



# Absence Policy and Procedure

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Old Rayne playgroup aims to secure the attendance of all employees throughout the working week. However, it recognises that a certain level of absence may be necessary due to sickness. It is the organisation's policy to offer security of employment during such periods, subject to operational requirements and the conditions below:

### Notification and certification

If the employee is unable to attend, he or she must notify their manager by 08.30 hours on the first day of absence, indicating if possible when he or she expects to return to work. The employee must complete a self-certification form for the first seven calendar days of all sickness absences and give it to their manager. This form can be completed on the employee's return to work if their absence lasts less than seven calendar days. If the employee is absent by the eighth day (including Saturday and Sunday), they must send a fit note, issued by their GP, to their manager. Current fit notes must cover subsequent periods of absence. The employee should also keep in touch with their manager regarding their condition and likely return to work date. If the employee does not follow this procedure, they may be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

### Private medical certificates

In some circumstances the organisation may require the employee to provide private fit notes for all absences from work due to sickness, regardless of their duration. The organisation will reimburse him or her fully for the cost of obtaining these certificates. Examples of such circumstances include: a history of exceptional absenteeism, an appearance or disposition such that management are concerned that the employee may not be receiving adequate medical attention.

### Return to work

The employee will not be allowed to return to work until their GP deems that they are fit to return. Requests for temporary adjustments to the employee's working conditions will be considered by the organisation and will be accommodated wherever possible and if organisational circumstances permit. In the case of extended periods of absence, the organisation may require that the employee's fitness to return is confirmed by a medical practitioner of the organisation's choice. Regardless of their length of absence, the employee will be interviewed by their manager on their return to work in order to:

- check on the employee's fitness to return
- ensure that all the support the employee needs is in place
- bring the employee up to date on any changes

### **Fit notes**

An employee's GP might indicate on a fit note that the employee "may be fit for work". If this option is selected the GP will also identify potential amendments that should be made, selecting from:

- Phased return to work
- Amended duties
- Altered hours
- Workplace adaptations

If a fit note is received the line manager will contact the employee and arrange for a meeting. At this meeting the suggested amendments will be discussed with the aim of facilitating the employee's return to work. If the suggested amendments are not possible the employee will remain on sick leave. If amendments are possible the employee will return to work, but regular reviews will be carried out to ensure that the amendments are adequate. It should be noted that any amendments are not to be viewed as a permanent change to the contract of employment.

### **Medical examination**

The organisation reserves the right to require the employee to be examined by a practitioner of its choice in order to seek a medical opinion.

### **Access to medical reports**

In order to gain as much information about the employee's medical condition as possible, the organisation may also request the employee's permission to contact his or her GP and ask for a medical report on the employee's condition. The employee may ask to see this report.

### **Extended absences**

The organisation will be sympathetic when an employee is ill, but the employee should appreciate that if they are persistently absent through ill-health or long-term injury or incapacity, it will not be possible for the situation to continue indefinitely, and their employment may be reviewed or terminated. Termination will not take place without:

- full consultation with the employee
- medical investigation
- a consideration of alternative employment.

Where a return to work does prove possible, the organisation may require that the employee's fitness to return is confirmed by a practitioner of the organisation's choice.

### **Meetings/home visits**

During any absence it is important that the employee keeps in touch so that their manager is kept informed of the employee's health and likely return-to-work date. The employee will therefore be periodically asked to attend meetings with their manager on work premises, for the purpose of

providing information and facilitating an effective return to work. If the employee is too unwell or physically unable to attend the office, the organisation reserves the right to visit him or her at home.

## **Disability**

If the employee has a condition that means they might be considered disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, the organisation will attempt to make reasonable adjustments to their job to accommodate their requirements. The employee will be fully consulted at all times. If reasonable adjustments or alternative employment prove not to be viable options, and there is no likelihood of a return to work in the near future, a decision to dismiss may be the inevitable outcome.

## **Dismissal and the right to appeal**

In the event of a dismissal, the reason for the dismissal and the circumstances leading up to that decision will be documented in writing to the employee. The employee may appeal against their dismissal by writing, within two working days of their receipt of the dismissal letter, to a member of the management committee, owner or director of the organisation, stating the grounds on which they wish to appeal. The appeal will be heard in accordance with the organisation's disciplinary procedure. This right also applies to 'action short of dismissal' such as transfers, demotion and alteration of duties.

## **Statutory sick pay (SSP)**

In most cases, employees between the ages of 16 and 65 will be entitled to claim statutory sick pay as long as they receive average earnings above the lower earnings limit. SSP is paid only from the fourth consecutive day of sickness - period of incapacity to work (PIW). Further periods of qualifying sickness absence within 56 days of the first is treated as one PIW.

Generally speaking a worker on a zero hours contract will be entitled to statutory sick pay if they meet the usual qualifying conditions. Workers whose absence lasts four calendar days or more and who meet the average earnings threshold over the previous eight weeks may be eligible for SSP. The lower earnings threshold is £116 per week at 2017/18 rates. The first three days of absence are unpaid.

Detailed guidance on calculating SSP entitlement can be found on the [HM Revenue and Customs](#) website.

## **Unusual or Unexpected Absence**

Unusual or unexpected absences are not related to sickness such as holidays, maternity/paternity/adoption/parental/dependency leave, career breaks or sabbaticals.

## **Absence due to medical appointments**

Employees that have a medical appointment (eg dentist, doctor, hospital) should inform their line manager as soon as they receive notification of the appointment, if the appointment will require them to be absent during working time. Wherever possible, appointments should be made out with working time. Employees may be required to produce evidence of the appointment, if requested by the line manager. Employees will be expected to attend work before and after the appointment if this is possible.

Employees will not receive payment whilst absent due to a medical appointment.

This policy does not apply to ante-natal appointments which are addressed in a separately.

**Absence due to travel difficulties**

If an employee is unable to attend work due to travel difficulties (for example, a strike relating to public transport, the employee's car will not start; severe traffic disruption) the employee must inform his/her line manager as soon as possible. This should be within one hour of the usual starting time. If possible, employees should carry out work from home. If this is not possible: Employees will be required to take the day as unpaid leave.

**Absence due to other difficulties**

If an employee is unable to attend work due to a personal difficulty that is not covered by dependent leave (e.g. illness of a pet, need to stay in for a tradesman) this absence will be taken as unpaid leave.