



## **Attendance & Absence Management Policy**

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|---------------------|----------------------|
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Southside 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 staff maintain the highest possible level of attendance.
- 1.2 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.

### **Definitions:**

- **Absence**  
Managing absence relates to managing an employee back to work by making reasonable adjustments, where possible, and dealing with the ability to carry out their work duties, taking into consideration any medical advice, the employee's comments and the business needs.
- **Attendance**  
Managing attendance refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of short term, frequent absences, with no reference to any particular absence or medical condition. We will follow this route in line with this Policy and our disciplinary policy and procedure.

## **2.0 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.

## **3.0 PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 The organisation requires good attendance from all employees to meet its objectives.
- If their level of attendance is unsatisfactory, they 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 less concerned with reasons for absence and more with the number of periods of absence/ days absent (excluding underlying health conditions protected under the Equality Act 2010 and pregnancy related absences, including employees undergoing fertility treatment, who have had an embryo transfer and may be pregnant).

- If they 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 to ensure an employee's fitness for work and to discuss any wellbeing concerns.
- Employees must adhere strictly to our absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and organisation sick pay being withheld.
- Managers must maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff to manage absence effectively.

## **4.0 ABSENCE MONITORING**

- 4.1 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, reliable information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health conditions or other issues. The sooner these issues are identified and acted upon – the more likely a successful conclusion for both the employee and the organisation can be achieved.
- 4.2 The association will use absence statistics for monitoring purposes of absence levels and causes of sickness absence.
- 4.3 It is important to keep records up to date as timeously as possible, therefore if a member of staff is absent, details should be passed to HR in order that the system is kept updated and relevant.

## **5.0 ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURES**

### **Reporting**

- 5.1 If an employee cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, early notification by text is helpful, however the employee must phone their line manager (or if not available, another manager) as soon as is reasonably possible. They should do this before they are due to start their shift and if not possible, within one hour of their starting time. In the event of an emergency where an employee cannot make contact on day one of their absence, they should ensure that someone else makes contact on their behalf.

### **Certification**

- 5.2 For every period of sickness absence employees are required to complete a self-certification form. If they are absent for seven days or less this is all the certification that is required. If they are off due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, they must provide a fit note as soon as possible to their line manager.

- 5.3 The fit note will indicate whether the employee is “not fit for work” or ‘may be fit for work’. If the ‘may be fit for work’ box is selected, their line manager will arrange a meeting with them to discuss any adjustments suggested. Employers are not obliged to follow the suggested adjustments, however if these are discussed and not possible the employee will be treated as not fit for work. If appropriate clarification may be sought from occupational health or the health professional that issued the fit note.
- 5.4 If we agree a phased return to work, the days they are still off sick within the agreed period will count as one period of absence.
- 5.5 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 they come back to work before the expiry of their fit note, we may seek professional advice.

### **Keeping in Touch**

It is important that the employee and line manager agree the best method, contact details and frequency of keeping in touch during periods of sickness absence. During contact and meetings, the employee is expected to keep their line manager up to date about the following points:

- The reason for their absence
- Predicted recovery and / or treatment
- When they expect to return to work.

- 5.7 Keeping in contact is an important part of the Association ensuring wellbeing of their employees who are on sickness absence. Therefore, if they fail to keep in contact as outlined above, we will initiate and maintain contact with them.

### **Failure to Comply**

- 5.9 Where the employee does 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 the employee in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Similarly, if we suspect that they have falsified their absence or have deliberately misled us, we will take disciplinary action against them. In serious and/or repeated cases, this may lead to a dismissal.

## **6.0 RETURN TO WORK**

- 6.1 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 the employee is fit to return to work and discuss any wellbeing concerns. This will be completed by their line manager (or another manager if he/she is not available) as soon as is reasonably practicable. Ideally during the first five days of their return to work. It may not always be possible to do this face to face, but they must telephone their manager to carry out the interview or arrange a suitable time for another day. As well as the Return to Work Form each employee must complete a Self-Certification Form for every absence. Completed forms will be kept in their personnel file. The return-to-work interview forms contain confidential information and may only

be viewed by authorised personnel, normally their line manager or any other manager who deals with the case.

6.2 Appendix 1 – Flow Chart for Managing Absence, will help managers to ensure they are following the correct procedures in dealing with any absences of their staff.

**7.0 STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP)**

7.1 If an employee is eligible to SSP this is irrespective to the employee’s 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.

7.2 If the employee is no longer entitled to SSP, they may be entitled to relevant benefits. They can enquire about this at their local job centre or visit [www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus](http://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus). We will inform the employee if they are not entitled to SSP and provide the appropriate government form. It is then their responsibility to claim any other State Benefit which they may be entitled to.

**8.0 COMPANY SICK PAY**

8.1 In any one rolling period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with the following scale.

| <b>Continuous service at the date sickness starts</b> | <b>Full allowance paid for:</b> | <b>Half allowance paid for:</b> |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Up to 1 year  | 5 weeks                         | 5 weeks                         |
| Over 1 and under 2 years                              | 9 weeks                         | 9 weeks                         |
| Over 2 and under 3 years                              | 18 weeks                        | 18 weeks                        |
| Over 3 and under 5 years                              | 22 weeks                        | 22 weeks                        |
| Over 5 years  | 26 weeks                        | 26 weeks                        |

8.2 Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is not a benefit of employment. It is quite different to the sickness allowances mentioned here, and we pay it on behalf of the Government.

**9.0 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT**

9.2 The Association will aim to assist the employee in maintaining a good attendance record. This will involve keeping good records, ensuring return to work meetings are completed and helping investigate and address any identified underlying causes of absence.

9.3 If an employee’s attendance does not improve, the association will manage this in line with the disciplinary procedure up to and including dismissal.

- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 Absence periods related to pregnancy, undergoing IVT, who have had an embryo transfer and may be pregnant, or underlying health conditions classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 will not be considered for the purpose of attendance management process.

### **Attendance review triggers**

- 9.6 Southside H.A. will use a number of methods to monitor attendance. These will provide triggers which will result in an attendance review meeting

### **Triggers**

- 3 periods of self-certified absence (in a 12-month period)
  - 10 days of self-certified absence (in a 12-month period)
  - Clear patterns of absence
- 9.7 A written record of the return-to-work interview will be taken. Where a trigger has arisen, a Performance Improvement Note may be issued. This will be at the manager's discretion as it is not always necessary to issue an Improvement Note. (This is part of the formal disciplinary procedures).
- 9.8 When an absence meets the triggers noted above, this allows the manager to look at patterns of absence. Does the absence follow on from leave, is the absence always after a weekend, or before a weekend etc. Any patterns of absence should be discussed in detail with the employee

## **10.0 ABSENCE MANAGEMENT**

- 10.1 Southside Housing Association will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term and/or underlying health condition. If they find themselves in such a position, they should be confident that their manager will react in a supportive fashion when approached.
- 10.2 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 their absence(s)
  - Any actions that can be taken by the employee
  - Any reasonable adjustments that we could make
  - Any possible redeployment opportunities
  - The nature of the duties in relation to their health conditions
  - Our business needs and the impact that their absence may have upon these
  - Their entitlement to statutory and company sick pay

- 10.3 If a healthcare professional makes suggestions for any reasonable adjustments, these will be discussed prior to the employee's return to work to determine if these can be accommodated, along with any suggestions they or we may also have made.

Although we are not bound by the doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to accommodate the employee's prompt return and good attendance. If we agree to any reasonable adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews to assess if they are still required and suitable.

- 10.4 When managing a long-term absence, a termination of employment for the reason of ill health capability may be considered. Prior to this any possible redeployment opportunities for the employee will be considered. This decision will only be taken 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.*

## **11.0 DISHONEST ABSENCE**

- 11.1 If an employee is found to falsify or exaggerate their 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.

## **12.0 OTHER PROVISIONS**

### **Absence and holidays**

- 12.1 If the employee is on annual leave and falls sick or has an accident, and provides a self-certification or fit note, we may count the period as sick leave and not annual leave. The employee must speak to their line manager on the first day of their return to work or earlier.
- 12.2 If there is a public or general holiday during their period of sickness, and they provide a self-certificate or fit note this will be counted as sick leave, and they will receive the holiday at another time.
- 12.3 If their illness prevents them from taking their holiday entitlement, we will carry over the remainder to the next holiday year.
- 12.2 If they are on sick leave and are fit enough to go on holiday, they should contact their line manager to discuss and agree how this is processed, either as sick pay or using their annual leave entitlement.

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

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

off.

### **Conduct whilst off sick**

- 12.4 When on sick leave, employees are still bound by their contract of employment with us and all our policies including Code of Conduct and their duty of fidelity. We also expect that they do not participate in activities that would be at odds with the reason for their 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**

- 12.5 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.

### **Fertility treatment**

- 12.6 There are a wide range of fertility treatments available, and absences relating to these will be processed as sickness absence or leave for medical appointments.

### **Stress management**

- 12.7 If the employee is off sick with stress related symptoms, their manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that 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. The line manager will follow procedures as outlined in the stress management policy

### **Data Protection**

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

## PART 1: EMPLOYEE SELF-CERTIFICATION FORM

This form must be completed immediately on return to work in the presence of the line manager following all absences (whether for sickness or any other reason) which have not been planned for and authorised in advance. (See Statement of Terms & Conditions of Employment A4). **Sections A and C** are to be completed in all cases. **Section B** is also completed where the absence is due to sickness or injury.

**A. Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dept/Section:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hours of Work:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of days absent:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Reason for Absence: (tick box)**

- a. Own sickness/illness:** complete sections B and C below.  
 **b. Other reason:** give brief reason for absence then complete section C below.

**Reason for absence:**

**B Sickness:**

1. Day & date sickness started:  
First day of absence from work:  
Date of return to work:
2. Brief description of illness/sickness/reason for incapacity for work:

Did they visit the doctor/hospital?

.....

Was a medical certificate supplied?

Name and address of doctor/hospital attended.

.....

.....

3. Was the sickness the result of an injury at work?  
If "yes" was the accident reported? (details of when / to whom)

.....

.....

4. Did the sickness/injury arise out of or in the course of another occupation or sport as a profession?

Were they carrying out any other paid work during their spell of sickness?

**C. Declaration:**

I declare that the information provided by me on this form is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate. I understand that provision of false/misleading information or any abuse if the Sickness Benefit Scheme will be regarded as serious misconduct which could result in Disciplinary Action being taken against me.

**Signed (employee):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (manager):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## PART 2 – RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW

This form should be completed on the employee’s first day of return, if possible, or within 5 days. Please ensure they also complete a self-certificate of absence, and a doctor’s certificate is still required for absence of eight or more consecutive days.

|   |
|---|
| Employee Name:  |
| Manager’s name & position:  |
| Actual date of return to work:  |
| Date of the interview:  |
| <b>Attendance history in the reference period:</b>                        |
| Number of spells:   |
| Number of days:   |
| Any informal action taken (dates and details):                            |
| Any triggers reached to date and formal action taken (dates and details): |
| Any underlying medical condition identified to date:                      |

### Fitness for Work:

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Is the employee fit to resume work:  | Yes | No |
| If absence was medically certified, has the doctor signed off the employee as fit to work: | Yes | No |
| Is there a need for any adjustments at work:   | Yes | No |
| Any additional comments:   |     |    |

### Discussion on latest absence:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| The reason for the employees absence:                              |  |
| Did the employee seek medical advice, if so what advice was given? |  |

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Could the employee have attended work:?                        | Yes | No |
| Is there any underlying cause for the absence?                 | Yes | No |
| Is the absence pregnancy related?                              | Yes | No |
| Has the notification of absence (NOA) procedure been followed? | Yes | No |
| Is the company sick pay to be paid for this absence?           | Yes | No |

**Attendance in the last 12-month reference period**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Number of days absent:   |     |    |
| Review any adjustments put in place so far (if any)                        |     |    |
| Can any adjustments be made to avoid further absences?                     | Yes | No |
| Agree timescales for the adjustments review?                               |     |    |
| Should a medical report be requested?                                      | Yes | No |
| Is the level of attendance satisfactory?                                   | Yes | No |
| If an attendance review trigger has been reached, what action will follow? |     |    |
| Does there appear to be a pattern in the employee’s absence?               | Yes | No |
| If so, what action will follow:  |     |    |
| Discuss possible consequences of further absence:                          |     |    |

**Review**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Is there is a need for a further review? | Yes | No |
| Agree a timescale for review             |     |    |

**Any further comments**

## Declaration

I confirm that the information here is true to my best knowledge and belief. I understand that giving false information regarding my absence from work may result in disciplinary action including dismissal.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Employees signature:</b>   |  |
| <b>Manager's signature</b>    |  |
| <b>Date of the interview:</b> |  |