



Attendance & Absence Management Policy

Introduction

Fair Deal recognises that on occasions it may be necessary for staff 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 are not intended to replace other policies, such as discipline & grievance, dignity at work, health & safety, managing stress, etc.

Aims of the Policy

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

Principles

The organisation requires good attendance from all staff in order to meet its objectives.

- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory then you will be informed what improvement is required and possible consequences of failure to do so (which may include disciplinary action, 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 medical condition causing absence(s), then we will consider whether any reasonable adjustments are possible to accommodate.
- 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 a disciplinary action and withholding of the organisation sick pay.
- 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 the 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 us can be achieved.

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

Absence Reporting Procedures

Reporting

Office based staff:

If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, not already authorised, you must phone and speak to your line manager (or if not available, another manager) as soon as is reasonably possible. It is expected that you phone as soon as possible before your usual start time, if not possible, within one hour of your starting time.

Service based staff:

If Support workers cannot come to work, you must phone and speak to the Duty Team Leader during office hours or the On-Call Team Leader out with office hours and at weekends. Do not wait until the next day you are required to work. Your minimum reporting requirement is 3 hours before the start time of when you are expected to begin your shift. The Duty Team Leader or On-Call team leader will alert any work colleagues on shift with you.

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.

Every unplanned absence will be followed with a Return-to-Work Interview (RTWI).

You must fill in a self-certification form, whether or not you are entitled to any sickness allowance and whatever the length or reason for absence.

Fit Notes

If you continue to be absent due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note from a healthcare professional as soon as possible to your line manager.

If the 'may be fit for work' box is ticked, you will meet with your line manager to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although employers are not obliged to follow the healthcare professional's advice, we will do our best to help you return to work and keep a good attendance record. However, if we cannot agree reasonable adjustments, you will remain off sick.

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.

You are permitted to return to work before the expiry of your fit note (as long as the medical professional does not state they wish to see you again before returning to work), even if this is before their fit note expires. You do not need to go back to your doctor first to be signed fit for work. If you come back to work before the expiry of your fit note, we may seek professional advice.

Keeping in Touch

You are responsible for phoning your manager to let them know the reason for your absence and when you expect to return to work. If, in 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 call again on day four and day seven of your absence (unless otherwise agreed with your line manager) and weekly thereafter.

While keeping in touch we would expect you to let us know; the reason for your absence, the predicted recovery and/or treatment, when you expect to return to work and, the best contact details which can be used during your absence.

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

Failure to Comply

Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold the company sick pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also lead to a disciplinary action against you in accordance with Fair Deal's disciplinary procedure.

Similarly, if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will investigate this, and it may result in disciplinary action being taken against you following an investigation. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

Return to Work

A thorough return to work 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 they are not available) on the first day of your return to work at the start of your working day or shift. Completed forms will be kept in your personal 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.

If a medical professional makes suggestions for any adjustments, these will be discussed prior to your return to work along with any suggestions that 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 a good attendance, if possible. If we agree any adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

If eligible for SSP this is irrespective to your entitlement to occupational sick pay. The scale of entitlement to SSP is reviewed by the government, normally at the beginning of each tax year. It is paid from day 1 of your absence and runs for up to 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 Government benefit/s which you may be entitled to.

Company Sick Pay

In anyone rolling period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with the following scale:

Service	Period on full pay	Period on half pay
Less than 6 months	No CSP – Only SSP from day 1 of absence as of 6 th April 2026	No CSP – Only SSP from day 1 of absence as of 6 th April 2026
Between six months and one year	3 Weeks	3 Weeks
Between one and two years	4 Weeks	4 Weeks

Between two and three years	6 Weeks	6 Weeks
Between three and five years	8 Weeks	8 Weeks
Over five years	10 Weeks	10 Weeks

Attendance Management

This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of short term, frequent absences, 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 absence management and 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 issue 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 medical conditions classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 will not be counted for the purpose of the attendance management process.

Attendance Review Triggers

Persistent Short-Term Absence

Where there appears to be no one substantial underlying cause for absence it will be made clear to you that you will be expected to meet appropriate attendance targets as set out below:

Attendance Management Interview:

If you have had two periods of absence within a rolling period of 6 months, you will be asked to attend an attendance management interview with your line manager. The purpose of this

meeting will be to explore the reasons for your absence with the objective of improving attendance. In the absence of mitigating circumstances acceptable to the manager you will receive an informal action note.

Stage 1 First Written Warning:

If you have a further two periods of absence within a 6-month period, you will be asked to attend a formal interview with an appropriate nominated manager. You may have a colleague or trade union representative with you at this meeting. In the absence of mitigating circumstances acceptable to the manager you may receive a formal written warning that will remain on your file for six months.

Stage 2 Final Written Warning:

If you have a further two periods of absence within a 6-month period, you will be asked to attend a formal interview with a senior member of staff. You may have a colleague or trade union representative with you at this meeting. In the absence of mitigating circumstances acceptable to the manager you may receive a final written warning that will remain on your file for twelve months.

Stage 3 Dismissal Hearing:

If you have a further two periods of absence within a 6-month period, you will be asked to attend a hearing with the Senior Management Team (SMT). You may have a colleague or trade union representative with you at this meeting. In the absence of mitigating circumstances acceptable to the panel you may be dismissed on the grounds of persistent absence.

Right of Appeal:

At Stages 1 and 2 of these procedures you have a right of appeal to the SMT. At Stage 3 you have a right of appeal to the Board. Appeals must be made in writing within 72 hours of the decision being made. An appeal hearing will then be convened within 2 week, and you will be informed of the decision as soon as possible. You may have a colleague or trade union representative with you at this hearing. The decision of the Appeal panel will be final.

Absence Management

Long Term Absence:

Any period of absence that exceeds 4 consecutive working weeks is defined as long term absence for the purposes of this policy. During any such period of absence your line manager will remain in regular contact with you.

Fair Deal will adopt a sympathetic approach to staff with a long-term and/or chronic health problem. If you find yourself in such a position you should be confident that your manager will support you.

During your period of absence, Fair Deal may seek medical advice from your GP or an independent medical advisor.

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 problems
- Our business needs and the impact that your absence is having upon these.
- Your entitlement to statutory and occupational 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 medical professional'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, it is possible that 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 Fair Deal disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action may be instigated, including dismissal or future withdrawal of the company sick pay.

Other Provisions

Absence and Holidays

If during an authorised period of annual leave, you fall ill, and you produce a self-certificate or fit note we may count the period as sick leave and not as annual leave. You must speak to your manager on the first day of your return to work or earlier if possible and provide them with the necessary certification.

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.

Employees on long-term sick leave can carry over 4 weeks' unused holiday entitlement. This holiday must be used within 18 months from the date it's carried over.

Doctor/Hospital/Dental Appointments

Doctor, hospital and dental appointments should be arranged out with working hours. If it is not possible, you should request time off from your line manager. Arrangements could include using annual leave or unpaid leave. In some circumstance's 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 the 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 Fair Deal, its 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 could 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. If the absence is certified by a doctor, your manager will ask your doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress.

Data Protection

Fair Deal will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Data Protection policy.

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Amendment History

Date	Version	Created By	Description of Change
09/02/2018	1	Jill Grace	Draft Initial Release
01/04/2018	2	Jill Grace	Removal of Draft
01/05/2019	3	Elaine Davidson	Adjustment to logo and front cover details,
03/02/20	4	Fiona Dunwoodie	Amendment to IVF wording
10/03/24	5	Liz Connor	Amendments to reporting process, addition of healthcare professionals for fit notes, change to triggers, annual leave carry forward amount, holiday while on sick leave info and DPA info.
30/04/26	6	Lauryn McManus	Amendments to SSP changes from 6/4/26 - SSP no longer has waiting days and is eligible from day 1 of sickness
25/05/26	7	Lauryn McManus	Amendments to CSP table to add that no CSP is payable to employees under 6 months of service. However, SSP is payable from day 1 of absence (Approved by SMC)