calendar year for employees with less than 5 years continuous service. At the discretion of the company full CSP will be paid to employees for up to a period of 6 months in any calendar year for employees with 5 years' service or longer and have complied with Clauses 2 and 3 above. Entitlement to CSP is determined according to the employees length of continuous service, as follows:
  - 8.1.2 Where the Company makes full payment in times of illness or injury, this includes any entitlement to statutory sick pay (SSP). Where the Company pays half pay, SSP will be added but the total of company pay and SSP will not exceed normal full basic pay.
  - 8.1.3 The employee will forfeit entitlement to CSP if:
    - 8.1.3.1 They fail to comply with notification and certification requirements;
    - 8.1.3.2 They make or produce any misleading or untrue statement or document concerning their fitness to work;
    - 8.1.3.3 Their incapacity has been caused by participation in dangerous sports or activities.

### **Jury Service**

- 9.1 Any employee called for jury service should inform their Line Manager as soon as possible.

9.2 Employees called for jury service will not be paid by Central Employment for the period of their absence. Employees should instead claim all available allowances from the Court.

#### **Public Duties**

10.1 Central Employment is legally obliged to permit any employee time off to complete their public duties including, but not limited to, magistrate or school governor duties. The employee should inform their Line Manager of their duties, meetings or rotas as soon as possible in order to allow the Company time to plan for their absence.

10.2 Employees carrying out public duties will not receive pay for time off taken to complete their duties.

#### **Emergency, Maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption Leave**

11.1 Emergency leave (time off for dependants), maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave are all dealt with in their respective policy documents contained in Central Employment's Policies and Procedures.

11.2 If employees are uncertain about any other type of absence, they must ask for advice from the HR Manager. Other types of absence may be covered by separate company policies and procedures and/or by statutory rights. Unauthorised absence is likely to be treated as a disciplinary offence.

## **Trade Union**

Central Employment is legally obliged to allow employees time off to carry out their trade union duties. Any time taken off will be paid unless the carrying out of such duties occurs outside working hours.

## **Monitoring**

Central Employment will monitor and record levels of absence and reasons for absence in order to help identify abuse of this policy, which places additional stress on colleagues. Any employee with 3 or more occasions of absence in a 6-month period will be placed on absence monitoring. Further the Company will be better positioned to identify unsatisfactory work practices and to distinguish between different types of absence.

Central Employment will obtain consent from each employee, either in their Terms and Conditions of employment, or on a separate consent form to comply with the relevant Data Protection legislation.

All information gathered through absence monitoring under this Policy will be held and treated in confidence.

This policy has been approved and authorised by:



**Signed**

Mark Trett - Director

**Date**

5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

**Review Date**

5<sup>th</sup> December 2025