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# Sickness Absence Policy

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POL-026

## 1. Policy Statement

It is the responsibility of John Graham Construction Ltd. (“GRAHAM”) both as an employer and as a business to ensure sickness and sickness absence are controlled effectively. This is in the interests of all employees of the company and all of those customers for whom we provide a service. It is in the interest of all employees that sickness and absence are kept to a minimum.

You are expected to attend for work regularly. The company understands however that you may sometimes be unwell and that as a result of ill health or injury, you may be unable to come to work for a period of time. The company does not require, nor does it wish you to attend work when you are unwell or not fit for work.

This policy is designed to help you when you are absent from work due to illness, as well as enable the company to maintain effective staffing levels. We aim to deal fairly and reasonably with you, should you have either frequent periods or extended periods of sickness absence. You should familiarise yourself 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.

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-JGC@graham.co.uk](mailto:HR-JGC@graham.co.uk)

## 2. Sickness Absence Notification Procedure

In the event of unavoidable 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 you send an initial message via text or other electronic communication, you must follow up with verbal contact before close of business on the first day of absence. If your line manager is unavailable, then you must notify the next most senior manager or a member of the HR department.

- On return to work you will be interviewed by your line manager. You will be required to submit a signed GRAHAM Self Certification Form covering your entire period of absence.
- 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.
- It is the manager's responsibility to update systems for an employee's absence.
- If the sickness absence continues for more than seven consecutive days, including weekends and days off, you must obtain a Fit Note and send this to the HR administrator.
- Should your absence continue beyond the period covered by the first Fit Note, you must continue to submit Fit Notes to cover the entire period of absence. Subsequent Fit Notes must reach Human Resources within 3 days of the expiry date of the current Fit Note.
- A false declaration regarding absence is a disciplinary offence.
- Should it be deemed necessary, GRAHAM reserves the right to request a medical certificate to cover all periods of sickness absence.

### 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.

The company use 'trigger levels' to identify those employees with attendance records that give cause for concern. 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 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.

### 3.1. Procedure 1 - Short Term Sickness Absence

#### **Counselling Interview**

Once your absence reaches the triggers detailed above, you will be invited to attend a counselling interview with your manager/ supervisor. The purpose of this meeting is to make you aware that you have reached the trigger levels, to get an understanding of the reasons for your absence and to make you aware that further periods of absence may result in formal disciplinary action being taken against you.

#### **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. At the end of 6 months, your line manager will inform you whether the Verbal Caution has lapsed or when it will next be reviewed.

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.

### 3.2. 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 considers that it may not be appropriate to implement Procedure 1.

Under Procedure 2 the company will therefore:

- keep your absences under review
- keep in regular contact through visits and/or telephone contact where appropriate
- 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 your 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 to extend the period of paid absence where it feels appropriate.

The company will try to, as far as is reasonably practicable, provide you with assistance to facilitate an early return to work. The company will action a 'may be fit to work' statement on a Fit Note through the employee guidelines on Fit Notes.

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.

### 3.3. 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 why a meeting is being held and when and where it will be. This letter will also set out 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 all relevant information, including 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 department 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 statutory 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 and 2.

Although some timescales are included, it is recognised that it may not always be possible to keep to these. Nevertheless, the principle applies that each stage of the procedure should be completed as quickly as possible and the time limits extended in exceptional circumstances only.

#### **4. Sanctions during Extended Absence**

Where a warning is issued, if the employee goes on extended absence for more than 4 weeks i.e. long-term sick, maternity, sabbatical etc. their sanctions would be paused and continue on their return.

#### **5. Obtaining Medical Information**

As stated above, 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.

#### **6. Sick Pay**

During your probation period you will receive statutory sick pay whilst you are absent from work on sickness leave.

Thereafter, if you are absent due to sickness and you meet GRAHAM requirements regarding notification of sickness you may receive sick pay in any 12 month rolling period as specified in your contract of employment.

The company reserves the right to recover any payment made, where you are in receipt for loss of earnings from a third party.

## 7. 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.

## 8. 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. Managers should notify HR who will update the Holiday System accordingly.**

## 9. 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 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 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.

## 10. Recordings

Notes may be taken at any meeting held under this policy, however recordings are not permitted and are an offence under the disciplinary policy.