



WILLIAMSBURGH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Attendance and Absence Management

Policy and Procedure

Revision History

Creation Date	Reviewer(s)	Review Date
Feb 2023	HR	Feb 2026

This policy statement can be made available in different languages and other formats such as Braille, large print or audio on request.

Introduction

Williamsburgh Housing Association (WHA) recognises that on occasions it may be necessary for employees to be absent from work. We have a duty to provide a reliable service to our customers and thus we need to ensure that we help you maintain the highest possible level of attendance.

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.

This policy and the guidelines it contains work in conjunction with but is not limited to other policies such as discipline & grievance, dignity at work, health & safety and managing stress.

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 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.
- To pro-actively maximise attendance levels through effective attendance management, which includes taking appropriate action where attendance levels are no longer sustainable.

Principles

WHA requires good attendance from all employees to meet its objectives.

- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory you 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 concerned with the number and periods of absence/ days absent.
- Should there be a concern with the reasons for absence then this will be discussed informally with you at the earliest opportunity to see how your manager and the organisation can assist you.
- If you 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 on the first day of your return to work.
- You need to adhere strictly to our absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and organisational sick pay being withheld.
- Managers will maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff to manage absence effectively.

Absence Monitoring

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 information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health conditions. The sooner these issues are identified and acted upon – the more likely a successful conclusion for both you and the organisation can be achieved.

Accurate recording is also an essential element in satisfying potential concerns over the fairness of any actions taken by line managers.

Our HR system and leave systems will keep records of absences and return to work interviews.

Absence Reporting Procedures

Reporting

If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, not already authorised, you must phone and speak to your line manager (or, if not available, another manager or HR) as soon as is reasonably possible. It is expected that you phone as soon as possible and before 10am at the latest.

Fit Notes

If you continue to be absent due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note (which can be obtained from a range of medical professionals) as soon as possible to your line manager.

If the fit note indicates by way of the box for 'may be fit for work' box your line manager will contact you and arrange a meeting with you to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although we are not obliged to follow the doctor's advice, we will do our best to help you return to work and maintain a good attendance record.

You are permitted to return to work before the expiry of your fit note however, we may either ask you to discuss with your medical professional for sign off or we may seek professional advice from Occupational Health.

Keeping in Touch

You are responsible for phoning your line manager to let them know the reason for your absence. After this, you should contact your line manager on a weekly basis, or as agreed between you and your line manager.

While keeping in touch we would expect you to let us know: the reason for your absence, the predicted recovery and/or treatment, when you expect to return to work and, contact the best contact details which can be used during your absence.

If you fail to keep in contact as detailed above, we will contact you.

Failure to Comply

Where you do 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 you in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Similarly, if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will investigate this, and it may result in disciplinary action being taken against you. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

Return to Work

A return-to-work meeting will be carried out after every period of sickness absence. The purpose of a return-to-work interview is to establish if you are fit to return to work and discuss anything the organisation needs to be aware of to support you. This will be done by your line manager (or another manager if they are not available) on the first day of your return to work at the start of your working day. Completed forms will be kept on your personnel file. Return to work interview forms contain confidential information and will only be viewed by those authorised to access it, normally your line manager, HR or any other manager who deals with the case.

Company Sick Pay

In anyone rolling period of 52 weeks, we will pay a sickness allowance in line with the following:

Continuous service at The date sickness starts:	Full Allowance paid for:	+	Half Allowance Paid for:
Up to 1 year	5 weeks	+	5 weeks
Over 1 year and under 2	9 weeks	+	9 weeks
Over 2 years and under 3	18 weeks	+	18 weeks
Over 3 years and under 5	22 weeks	+	22 weeks
Over 5 years	26 weeks	+	26 weeks

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

If eligible to SSP this is irrespective to your 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.

Short Term Absence Procedures

This section refers to dealing with below acceptable levels of attendance, and has no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition.

We will aim to assist you in maintaining a good attendance record. This will involve maintaining good records, ensuring return to work meetings are completed and, helping investigate and address any identified underlying causes of absence.

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.

A review period may be discussed at any stage in Absence procedures once a “trigger” has been breached. The initial review period should not be less than 3 months and no longer than 6 months.

Stage 1 – Informal Attendance Support meetings

In order to support an employee’s attendance at work, WHA operate a “trigger” system whereby absence levels are reviewed and assessed by Line managers. These levels are any of the following:

- 3 separate occasions of absence in any 12-month rolling period:
- 12 days absence (either continuous or totalling 12 days in any 12-month rolling period)
- Any identifiable pattern of absence or recurrent theme of absence reasons.

When a trigger is reached, an individual may be invited to an attendance support meeting whereby the purpose is to offer support to the employee, review and discuss the sickness record and discuss whether further action is required.

The purpose of these informal meetings are to:

- Offer support (may take various forms including Occupational Health)
- Review and discuss the sickness absence record, and ensure accuracy
- Ask the employee to explain the reasons for their absence
- Assess if further action is required

- If further action required, advise employee that if there is not the expected improvement in attendance going forward, and if there is no improvement then it is likely to lead formal action under stage 2 of this process (a review period may be set at this meeting)

Procedures for Stages 2 and 3

Stages 2 and 3 are formal meetings and as such, the employee must be given at least 5 working days' written notice and informed of:

- The date, time and location of the meeting
- The purpose of the meeting
- The right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague
- HR will be in attendance
- That a warning in relation to the absence/attendance levels may be given (which could lead to the termination of employment at Stage 3)
- As this is part of a formal process, the employee is entitled to appeal the outcome. To request an appeal there must be clear details of new evidence or an appeal based on the organisation not following proper procedures.

Table 1.1 – Level of Delegated Authority

Stage in the process	Decision maker	Appeal
1 (informal)	Line Manager	n/a
2	SMT	CEO
3	SMT of another department	CEO

Should the Employee in question be of SMT level then Stage 2 and 3 will be handled by the CEO with the appeal being Management Committee,

Should the employee be the CEO then all stages will be handled by the Management Committee

Stage 2

Prior to the Stage 2 meeting, WHA may request permission to write to your GP or request that you attend an Occupational Health appointment.

The purpose of Stage 2 in the formal process is to discuss your absence(s) and to identify any support that can be provided to assist in either return to work (if on long term absence) or in achieving an improved level of attendance (if recurrent short-term absences).

Your absence record during your review period will be considered, along with any medical advice/information received.

You may receive a written warning detailing the level of improvement expected and should your attendance not improve to the expected level or you have breached another trigger, you will progress to Stage 3 of the formal process.

Stage 3

If, after further monitoring your attendance has not reached the level expected, or your attendance level is not sustained you will be invited to a formal Stage 3 meeting where you will either be given a final written warning, or your employment may be terminated.

An Occupational Health report must be requested if there has not been one in the 3-month period prior to the formal meeting. We may also request a medical report from your GP. If you refuse these options then a decision will be made on the information available at the time.

Where you receive a final written warning, a review period will be set where if there is no improvement you will be invited to a further Stage 3 meeting where the outcome could be termination of employment.

Long Term Absence Procedures

Any absence of 4 weeks or longer will be considered a long-term absence. WHA will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term and/or underlying health condition. If you find yourself in such a position you should be confident that your manager will support you.

Please note, when you are expected to be off for a prolonged period, WHA will expect you to return any equipment which you have in your home.

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 your absence(s)
- Any actions that can be taken by you
- Any reasonable adjustments that we could make
- Any possible redeployment opportunities
- The nature of the duties in relation to your health conditions
- Our business needs and the impact that your absence may have upon these
- Your entitlement to company and statutory sick pay

If a medical professional makes suggestions for any reasonable adjustments, these will be discussed prior to your return to work to determine if these can be accommodated, along with any suggestions you or we may also have made. Although we are not bound by the doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to

accommodate your prompt return to work. If we agree, any reasonable adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews to assess if they are still required and suitable.

When managing a long-term absence, it is possible that termination of employment for the reason of ill health capability may be considered where all other options have been exhausted, and the organisation can no longer sustain the absence.

We will ensure that we seek the appropriate advice when necessary.

Stage 1 - Long Term absence contact

For long term absence the review will be ongoing with contact methods and frequency being agreed between the member of staff and manager. This may differ depending on the nature of the illness however the recommended contact will be weekly telephone updates with a monthly face to face meeting.

For long term absence your line manager will assess when an absence support meeting is most appropriate – they will keep in mind diagnosis, timing of specialist appointments which may require more relevant information.

Stage 2 - Long Term review

The purpose of a long-term absence review meeting will be to establish the nature of your illness, the expected duration of your absence and the general outlook in relation to recovery.

Occupational Health advice and input will be sought when required throughout the absence but certainly before an expected return to work to allow the organisation to consider any potential adjustments that are requested. WHA will also request permission to write to your GP/Specialist for further information.

The aim during long term absence is to support you to return to work as soon as you are well enough to do so. A key part in enabling this to happen is to ensure that you maintain regular contact with your manager during your absence.

For long term absence if you have been unable to return to work by the end of the review period, you will progress to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Long term absence

Stage 3 is a formal meeting and as such, the employee must be given at least 5 working days' written notice and informed of:

- The date, time and location of the meeting
- The purpose of the meeting
- HR in attendance
- The right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague

- That a warning in relation to the absence/attendance levels may be given which could ultimately lead to the termination of employment

Your manager will consider the details of your most recent fit note and any information received from Occupational Health/GP/Specialist. Based on this information your manager will decide as to how best to support your return to work, or where this is unlikely, consider alternative hours or duties.

If medical evidence suggests

- that a return to work will not be possible, or
- will not be possible in the near future, or
- that you will be unlikely to be able to maintain a sufficient level of attendance should you return to work

then your employment may be terminated on the grounds of ill health/capability. However the following options will also be fully considered before reaching a decision:

- reasonable adjustments
- reduced hours/alternative working patterns
- temporary or permanent redeployment, or
- ill health retirement (if appropriate)

Dishonest Absence

If you are found to falsify or exaggerate your 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.

Other Provisions

Disabilities

If you recognise you have a disability which under the Equality Act 2010 which is a “physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to carry out day to day activities.” WHA will do whatever it can to make reasonable adjustments to your role to enable you to carry on working or return to work.

You do not have to be absent from work to request a reasonable adjustment to your role, working environment or working conditions. A request can be made to your manager at any time. Your manager will meet with you to discuss your request. HR and/or Occupational Health may be asked for further advice.

WHA will endeavour to implement reasonable adjustments wherever practical and possible but in some cases it may not be possible to support your request.

Absence and holidays

If during an authorised period of annual leave you fall ill, and you follow the above reporting procedures or provide fit note we may count the period as sick leave and not as annual leave. WHA, do reserve the right to refuse this request if your leave entitlement remains above the statutory minimum of 28 days leave.

If your illness prevents you from taking your holiday entitlement, we will carry over the remainder to the next holiday year. For periods of long -term sick the organisation may cap this at the statutory minimum of 28 days leave.

If you are on sick leave and wish to go on holiday you should contact your line manager to seek authorisation and to let them know how long you will be away for and to ensure communication continues as per agreement.

Doctor/hospital/dental appointments

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

If you have a Hospital appointment then you can receive permitted absence with permission from your manager. Your manager reserves the right to request a copy of the appointment letter.

Conduct whilst off sick

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

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

WHA support staff who go through fertility treatment and understand that this can be a demanding time and there may be a high level of appointments. As this will vary from person to person, you should discuss with your line manager how time off for treatment can be accommodated. As with all aspects of absence these conversations will be treated as sensitive and confidential.

Stress management

If you have an absence related to stress, and in particular work-related stress, your manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that an appropriate action can be taken (if any). This will assist in determining whether conditions at work cause or contribute to stress and whether something could be done to help the situation. We will follow procedures as outlined in the stress management policy. If your absence is certified by a doctor, your manager may request permission to discuss the absence with your doctor or request an Occupational Health appointment.

Data Protection

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Data Protection policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Management Committee or relevant sub committee every three years to ensure that it responds to any changing circumstances.