



# Breakaway

## Sickness absence policy

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<b>Version:</b>	1:3
<b>Date:</b>	April 2024
<b>Review Date:</b>	April 2025



A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be

..... Safe, Secure and Successful

## WHY MANAGE SICKNESS ABSENCE

### 1. To achieve best employment practice.

The management of sickness absence has to be a supportive process.

Valuing staff and demonstrating that value involves:

- Showing concern for, and interest in the employee's health;
- Being aware of their absence, welcoming them back to work and ensuring briefings or developments they have missed are explained;
- Recognising the impact of workload on others as a result of the staff absences;
- Being alert to stress symptoms and taking early supportive action providing access to good occupational medical advice to employees in addition to their GP's support.

The manager will ensure consistency in applying the procedures and ensure they are implemented supportively and not punitively.

### 2. To achieve reduced cost

In front line services sickness absence has an impact on service delivery and ultimately children. In some circumstances sickness absence has to be covered by agency workers, extra hours worked by other staff (overtime) to ensure continuity of service delivery. The costs are therefore in addition to the amount of lost days work identified above.

### 3. To achieve improved productivity

For any organisation it is vital staff attendance is managed properly as poor levels of attendance leads to:

- Loss of service delivery
- Increased pressures on colleagues to cover workload
- Reduction in the quality of service

This procedure enables managers to address absence issues, both short-term and long-term, in a fair, consistent and equitable manner. It is recognised however that all cases must be dealt with on an individual basis because of differing circumstances therefore this procedure gives an outline of the principles to be observed.

This procedure will be invoked where management has cause for concern regarding an employee's short-term persistent or long-term absence.

The SCF recognises that everybody is sick from time to time, however, regular attendance at work is a contractual requirement.

Short-term absenteeism refers to a series of illnesses that are often unconnected which result in frequent, short periods of absence.

In accordance with the SCF's Equality Policy, this procedure will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation trade union membership, or any other personal characteristics in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010.

The policy and procedure will be reviewed periodically giving due consideration to any legislative changes.

## **GENERAL POINTS**

Breakaway procedure for managing absence MUST be followed. It is the responsibility of every staff to report any absence and only in exceptional cases should this procedure be carried out by someone else on their behalf.

If staff knowingly gives any false information or makes false statements about their sickness it may be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken. In proven cases of gross misconduct it could lead to dismissal (e.g. absent on sick leave and working elsewhere).

Staff will not be entitled to an additional day off if they are sick on a statutory holiday.

If staff accrues annual leave during a period of sick leave and is unable to take it before the end of the leave year they will be able to carry no more than the statutory amount of leave forward to the new leave year.

If staff has booked annual leave and then they are sick during this period, the employer will not deduct the annual leave from the staff's entitlement, providing a fit note has been received from the staff to cover the period of illness.

## **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

As staff at Breakaway your role is to:

- Attend work when fit to do so
- Ensure you report your sickness on the first day of absence, prior to your usual start time. If you are unable to reach Team Leader on-call, you should endeavour to reach the Manager or leave an answer phone message for the line manager with a contact number for the manager to call them back.
- You must make this call, the only exception is unless you are incapacitated to the extent that you are unable to and then you should get somebody else to do it for you.
- You should endeavour to report absences to your line manager wherever possible.
- You must not leave messages with colleagues.

When reporting absence you must give the following information:

- The reason for your sickness;
- How long it is likely to last (if known) and;
- If there are any urgent work problems which need to be dealt with in your absence.
- If your sickness continues beyond 3 days, you are required to contact your manager again on the fourth day to confirm you are still sick, give an indication of the reason for the absence and the date you expect to return to work. Seek advice from a Senior Manager or Human Resources if the reasons for your absence are sensitive and confidential.

## **Sickness Certification**

You should provide your Line Manager with:-

- A completed self-certification form to cover ALL absences up to seven days.
- On the eighth day onwards, a fit note should be obtained from your GP or a certificate from the Ward Sister if you are in hospital. The dates of any subsequent fit notes should run consecutively and be produced at regular intervals.
- You should keep your manager apprised about your absence and the date you are likely to return to work (if known).

Please note it is your responsibility to ensure that the SCF is informed of your intention to return to work as early as possible. If you intend to continue to be absent and seek a further fit note from your GP, as a courtesy you should inform the SCF. It is your responsibility to ensure that your fit notes are sent to the SCF regularly

and when they have been issued to cover your absence, failure to do so may impact on your sick pay being suspended until such time as they are received.

### **LINE MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES**

As a manager your role is to:

- use the procedure to ensure consistency and fairness
- ensure that employees are treated sensitively and objectively
- maintain confidentiality throughout the process
- monitor and maintain accurate sickness records
- ensure employees are aware of the procedure for reporting their absence
- carry out return to work meetings
- seek advice from Occupational Health where there are concerns regarding an employee's absence

### **RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS**

On returning to work, employees will be required to attend a return to work interview with their line manager to discuss their absence. The line manager should endeavour to carry out the return to work interview on the employee's first day back at work. This will help highlight any underlying work, domestic or welfare issues related to their absence.

The discussion should allow for an exchange of information and be as frank and as open as possible as this will prevent any misunderstandings concerning the nature of the absence. This will also enable the line manager to discuss any assistance that may be given to enable an employee to return to work or prevent further absence occurring.

A record of the interview should be kept by the line manager.

In general, the following should be discussed:

- the employee's fitness for return to work
- any underlying work, domestic or welfare issues related to the absence
- an update on any workplace developments during the absence
- review the employee's absence record

**Monitoring and Consultation:** The SCF operates an accurate method of recording and monitoring levels of absence. If the amount of time being taken off for illness is giving cause for concern, managers will discuss this with employees at the return to work interview (Trigger Levels).

In cases of long-term absence line managers must arrange to conduct regular 'care and concern' interviews to discuss possible courses of action should the absence continue (these interviews should be recorded and notes sent to the employee concerned). Employees may choose to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative. The line manager may also choose to be accompanied by HR. The regularity of 'care and concern' interviews should ideally be agreed between the line manager and the employee as appropriate in the particular circumstances of each case. If employees are too ill to travel line managers may choose to conduct a home visit at a mutually convenient time.

Please read in conjunction with SCF Sickness Absence Policy for Trigger Levels:

- Informal Stage – Stage One
- Formal Stage - Stage 1 (Formal review)
- Formal Stage - Stage 2 (Sickness Hearing)
- Outcomes at sickness hearing