
Sickness Absence Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

GRAHAM Facilities Management

You are expected to attend for work regularly. The company understands however that you may sometimes be unwell and that because of ill health or injury, you may be unable to come to work for a period of time.

This policy is designed to regulate the procedure for attendance and apply consistent standards throughout the Company. You should familiarise themselves with this policy to be aware of how the company manages sickness absence.

This policy does not confer any contractual rights. The company reserves the right to alter any of its terms at any time although you will be notified in writing of any changes. The Company will also comply with its legal obligations including the duty to make reasonable accommodations.

Whilst this policy is not a disciplinary policy, its provisions can in some cases lead to dismissal.

Where it transpires that an employee is abusing the sickness absence provisions it may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

GRAHAM are committed to being an inclusive workplace where all employees, customers and stakeholders can fully participate and contribute. We strive to ensure accessibility across all facets of our operations, including physical spaces, digital platforms, communication channels and services.

Our People policies are regularly audited against rigorous accessibility standards to ensure compliance and to support every employee.

Anyone who requires additional support or has any questions regarding accessibility can contact the HR team at HR-GFM@graham.co.uk

2. PROCESS

In the event of absence due to sickness you must adhere to the correct notification procedures as set out below.

- On the first day of sickness, you **personally** must notify your immediate manager before you are due to commence work and no later than 30 minutes afterwards to advise that you will not be attending work due to sickness, specifying the reasons for the sickness and the anticipated duration of the absence. If your line manager is unavailable, then you must notify the next most senior manager or a member of the HR department. Voice message and text messaging is not acceptable nor is speaking to another employee.
- If the absence continues for more than one day you personally must keep your manager informed of your progress and the possible duration of your illness.

- If your absence exceeds 2 working days, it must be supported by medical certification and at weekly intervals thereafter. Certificate should be sent to your HR administrator. This certificate will provide cover for a maximum of 7 consecutive days.
- Should your absence continue beyond the period covered by the first Medical certificate MC1 Form, you must continue to submit Medical certificates MC1 Form to cover the entire period of absence. Subsequent Medical certificates must reach Human Resources within 3 days of the expiry date of the current Medical certificate.
- A false declaration regarding absence is a disciplinary offence.
- Should it be deemed necessary, GRAHAM Facilities Management reserves the right to request a medical certificate to cover all periods of sickness absence.
- On your return to work a return-to-work interview will be completed by your line manager. You will be required to submit a signed GRAHAM Facilities Management Self Certification Form covering your entire period of absence. This interview will allow your manager to discuss your health and welfare, provide support, if required, review your attendance to highlight any concerns and update on any job priorities.

3. PROCEDURE

Whilst the company recognises that there are times you are too ill to attend work, there are limits to the amount of absence that the business and colleagues can sustain. The company therefore monitors the absence level of all employees and, where appropriate, takes action to bring about an improvement.

Absence due to disability will be considered separately from any other absences and reasonable accommodations will be made for a disabled employee in line with the law. Absences during the probationary period will also be treated differently.

The company use 'trigger levels' to identify those employees with attendance records that give cause for concern and reserves the right to change the trigger levels by providing employee with reasonably notice. Absences may be dealt with under either Procedure 1 (short term sickness absence) or Procedure 2 (long term sickness absence) as detailed below. At any time during Procedure 1, the company may, at its discretion choose to commence Procedure 2 or vice versa.

It is important that you understand that trigger levels are not an entitlement to sickness absence, and you may be called to account for any level or pattern of absence.

The 'trigger levels' are as follows:

In any 13-week period,

- 3 occasions of absence or 2 occasions of absence totalling 5 working days or more.

Or

In any 52-week period,

- 4 occasions of absence or 3 occasions of absence totalling 15 working days or more.

In any period:

- Any pattern of absence that causes concern such as every Monday off work or absences shortly before or after holiday periods, absences after warnings have lapsed.

Procedure 1 – Short Term Sickness

Counselling interview

Only one of the triggers needs to be reached for the line manager to invite you to attend a counselling interview with your manager/supervisor. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the fact that an absence trigger has been reached and to discuss necessary actions, such as considering a referral to a medical practitioner, implementing any possible reasonable accommodation that may be necessary in relation to a disability, or any possible formal disciplinary action. The line manager may establish that there may be an underlying medical condition, and it may be that advice is required from HR as to the best course of action to take. Disciplinary procedures may not be necessary or appropriate in those circumstances.

A summary of the meeting should be kept on your personnel file.

Verbal Caution

If, following your counselling interview, you are:

- absent again within a 13-week rolling period of your counselling interview

you will be invited to attend a meeting where you may be issued with a Verbal Caution. If there is a substantial and lasting improvement in your attendance, your Verbal Caution will lapse after 6 months from the date it is issued.

Where the company suspects that an employee is abusing the trigger points to avoid a verbal caution the company reserves the right, after an investigation to move to the formal caution stage of the process.

Written Caution

If, during the currency of your Verbal Caution, you:

- have a further period of absence

you will be invited to attend a meeting where you may be issued with a Written Caution. If there is a substantial and lasting improvement in your attendance, your Written Caution will lapse after 12 months from the date it is issued. At the end of 12 months, your line manager will inform you whether the Written Caution has lapsed or when it will next be reviewed.

Final Written Caution

If, during the currency of your Written Caution, you:

- have a further period of absence

you will be invited to attend a meeting where you may be issued with a Final Written Caution. If there is a substantial and lasting improvement in your attendance, your Final Written Caution will lapse after 12 months from the date it is issued. At the end of 12 months, your line manager will inform you whether the Final Written Caution has lapsed or when it will next be reviewed.

Dismissal

If, during the currency of your Final Written Caution you:

- have a further period of absence

you will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss your absence levels and the reasons for it. Your level of absence will be discussed at the meeting and may result in the termination of your employment with notice. You will be informed of your right of appeal.

PROCEDURE 2- LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

This section refers to the handling of long-term absence.

This Procedure is aimed at employees who have an underlying medical condition which is preventing them from working normally, perhaps causing frequent short-term absence or alternatively a longer period of absence. In circumstances such as this the company may consider it appropriate to use Procedure 2.

Under Procedure 2 the company:

- will keep your absences under review
- will keep in regular contact through visits and/or telephone contact where appropriate
- may seek medical reports, which may involve you attending one or more medical examinations with a doctor or health care professional
- where possible, identify and consider with you possible rehabilitation measures which might help you return to work or improve you absence record
- keep any rehabilitation measures that are implemented for you under review on an ongoing basis

The company will deal with each situation on an individual basis and reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to extend the period of paid absence where it believes it appropriate.

The company will try to, as far as is reasonably practicable, provide you with assistance to facilitate an early return to work.

Procedure 2 is aimed at enabling and facilitating your continued employment with the company. Any refusal to cooperate may affect your employment and any entitlement you may have to sick pay.

Regrettably, there may be circumstances where it becomes necessary to consider your future employment with the company.

Should this be the case, we will, where reasonably possible, hold a meeting with you to discuss your absence and your probable future absence, bearing in mind any relevant medical evidence. We will write to you to explain the reason and purpose of the meeting and the possible outcomes. In some circumstances, for example where there is no prospect of your return within a reasonable period of time the meeting may result in your employment being terminated with notice. You will be informed of your right of appeal in these circumstances.

PROCEDURAL STEPS UNDER THIS POLICY

Other than in exceptional circumstances, the company will not issue a Caution (Verbal, Written, Final Written) or dismiss you under Procedure 1 or 2 without:

- Giving or sending you a letter explaining the purpose of the meeting and when and where it will be. The Company will provide you details of your attendance record, any relevant past Cautions and possible outcomes of the meeting. If you have difficulty understanding such a letter, you should ask the HR Manager for an explanation;
- before the meeting, providing you with the relevant information, including any relevant medical reports;
- giving you, together with any permitted representative (see below), a reasonable opportunity to consider your response to that information; and
- explaining the company's position at the meeting and giving you an opportunity to put your case.

The company will confirm the outcome of any meeting where a Caution (Verbal, Written or Final Written), or Dismissal is considered (together referred to as 'formal meetings') in writing.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal meeting, then you can appeal the decision. Appeals should be in writing, setting out the reasons for the appeal and should be delivered to the HR Manager within five working days of the decision. A meeting will be held to discuss your appeal. This may take place after the decision appealed against has taken effect. The company will inform you of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 3 working days of the meeting.

All formal meetings and appeals will be held at a reasonable time and place. If you have been invited to attend a formal meeting or appeal you must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. The company will not unreasonably delay any formal step of Procedures 1 and 2.

You will have the right to request to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official of your choice to any formal meeting or appeal under Procedures 1 & 2.

1. OBTAINING MEDICAL INFORMATION

The company may require you to attend its doctor or other health care professional or we may ask your permission to seek a medical report from your own doctor. This is to gain a clearer picture of your capabilities, your diagnosis and prognosis. This information may be used to consider any alternatives/measures to assist in your return to work, bearing in mind the company's health and safety obligations. Additionally, it may also be taken into account when making decisions about your future employment.

2. SICK PAY

You may be entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) if you are absent due to sickness and if you satisfy the relevant statutory requirements from time to time in force. Qualifying days for the purpose of Statutory Sick Pay are Monday to Friday, unless stated otherwise in your contract of employment. The rate of SSP is set by the government each year and you will be notified of the appropriate rate during your sickness absence.

The entitlement to SSP is due to increase on an annual basis, in accordance with government legislation, as set out below.

- 2023 – 3 days SSP
- 2024 – 5 days SSP
- 2025 – 7 days SSP
- 2026 – 10 days SSP

SSP is paid at a rate of 70% of normal wages up to a maximum of €110 per day. To qualify for SSP, you must have at least 13 weeks' continuous service and provide a medical certificate from your GP certifying you as unfit to work for each day of statutory sick leave.

If you are not eligible to receive SSP, you may be entitled to payment of Illness Benefit from the Department of Social Protection, subject to criteria .

Company Sick pay

Details of any entitlement to receive company sick pay will be set out in your contract of employment .Any company sick pay you receive in accordance with your contract or employment will be inclusive of any SSP due for the same period.

3. HOLIDAY ACCRUAL DURING LONG TERM ABSENCE

Holiday accrual will be dependent on the law prevalent at any given point in time and the company holiday policy.

4. MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS DURING WORKING HOURS

Where possible, routine doctor, hospital, dentist, optician, or other necessary medical appointments should be arranged outside working hours. If this is not possible every attempt should be made for the appointment to be at the beginning or end of your working day. Advance notification of such appointments should always be given and managers have the right to ask for proof of attendance at such appointments. **Hospital appointments/admissions lasting half a day or longer should be taken as sick leave or holiday.**

5. CONDUCT DURING SICKNESS ABSENCE

In all cases of sickness, which necessitates taking time off work, you are expected to do your utmost to facilitate a speedy return to work. GRAHAM Facilities Management would not under normal circumstances expect you to:

- Participate in any sports, hobbies, social or any other activities, meetings, etc which are in any way, inconsistent with your sickness or which could aggravate your condition or delay recovery. There may be some instances however, whereby these activities may be considered therapeutic. GRAHAM Facilities Management reserves the right to seek the necessary professional medical advice on this matter.
- Undertake any other work, whether paid or unpaid.
- Engage in work around the house (e.g.: home improvements) where it is inconsistent with your condition.
- Engage in any other activity, which is inconsistent with the nature of your condition.

The above examples are only illustrative not exhaustive. The type of behaviour expected will depend on individual circumstances and the nature of your condition.

Should you be in any doubt regarding the appropriateness of your behaviour whilst absent due to sickness you should consult your line manager in advance.

Sickness during Holidays

In the event that you become sick during a period of annual leave and this period of sickness is supported by a medical certificate, the period of leave which was originally designated as annual leave will be converted to sick leave. In all cases, you must inform your line manager of the sickness as soon as possible. In addition, production of a medical certificate is mandatory for any period of sick leave during an authorised absence from work.

Protecting your data

All data processed as part of procedures in relation to sickness absence will be handled in line with our data protection policies incorporating the General Data Protection Regulation.