



# **Attendance and Absence Management Policy**

**November 2019**

## **Introduction**

Spire View Housing Association recognises that on occasions it may be necessary for employees to be absent from work. However, we also have a duty to provide a reliable service to our customers and thus we need to ensure that we help you maintain the highest possible level of attendance.

This policy is designed to help all employees achieve good attendance, and to ensure that a consistent and fair approach in managing attendance is adopted throughout the organisation.

This policy and the guidelines it contains work in conjunction with but is not limited to other policies such as discipline & grievance, dignity at work, health & safety and managing stress.

## **Aims of the Policy**

- To manage attendance in a way that reflects genuine concern for employees and to develop a positive attitude towards attendance.
- To set clear expectations for standards of attendance that we require from our employees.
- To separate two processes: attendance and absence management and provide guidelines for employees and managers in how to manage these.
- To identify the causes of absence and, where possible, develop a programme of supportive and preventive measures.
- To ensure training and support is available to both managers and employees.

## **Principles**

The organisation requires good attendance from all employees to meet its objectives.

- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory you will be informed what improvement is required and possible consequences of failure to do so (which may include disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal).
- The attendance management process is not concerned with reasons for absence but with number of periods of absence/ days absent (excluding underlying health conditions protected under the Equality Act 2010).
- If you have an underlying health condition causing absence(s), then we will consider reasonable adjustments.
- Managers will conduct "return to work" interviews for every period of sickness absence within the spirit of this policy.
- You need to adhere strictly to our absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and organisation sick pay being withheld.
- Managers will maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff to manage absence effectively.

## **Absence Monitoring**

A fundamental feature of good attendance management is the accurate and timely recording of all absences. This is essential for processing the requirements of statutory and occupational sick pay arrangements and the process of managing attendance and absence. Good information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health conditions. The sooner these issues are identified and acted upon – the more likely a successful conclusion for both you and the organisation can be achieved.

Accurate recording is also an essential element in satisfying potential concerns over the fairness of any actions taken by line managers.

Having maintained attendance records, managers will be expected to provide and discuss monthly aggregated statistics at management team meetings and at departmental meetings with staff. Your individual case will not be discussed as it forms part of your confidential record.

## **Absence Reporting Procedures**

### **Reporting**

If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, you must phone your line manager (or if not available, another manager) as soon as is reasonably possible. You should do this before you are due to start your shift and if not possible, within one hour of your starting time. You must fill in a self-certification form, whether or not you are entitled to sickness allowances and whatever the length or reason for absence.

### **Fit Notes**

If you are off due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note as soon as possible to your line manager.

If the Doctor ticks the 'may be fit for work' box your line manager will arrange a meeting with you to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although we are not obliged to follow the doctor's advice, we will do our best to help you return to work and maintain a good attendance record. However, if we cannot agree reasonable adjustments you will remain off sick. If this situation arises please contact us for specific advice.

If we agree a phased return to work, the days you are still off sick within the agreed period will count as one period of absence.

An employee can come back to work at any time, even if this is before their fit note expires. They do not need to go back to their doctor first to be signed fit for work. If you come back to work before the expiry of your fit note, we will seek professional advice.

## **Keeping in Touch**

You are responsible for phoning your line manager to let them know the reasons for any absence and when you expect to return to work. If, in the event of an emergency you cannot get to a phone on day one of your absence, you should make sure that someone else calls on your behalf. After this, you should contact your line manager as soon as you can and maintain regular contact by calling daily during the first week of your absence (unless otherwise agreed with your line manager) and weekly thereafter.

If you fail to keep in contact as outlined above, we will initiate and maintain contact with you.

We expect that you let us know the following information: the reason for your absence, when you expect to return to work and contact details which can be used to maintain contact during your absence. (If this information is not provided we will contact you to find out this information).

## **Failure to Comply**

Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold company sick pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also lead to disciplinary action against you in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Similarly, if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will take disciplinary action against you. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

## **Return to Work**

A thorough return to work meeting will be carried out after every period of unplanned sickness absence. The purpose of a return to work interview is to establish if you are fit to return to work. This will be done by your line manager (or another manager if he/she is not available) on the first day of your return to work at the start of your shift. Completed forms will be kept in your personnel file. The return to work interview forms contain confidential information and may only be viewed by authorised personnel, normally your line manager or any other manager who deals with the case.

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

If eligible to SSP this is irrespective to your entitlement to company sick pay. The scale of entitlement to SSP is reviewed by the government, normally at the beginning of each tax year. It is not paid for the first three days of absence and runs for 28 weeks after that.

If you are no longer entitled to SSP, you may be entitled to an incapacity benefit. You can enquire about this at your local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We will tell you if you are not entitled to SSP and send you the appropriate government form but it is then your responsibility to claim any other State Benefit which you may be entitled to.

## **Company Sick Pay**

In any one rolling period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with EVH Terms and Conditions of Employment – Section A5 ‘Sickness Benefits’

## **Attendance Management**

This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of attendance, with no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition.

We will aim to assist you in maintaining a good attendance record. This will involve maintaining good records, ensuring return to work meetings are completed and helping investigate and address any identified underlying causes of absence.

Where this fails to secure a required improvement, we will invoke the terms of the disciplinary procedure. Unsatisfactory attendance reviews can result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If at any stage during this process it becomes apparent that an underlying health condition is involved, medical information will be sought, and further discussion will take place prior to deciding on any appropriate action, if any.

Absence periods related to pregnancy or underlying health conditions classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 will not be considered for the purpose of attendance management process.

## **Absence Management**

Spire View Housing Association will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term and/or underlying health condition. If you find yourself in such a position you should be confident that your manager will react in a supportive fashion when approached.

The following points will always be considered in relation to long-term absence:

- The nature of the illness and any contributing factors
- The likely duration and/or frequency of your absence(s)
- Any actions that can be taken by you
- Any reasonable adjustments that we could make
- Any possible redeployment opportunities
- The nature of the duties in relation to your health conditions
- Our business needs and the impact that your absence may have upon these
- Your entitlement to statutory and company sick pay

If a medical professional makes suggestions for any reasonable adjustments, these will be discussed prior to your return to work to determine if these can be accommodated, along with any suggestions you or we may also have made. Although we are not bound by the

doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to accommodate your prompt return and good attendance. If we agree, any reasonable adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews to assess if they are still required and suitable.

When managing a long-term absence, a termination of employment for the reason of ill health capability may be considered where all other options have been exhausted, and the organisation can no longer sustain the absence.

*N.B if this outcome is being considered we will seek professional advice.*

## **Dishonest Absence**

If you are found to falsify or exaggerate your absence, this will be treated as gross misconduct. An investigation will be carried out in accordance with our disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action may be instigated, including dismissal or future withdrawal of the company sick pay benefit.

## **Other Provisions**

### **Absence and holidays**

If you are on annual leave and fall sick or have an accident, we will discuss this with you and agree how the leave will be processed.

If you are on sick leave and go on holiday you should contact your line manager to seek authorisation and to let them know how long you will be away for and to ensure communication resumes upon your return.

### **Doctor/hospital/dental appointments**

Doctor, hospital and dental appointments should be arranged outwith working hours. If it is not possible, you should request time off from your line manager. Arrangements could include using annual leave, TOIL/flexi or unpaid leave. In some circumstances managers could also use their discretion and consider giving paid time off.

### **Conduct whilst off sick**

When on sick leave, you are still bound by your contract of employment with us and all our policies including Code of Conduct and your duty of fidelity. We also expect that you do not participate in activities that would be at odds with the reason for your absence. Any breach in respect of this will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. This includes conduct on social networking sites and any other publicly made remarks regarding our customers, work colleagues, partners and anyone else who is connected with us.

### **Cosmetic procedures**

Absence due to cosmetic procedures (whether carried out in the UK or abroad) will not fall under the sick leave or pay unless it is recommended by health professionals. Employees should therefore request time off and agree with their line manager how the absence will be processed, e.g. annual leave or unpaid leave.

**IVF treatment**

Absences relating to IVF treatment will not be processed as sick leave or pay. The same applies to a partner of a person that is undergoing such treatment. Instead, you should discuss with your line manager how time off for the treatment could be accommodated, e.g. annual leave, flexi time or unpaid leave. Absences relating to IVF treatment will also not be treated as relating to pregnancy unless the employee actually falls pregnant.

**Stress management**

Stress is not an illness. It can result from an illness or lead to one but it is not an illness itself. The same relates to "nervous debility" or any other diagnosis of that type. If you go off sick with stress, your manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that an appropriate action can be taken (if any) and in particular to determine whether conditions at work cause or contribute to stress and whether something could be done to help the situation. We will follow procedures as outlined in the stress management policy. If your absence is certified by a doctor, your manager may ask your doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress.

**Data Protection**

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Privacy Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Spire View Housing Association's employee privacy notice.