

Sickness absence policy template

Most sickness policies explain how to phone in and never say what anyone gets paid. This one states the pay position, because s.1(4)(d)(ii) ERA 1996 requires it in the written statement on day one, and it excludes pregnancy and disability-related absence from the triggers, because a system that counts them is the usual route to a claim.

Download the policy ? PDF • edit the [bracketed] parts

The template

Replace each [bracketed placeholder]. Copy it straight from this page, or download the PDF above.

1. Purpose and scope

This policy explains what to do when you are too unwell to work, what you will be paid, and how [Company name] manages absence fairly and consistently. It applies to all employees and workers from their first day. The procedure in this policy is not contractual and may be updated; the sick pay terms in clause 4 form part of your written statement of particulars. The current version is always at [location].

2. Reporting an absence

If you cannot work, tell [your line manager / named role] as early as possible and no later than [time] on the first day, by [telephone call - not text or message, so that a conversation can happen]. Say what is wrong in general terms, whether you expect to be off beyond today, and anything urgent that needs covering. If you cannot make contact yourself, ask someone to do it for you. Let us know each day you remain absent unless we have agreed otherwise, and tell us as soon as you know when you expect to return.

3. Certification

For absence of up to and including seven calendar days - counting weekends and bank holidays - you complete a self-certification form on your return. From the eighth calendar day onwards you must provide a fit note from a healthcare professional, and further notes covering any continuing absence. A fit note may say you are "not fit for work" or "may be fit for work" with suggestions such as amended duties, a phased return or altered hours. Where it does, we will discuss whether those suggestions can be accommodated. If they cannot, the fit note is treated as if it said you are not fit for work.

4. Sick pay

[Option A - statutory only] You will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if you are eligible. SSP is paid at the rate set by the government for each qualifying day of sickness, for up to 28 weeks. We do not operate a company sick pay scheme.

[Option B - company scheme] After [qualifying period, or "from your first day"] you will receive [full pay for up to X weeks in any rolling 12-month period, followed by half pay for up to Y weeks]. Company sick pay is inclusive of any SSP payable for the same period; the two are not paid on top of one another. Once company sick pay is exhausted you will receive SSP alone for any remaining entitlement. Payment beyond these limits is not an entitlement and will only be made in exceptional circumstances, decided case by case and creating no precedent. Delete whichever option does not apply. Sick pay may be withheld where absence has not been reported or certified in line with this policy.

5. Keeping in touch

During a longer absence we will agree how often we will be in contact and who will make it, normally your line manager. The purpose is to see how you are, to keep you connected to what is happening, and to plan your return. It is not a check-up, and it should never feel like pressure to come back before you are ready. If you would prefer contact through someone other than your manager, tell [role] and we will arrange it.

6. Returning to work

Your manager will hold a return-to-work conversation with you on your first day back, after every absence, however short. It covers whether you are well enough to be back, whether anything at work contributed, whether any adjustment would help, and what you missed. It is a normal conversation and not a disciplinary step. Where a fit note suggested adjustments, or where you have been absent for more than [four] weeks, we will agree a written plan for your return.

7. When absence is reviewed

We keep an eye on patterns rather than individual absences. A review conversation is prompted where you reach [three separate absences in a rolling three months / X days in a rolling 12 months / a Bradford Factor score of X]. Reaching a trigger is not misconduct and does not mean action will be taken: it means we will sit down, understand what is happening and consider what support or adjustment would help. Where absence continues at a level the business cannot sustain, and support has not resolved it, we may move to a formal capability process - separate from our disciplinary procedure, which deals with conduct.

8. Absences that are not counted

The following are recorded but never counted towards a trigger: absence related to pregnancy; absence related to a disability, which is considered separately as a possible reasonable adjustment; time off for dependants; absence arising from an accident at work; and time off for hospital or antenatal appointments where [policy applies]. If you believe an absence has been counted that should not have been, tell [role] and it will be corrected.

9. Long-term absence and medical advice

Where absence is likely to be or becomes long term, we will meet you to understand the position and plan. We may ask for your consent to seek a medical report from your GP or specialist, or to refer you to an occupational health adviser, so that decisions are based on medical evidence rather than assumption. You will be told what we are asking and why, and you have rights over reports from a doctor responsible for your care. You may decline; we will then have to make decisions on the information available, which is rarely in anyone's interest.

10. Disability and adjustments

If a health condition amounts to a disability, we will consider reasonable adjustments, which may include adjusting duties or hours, a phased return, workplace changes, adjusting the trigger levels in clause 7, or extending paid sick leave. Tell us about a condition that might need adjustments, whether or not you consider it a disability. Health information is handled confidentially and shared only with those who need it to manage your absence or make an adjustment.

11. Annual leave, and honesty

Annual leave continues to build up while you are off sick. If you fall ill during booked annual leave you may ask for those days to be treated as sickness instead, provided you report and certify them as you would any other absence. Finally: this policy runs on trust. Dishonest claims of sickness, including working elsewhere while certified unfit, will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Using it well

- Fill in clause 4 before you publish it. An unanswered sick pay clause is the reason people ask HR the same question every winter, and leaving it blank does not satisfy the written statement duty.
- Set triggers you will actually act on. A threshold nobody enforces teaches everyone the policy is decorative. Model yours against your own figures with the Bradford Factor calculator before choosing a number, and read the trigger point ranges first.
- Hold the return-to-work conversation every time. Every time is the part that works. Once it becomes selective it reads as an accusation.
- Keep clause 8 visible. Exclusions that live only in the manager's head are exclusions that get forgotten under pressure.

This is a starting point for a general UK employer and is not legal advice. Long-term absence, ill-health dismissal and anything involving a disability are worth specific advice before you act.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.