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Aim Of This Policy

1. This policy is designed to assist the Company in effectively managing sickness-related and other staff absence. The Company 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, the Company 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.

Sickness

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 Office Manager as soon as possible after 8.00 am 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 the Company 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 the Company can contact them if necessary, ideally leaving a landline number on which they can be contacted.

Certification of sickness

- 3.1 For sickness absences of up to 7 calendar days, the self-certification form SC2 (available from the HMRC website) should be completed by the employee upon their return to work.
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3.1.2 For sickness absence of more than 7 calendar days, the employee must also provide a medical certificate from a GP, 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.

Long-term and persistent absence

4.1 The Company will treat as long-term absence any period of extensive absence due to serious or significant illness over a prolonged period. Persistent absence may consist of a series of unconnected short-term illnesses. Where the Company 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 the Company, at such intervals as agreed between the Company and the employee; and

4.1.2 ensure that the employee is kept informed as to any possible threat to their employment.

4.2 The Company reserves the right to request a home visit where the illness is long-term. The purpose of the visit will be to discuss possibilities for a return to work and to discover whether the Company can assist in facilitating this.

4.3 The Company will treat as persistent absence a series of unconnected short-term illnesses.

4.4 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 the Company will:

4.4.1 investigate the absence through “Return to Work Interviews” and the obtaining of medical reports;

4.4.2 set time limits on the assessment of the employee and keep him or her informed of such;

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4.4.3 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;

4.4.4 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

4.4.5 keep the employee informed in all the circumstance of any threat to their employment.

4.5 Where the Company 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.

4.6 The Company will hold all medical reports and related information obtained under Clause 4.5 as private and confidential.

4.7 The Company 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 the Company's Disciplinary Procedure.

Sickness Which Occurs While The Employee Is On Holiday

5.1 Where an employee is incapacitated through sickness or injury during any period of pre-booked holiday (whether in whole or in part), the Company 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;

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5.1.2 The employee must contact the Company (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 Payroll Dept. 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 Company'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, the Company will allow the employee to carry forward the leave into the next holiday year.

5.3 The Company may require the employee to take all or part of their replacement holiday on particular days to be specified by the Company.

Return to Work Interviews

The Company shall decide, after any absence due to sickness, whether the employee is required to attend a return to work interview with their Contract 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.

Sick Pay

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

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or more than the lower earnings limit. Please see relevant government websites such as HMRC, Business Link and Directgov for details of the current lower earnings limit.

- 7.2 Employees must use the SC2 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 Directgov.
- 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, the Company will provide the employee with Form SSP1 to support the employee's claim for Employment and Support Allowance.

Other Absence

Jury Service

- 9.1 Any employee called for jury service should inform their Contract Manager as soon as possible.
- 9.2 Employees called for jury service will not be paid by the Company for the period of their absence. Employees should instead claim all available allowances from the Court.

Public Duties

- 10.1 The Company 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 Contract 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.
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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 Policies and Procedures.

11.2 If employees are uncertain about any other type of absence they must ask for advice from their Line 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

The Company 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

The Company 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. Further the Company will be better positioned to identify unsatisfactory work practices and to distinguish between different types of absence.

The Company 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.

All staff will be required to sign a copy of this policy.

I, the undersigned, do hereby agree to abide by the terms of the Bribery Policy. I am fully aware that any violation of this requirement may result in immediate termination of employment.

Signed..... Date.....
