



Sickness Absence Policy





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1 Purpose

- 1.1 We believe that the health and wellbeing of our employees is extremely important. The Guild therefore has policies in place designed to promote responsible working practices and ensure a positive working environment. This policy sets out how the Guild manages sickness absence in a fair and consistent way.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework that helps us to balance the need for employees to take time off work because of ill health with the need to minimise disruption to our services and minimise the impact of absence on colleagues.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.
- 2.2 This policy does not form part of the contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

3 General Principles

- 3.1 We expect employees to take responsibility for maintaining regular, punctual attendance as much as possible.
- 3.2 We will support employees who need to be absent from work. This support includes:
 - Providing separate leave allowances to enable you to be absent from work for other reasons not caused by sickness;
 - A flexible approach to taking Annual Leave;
 - Access to our Employee Assistance Programme, Health Assured.
- 3.3 Conversations with employees about their absence can take place at any time, where there are concerns about frequency, length or types of absence. Line managers are therefore expected to have regular conversations with employees to help them remain able to stay in work whilst supporting their wellbeing and performance.
- 3.4 Line managers must seek medical or occupational health advice before taking disciplinary action relating to sickness absence.

4 Disability

- 4.1 In managing and supporting absence and return to work, particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to your role, working environment or ways of working that will help to keep you in work and/or return to work after absence.
- 4.2 Disability related sickness absence, and attendance at disability related medical appointments will be recorded as sickness absence but will not form part of any sickness absence triggers.
- 4.3 If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which impacts your ability to carry out your work, you are encouraged to inform your Line manager so that they can agree how best to support you.

5 Notifying us of absence

- 5.1 If you are going to be absent from work, you should let your line manager know (or an appropriate alternative manager) as soon as possible and ideally within one-hour of the time you were due to start work. You should provide an indication of the reason for your absence and a likely return date, where possible.
- 5.2 You should discuss and agree ongoing contact and make your line manager aware of any work that may need to be covered in your absence.
- 5.3 If the absence is likely to last more than four weeks, it is the responsibility of both you and your line manager to maintain contact at agreed intervals.
- 5.4 If you need to be absent from work as a result of something other than sickness or ill-health, other options are available to you. These are outlined in our Special and Other Leave Policy and your line manager will discuss and agree your options with you.

6 Evidence

- 6.1 For absences lasting up to 7 calendar days, you will need to confirm that you have been off sick. This is called 'self-certification' and is completed via People HR.
- 6.2 For absences exceeding 7 calendar days, a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' (Fit Note) is required. Certificates must be provided for the whole period of absence. Failing to produce a medical certificate could affect your eligibility for sick pay.

7 Sick Pay

- 7.1 If you are absent from work due to sickness or injury, and have followed the correct reporting procedures, we will pay contractual sick pay in line with your contract of employment.
- 7.2 The following table outlines the entitlement to Guild sick pay.

Completed Service	Full Pay	Half Pay
Up to 6 months	1 week	1 week
6 months to 1 year	1 month	1 month
After 1 years' service	2 months	2 months
After 2 years' service	4 months	4 months
After 3 years' service	5 months	5 months
After 5 years' service	6 months	6 months

- 7.3 These payments will include any statutory payments to which you may be entitled. More information regarding eligibility for SSP and the current rates are available from <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>.

8 Reporting and Returning to Work

- 8.1 Accurate absence records are important to enable us to effectively support our employees' wellbeing and identify short-term absence problems at an early stage.
- 8.2 Your line manager will discuss your absence with you when you return to work to establish:
 - the reason for, and cause of absence;
 - anything that your manager or the Guild can do to help support your health and wellbeing at work;

- support for managing your workload upon your return;
- that you are fit to return to work. If your GP has advised that you 'may be fit for work', the return-to-work discussion can also be used to agree how your return to work can be supported.

8.3 Line managers must keep an accurate and confidential record of the absence reason and duration on People HR.

9 Monitoring Absence

9.1 Your line manager will monitor sickness absence levels on an ongoing basis, with support from the HR Administrator.

9.2 A review into your absence may take place at any time, depending on your individual circumstances, and may take place before your entitlement to company sick pay has expired. This review will aim to identify any support required to improve your attendance and wellbeing, and may begin where one or more of the following attendance patterns are identified:

- more than 3 periods of absence in a 3 -month period
- 10 days' absence in a 12 -month rolling period
- more than 3 periods of absence in a 12 -month rolling period, each in excess of 3 days
- continuous absence of 4 weeks or more
- if you have an absence rate of 5% or more
- frequent, short-term absence that follows a regular pattern, that may indicate an underlying health / wellbeing issue

9.3 Some sickness absence reasons will not be included in these absence triggers (although absence occasions may still be recorded), including time off for:

- Fertility treatments and IVF
- Gender reassignment
- Absence relating to a disability
- Pregnancy related illness

9.4 Line managers are encouraged to talk to employees about the reasons for their absence and should consider the circumstances leading to high instances of absence before any action is taken.

9.5 Action will depend on the situation, and may include:

- An informal conversation with you about your absence levels and what might happen should there not be an improvement;
- An investigation, as outlined in our Disciplinary and Capability Procedure, followed by potential disciplinary action.

9.6 An example of the steps that may be taken to manage absence can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Line managers should speak to the HR Administrator for advice if they are unsure of what action to take.

10 Occupational Health

- 10.1 Line managers may request the use of Occupational Health services in order to help them understand how to best support you to stay in work or to return to work after a period of absence.
- 10.2 Occupational Health services can be used for individual health-screening, designing return-to-work plans or to provide recommendations of reasonable adjustments to help protect and support employees with health conditions.
- 10.3 A referral to Occupational Health services will only be made if both you and your line manager agree that it is appropriate. Conversations with occupational health are confidential, although the service is likely to provide a report on your fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to your role or working environment.
- 10.4 Line managers wishing to make a referral to Occupational Health should first seek advice from a member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or the HR Administrator.

11 Long Term Absence

- 11.1 Long-term sickness lasts 4 weeks or more and may be related to an underlying health condition.
- 11.2 Long term absence will be reviewed by your line manager, on a case-by-case basis and taking your individual circumstances into account.
- 11.3 We may request your permission to contact your GP for information about your health and returning to work or make a referral to occupational health. Where this is the case, you will be informed in writing of your rights in relation to requesting access and amendments to any medical reports.
- 11.4 We will use the evidence available to decide on an outcome, which may include:
 - You are capable of remaining in your existing role with no adjustments
 - You are capable of remaining in your existing role with temporary adjustments
 - You are capable of remaining in your existing role with permanent adjustments (such as reduced hours), resulting in a permanent change to your contract
 - There are no reasonable adjustments that would enable you to remain in your existing role, but there are alternative roles in the organisation that you could perform, resulting in a permanent transfer
 - Where your job can no longer be held open, and no suitable alternative roles are available, you may be dismissed on the grounds of ill health. This is not disciplinary action.
- 11.5 You have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative to any formal meetings regarding your absence.
- 11.6 It is important that both you and your line manager agree to stay in regular contact during long term absence. This ensures that they can continue to take all circumstances into consideration, support your wellbeing, identify any support you might need and talk about any relevant updates or changes happening at work. Line managers should seek to agree:
 - how often contact should be;
 - whether it will be by email, phone or face-to-face;

- who you should be in contact with (i.e. your line manager, another manager or HR Administrator).

11.7 Where an employee's absence is due to a mental health condition, it's particularly important to consider whether less or more frequent contact is most appropriate, based on the needs of the employee.

11.8 Where dismissal action is taken, you are entitled to appeal. Appeals for ill-health dismissal will follow the same Appeals procedure as outlined in our Disciplinary Procedure.

12 Disciplinary

12.1 Disciplinary action may be taken if you:

- Have claimed to be sick when you're not unwell (and without good reason);
- Have not followed the correct reporting procedure;
- Have been absent unexpectedly and without explanation or authorisation from a manager;
- Have absence that is intermittent and persistent, where a pattern is evident or there is an unreasonable number of days absence and there does not appear to be any significant underlying medical reason;
- Have not improved your attendance after previous informal meeting(s) to discuss absence levels, where there does not appear to be any significant underlying medical reason.

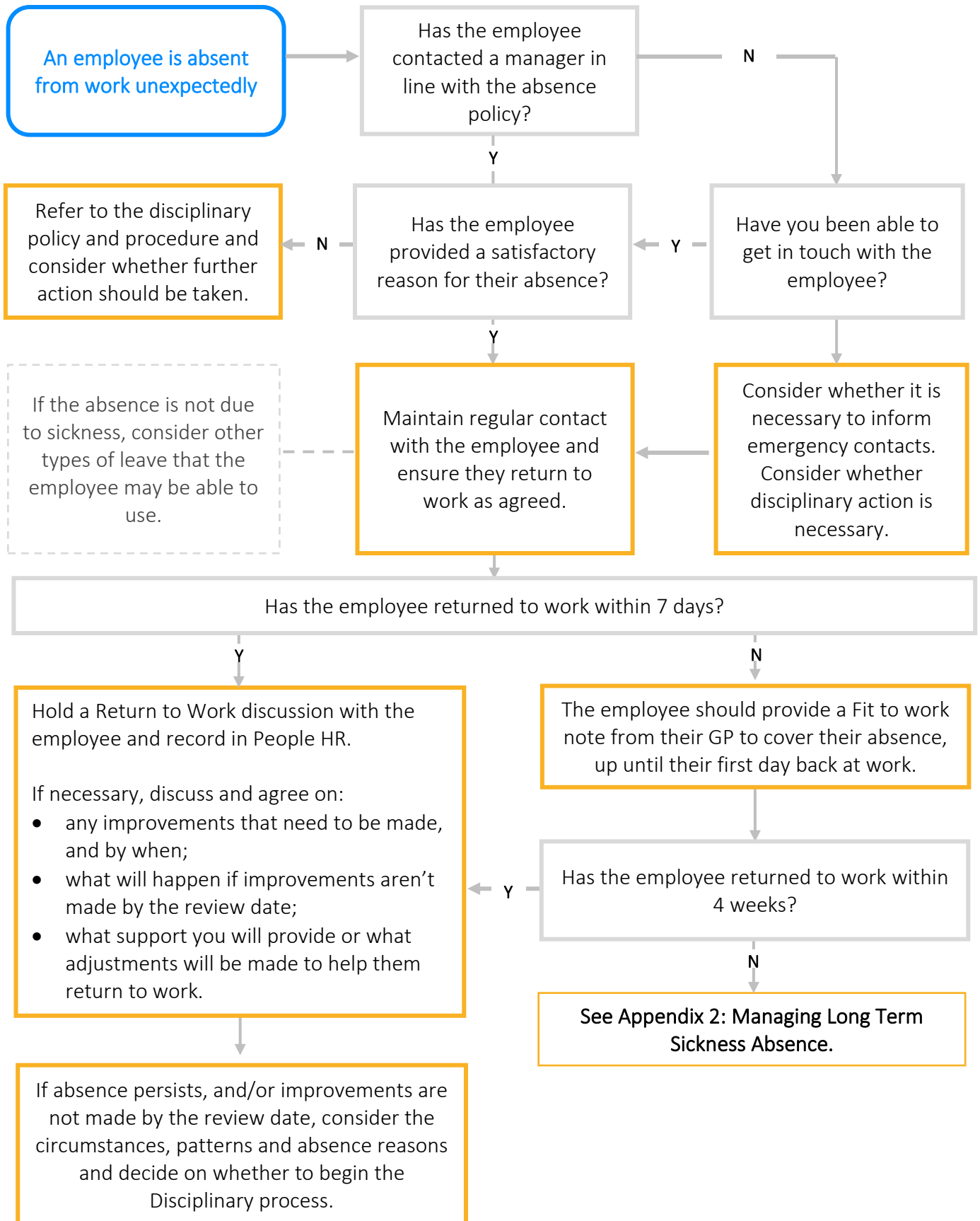
13 Employee Assistance Programme

13.1 Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a paid-for service that provides all employees with 24-hour access to free and confidential advice and counselling services. Our Employee Assistance Provider is Health Assured, who are the leading EAP provider in the UK. Partners and dependants living in the same household can also use this service.

13.2 There are four ways to access counselling and advice services:

- **Free 24/7 confidential hotline:** 0800 047 4097
- **Health Assured Portal:** www.healthassured.com
(Username: Peninsula / Password: EAP)
- **My Healthy Advantage App:** Sign up using the employer code <ZENA TO INSERT>
- **Manager Referral (with your permission):** Please speak to your line manager or the HR Administrator for more information.

Appendix A: Managing Short Term Sickness Absence



Appendix B: Managing Long Term Sickness Absence

