



The SUN Network Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Staff Absence Policy

1. Purpose and Scope of the policy

1.1 This policy establishes guidelines for Executive Directors and staff in relation to sickness or continued unplanned absences. It is aimed at enabling sickness absence to be addressed consistently and fairly across The SUN Network and sets out procedures for reporting and recording sickness absence. Accurate sickness absence records are important to enable The SUN Network to identify patterns of sickness and work-related health problems.

1.2 Staff who are ill will be treated sympathetically and every effort will be made to assist recovery and safeguard employment. It is recognised however that the loss of working days through repeated sickness absence can be a significant cost to The SUN Network in terms of work not completed or the costs of arranging absence cover. Repeated sickness absence also places additional pressure on colleagues.

Absence

2. Reporting and recording procedures

2.1 Where a member of staff becomes ill while at work and feels too unwell to continue working, his/her Executive Director should give permission for the individual to leave work and, where appropriate, seek medical advice. Absence where at least half of the working day has been worked is not recorded as sick leave. Arrangements covering doctor, dentist and hospital appointments are to be minimised as much as possible during work hours.

2.2 If a member of staff is sick and cannot attend work, they should contact the Executive Director within 1 hour of their normal starting time. Staff should not normally ask anyone else to make contact on their behalf unless it is not possible for them to do so. Staff with a flexible or irregular work pattern should make contact as early in the day as possible if they are expected at work. Staff who have appointments/meetings booked in should give the Executive Director as much notice as possible if they are unable to keep an appointment due to ill health.

2.3 If a member of staff believes that their condition may be related to an activity or incident at work, they should inform the Executive Director. In such circumstances an Accident Report Form should be completed. Depending on the nature of the illness, the Executive Director (or the member of staff) may also wish to contact the Occupational Health Service for advice on how to avoid recurrence of the problem.

2.4 It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to ensure that a record is kept of the whereabouts of the staff (for example who is on holiday, sick leave or special leave and the general location of staff working off-site). The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that all incidents of sickness absence amongst the staff are accurately recorded. When reporting absence from work due to sickness, staff will be required to supply the following information, for the Self Certificated Sick Leave Form on their return to work:

- Period of absence
- The nature of illness (if the employee does not wish to reveal the exact nature of the illness s/he must indicate broadly the cause of the absence)



Staff are expected to contact The Executive Director during their sickness absence at agreed times. For absences of between one and seven consecutive calendar days a Self-Certificated Sick Leave Form must be completed and signed by the individual upon return to work. If the absence is likely to exceed seven calendar days (including non-working days), the employee must obtain a medical certificate from a GP to cover the absence. This should be forwarded to the Executive Director as soon as possible. If the absence continues, medical certificates must be obtained to cover the whole period and, if the absence has exceeded six weeks, the final certificate must contain the date on which the employee is deemed fit to return to work.

3. Absence due to sickness

3.1 If an employee is absent from work on account of sickness or injury, it is the employee's responsibility to inform the Executive Director on their first day of absence, giving the reason for the absence (within an hour of their normal starting time).

3.2 In respect of absence lasting seven or fewer calendar days, employees are not required to produce a medical certificate.

3.3 In respect of absence from work lasting seven days or more (inclusive of weekends), employees will be required to provide a medical certificate (typically a fit note) from their GP or other appropriate medical practitioner as well as making regular contact with the Executive Director informing them of their progress.

3.4 For all sickness leave over seven days, the employee should have a return-to-work interview with the Executive Director.

3.5 In any consecutive (rolling) 12 months, employees are entitled to the following sickness benefits (this relates to any staff member joining The SUN Network on or after April 1st, 2012) followed by Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if applicable under National Insurance ruling.

| Length of Service | Full Pay | | Half Pay |
|---|----------|-------------|----------|
| Up till end of probationary period (6-9 months) | Nil | And: | Nil |
| From probationary end till 1 year | 1 week | | 1 week |
| 1-2 years | 2 weeks | | 2 weeks |
| 2-5 years | 4 weeks | | 4 weeks |
| 5-10 years | 10 weeks | | 8 weeks |
| 10 years+ | 14 weeks | | 10 weeks |

3.5.1 For doctor, dentist and hospital appointments, employees are requested to make these appointments either at the beginning or the end of their working day. Any long-term treatment must be negotiated with the Executive Director.

4. Return to Work Following Sickness Absence

When staff return to work following sickness absence they should report to the Executive Director as soon as possible, check and sign the Self Certificated Sick Leave Form and/or

provide any doctor's certificates that are required to cover their absence. The Executive Director, together with the member of staff, will complete the Sickness Record and store all the relevant documents in the employee's personnel file. Sickness records are confidential and must be stored appropriately

5. Monitoring Sickness Absence

5.1 The Executive Director should regularly review sickness absence to ensure that the organisation is able to function effectively and to check for patterns that give cause for concern or indicate the possibility of health problems that may be exacerbated by the working environment. If a member of staff's absence pattern gives the Executive Director cause for concern it should be discussed with them informally at the earliest opportunity.

5.2 Sickness absence forms from all employees will be collated and recorded by the Organisation.

6. Repeated short-term absence

6.1 We review and take relevant action when an employee hits specific absence trigger points. These are:

- four or more episodes of absence in a rolling 12-month period
- nine working days of absence in a rolling 12-month period
- absences in a short period warranting immediate action. For example, three episodes or six working days in six months.
- a pattern of absence causing concern, for example:
 - regular Fridays or Mondays
 - absences regularly occurring on a particular day
 - pre or post annual leave
 - school holidays
 - public holidays
 - payday

Trigger points for employees working fewer than five days in a week will be pro-rata. The number of days will be pro-rata, but not the number of occasions. We calculate this using nine days divided by five, multiplied by the number of working days. When necessary, we use the average working days. For example, employees working:

- One day per week = trigger point is two working days' absence
- Two days per week = trigger point is 3.5 working days' absence
- Five days per week = trigger point is nine working days' absence

We apply this formula irrespective of the number of hours an employee works in a day. This is important if you condense your working weeks. For example, if you worked 37 hours over four days, the trigger point would be seven working days' absence.

Some employees do not work the same number of days each week. When this is the case, managers will pro-rata the trigger to an average working week. For example, if you work a nine-day fortnight, the average working week of 4.5 days would apply. Your trigger point would be eight working days' absence.

6.2 A Sickness Absence Review (SAR) meeting will normally take place where the trigger number of absences (or days absent) is reached. The employee will be given at least seven days written notice of the meeting (unless the employee agrees to less) and they may choose to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. The SAR meeting will give the employee and the Executive Director a chance to discuss the absence record, the reason for it and, if appropriate, the improvement that is required over a specific period from the employee and the support required by The SUN Network.

6.3 If, during any agreed monitoring period following the SAR meeting, absence exceeds the improvement target this will trigger a second SAR meeting with the Executive Director and one of the other directors. If, following a second meeting, the pattern of sickness continues and the required levels of attendance are not met, the Capability Policy Procedure will be followed.

6.4 If, after a period of satisfactory improvement, sickness absence levels deteriorate again within the following year, it may be deemed inappropriate to repeat a SAR meeting. In such circumstances the Capability Policy Procedure may be invoked.

6.5 A member of staff who fails to comply with notification or certification procedures or who otherwise abuses sickness absence procedures may be subject to further action, which could include use of The SUN Network's disciplinary procedures.

7. Prolonged Sickness Absence

7.1 Long-term sickness is an absence lasting a continuous period of 28 calendar days or more. Our underlying principles are to:

- balance our needs against your circumstances
- recognise that the matters relating to your absence will vary. You may need different responses and actions at different points in time

The Executive Director will maintain contact with you during a long-term absence. They will start absence review meetings after four weeks of absence, or before if appropriate. These will continue throughout the period of long-term absence.

The Executive Director must consider the circumstances regarding your absence. They should base absence management meetings on a particular set of facts.

If you know the expected duration of the absence, there may be no need to hold absence management meetings. For example, planned surgery. The Executive Director should, however, keep regular contact with you throughout the period of absence.

If you do not return on the expected date or extend your absence, the Executive Director may:

- insist upon review meetings
- invoke the sickness absence procedure

The Executive Director must be able to maintain contact with you to:

- monitor your progress and return to health
- support you and keep you informed about events in the workplace
- provide information so that you may make informed decisions. For example, concerning sick pay entitlement
- seek advice and guidance from occupational health
- encourage a return to work as early as possible
- facilitate a phased return to work if required, by making appropriate adjustments

If you return to work for short periods, the Executive Director will continue to use the long-term absence approach. They do not have to switch between long and short-term sickness absence approaches.

You can move to a long-term absence after the sickness absence procedure. In this case, the Executive Director will continue with the next stage of the sickness absence procedure. It will not restart from the beginning.

7.2 The Executive Director will appraise the Chair of Directors or seek advice from ACAS Employment Services in cases of long-term sickness absence of four weeks or more. In such cases, following discussion with the Executive Director, the member of staff is likely to be referred to the Occupational Health Service for advice on the nature of the illness, a likely date of return and any rehabilitation/reasonable adjustments advice. The individual will be informed of the referral in advance and no confidential information about diagnosis, treatment or prognosis will be disclosed to the organisation without the consent of the employee concerned.

7.2 The Executive Director should maintain contact with the member of staff in order to remain updated about the likely duration of the sickness absence and to offer support. The member of staff has a responsibility to update the Executive Director regularly on their likely date of return to work.

7.3 Referral to the Occupational Health Service is likely to entail contact with the individual's GP or Consultant which will require consent under the Access to Medical Records Act 1988. Following a prolonged period of sick leave, the Occupational Health Service can advise (if necessary) on rehabilitation to enable the employee gradually to undertake their full range of duties. This may include an initial period of reduced hours or performing alternative duties. Where the hours of work are reduced following a return to work, this would normally be on full pay for a limited period of up to four weeks.

7.4 Where appropriate, once advice has been received from the Occupational Health Service the individual will be invited, in writing, to a meeting with the Executive Director to discuss the advice received. They may choose to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague and at least seven working days' notice will be given (unless the employee agrees to less). If an employee has an underlying medical condition that they wish to have taken into consideration, a letter confirming the condition must be obtained from their GP/Consultant.

7.5 If the member of staff is considered by the Occupational Health Service to be permanently unfit to resume their duties, an amendment to the job description will be considered and, if that is not possible, redeployment into another type of work will be explored. The individual's views will be taken into account in the exploration of options. Following the meeting, the content of the discussion and any action to be taken, will be confirmed in writing. In some cases, more than one meeting will be necessary and if the individual is unable to travel, a meeting can take place at their home if they prefer. Alternatively, a written representation can be submitted.

7.6 A member of staff may appeal against Occupational Health Service advice by confirming the grounds of the appeal to the Chair of Directors in writing within 15 working days of receiving confirmation of the advice. In these circumstances the Chair will seek a second opinion from an independent Occupational Health practitioner and the individual will have the opportunity to refer the independent practitioner to their Consultant, GP etc.



7.7 If the member of staff is considered by the Occupational Health Service to be permanently unfit to return to their post and redeployment is not possible, early retirement on the grounds of ill health will be pursued. You will be paid any outstanding wages and holiday pay.

7.8 If a member of staff is deemed permanently unfit for employment and ill health retirement is not possible, consideration will be given to termination of his/her employment under the Capability Policy Procedure. Every effort will be made to meet with the individual at this point but where this is not possible, consultation will take place in writing.

7.9 Following consultation, if termination of employment is appropriate, this will be confirmed in writing by the Executive Director, and the right of appeal against the decision and the mechanism for appealing will be explained.

8. Jury service/witness at court

If an employee is called to Court, they will be paid their normal salary. If this is the case, the employee must inform the Executive Director as soon as is practical of the dates/times when they will be attending Court, so that arrangements can be made for cover during their absence.

9. Maternity/paternity leave and pay

9.1 The rules in respect of maternity/paternity leave, pay and rights to return to work are fairly complex. In view of this, employees are to contact the Executive Director who will provide them with details of the current legislation.

9.2 However, the organisation would encourage any employee who suspects that they are pregnant to notify the Executive Director immediately so that a risk assessment can be conducted in case they are employed in a post which could pose a risk to their health or to that of their unborn child.

9.3 The organisation will allow a pregnant employee reasonable time off work to attend an appointment for antenatal care which has been made on the advice of their doctor, midwife, or health visitor.

10. Compassionate leave

The SUN Network will give sympathetic consideration to any hardship or difficulty which might arise if staff have to ask for absence from work on compassionate grounds. Such difficulties might include bereavement, religious holidays, or illness of a dependant relative or close friend. Each request for compassionate leave will be considered individually and may be with or without pay, or on reduced pay.

11. Other unpaid leave

The SUN Network may in certain circumstances, consider requests for special unpaid leave, however you are expected to use your paid annual leave first. Any further time off for special reasons will only be granted at the absolute discretion of The SUN Network, and you have no contractual or statutory right to be paid for this leave. You should approach the Executive Director in the first instance, and provided that your absence will not have a detrimental effect on the service, the request will be considered for a decision. Only one such request



may be approved within a period of three years. Please be aware that extended periods of unpaid absence may affect your continuity of employment.

12. IVF leave

12.1 Fertility Treatment - Members of staff who have completed 12 months' service with us may be granted unpaid leave for fertility treatment or the support of a partner undergoing the same.

12.2 Female staff personally undergoing fertility treatment. Wherever possible, appointments related to fertility treatment should be arranged outside of working hours. Where this is not possible, a member of staff may be **granted up to 5 working days of unpaid leave in any 12-month period** for the purpose of receiving and recovering from IVF treatment and to attend appointments specifically associated with the IVF process (i.e. pre-booked interventions for consultant appointments, collection and delivery of eggs, monitoring tests, etc.).

12.3 Should the member of staff require time off because of the side effects of the treatment, this will be subject to The SUN Network's normal sickness absence provisions. Sickness absence associated with IVF will not be regarded as 'pregnancy-related'

12.4 The unpaid leave can be taken to suit the member of staff's needs, subject to operational circumstances, e.g., in one block, separate days or half days. The leave entitlement will be pro-rated for part-time members of staff according to their normal weekly working hours.

12.5 Members of staff supporting a partner undergoing fertility treatment -If it is an essential requirement within the course of the treatment for the partner to attend a specific appointment, The SUN Network will allow eligible employees up to one day's unpaid leave in any 12-month period to support fertility treatment.

13. Adverse weather

With staff having the option of working from home, adverse weather is unlikely to prevent people from working, however in the event that adverse weather impacts on a staff members ability to travel safely to meetings or appointments, every effort must be made to ensure that meeting is moved to another means, e.g., online or over the phone.

14. Annual Leave and public holidays

Employees holiday year begins on 1st January and ends on 31st December each year, during which they will receive a paid holiday entitlement of 27 working days in each calendar year (pro-rata for hours actually worked) plus public/bank holidays. This entitlement to holiday will increase by one additional day after three years completed service, a further additional day after five years completed service and two additional days after 10 years completed service to a maximum of 31 days plus public/bank holidays.

Your annualised holiday entitlement will therefore be 27 days per annum. (Pro-rata for part time employees)



In your first holiday year your entitlement will be proportionate to the amount of time left in the holiday year.

The public/bank holidays each year are typically:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| New Year's Day | The last Monday in May |
| Good Friday | The last Monday in August |
| Easter Monday | Christmas Day |
| The first Monday in May | Boxing Day |

In the event of termination of employment holiday entitlement will be calculated as 1/12th of the annual entitlement for each completed month of service during that holiday year and any holidays accrued but not taken will be paid for. However, in the event of you having taken any holidays in the current holiday year, which have not been accrued pro-rata, then the appropriate payments will be deducted from your final wages/salary.

15. TOIL

A degree of flexibility is both required and offered by The SUN Network to cover operational obligations. Any TOIL accrued or taken must be agreed with the Executive Director. Toil accrued will not be in excess of one working day. (pro rata for part time staff) unless by prior agreement with the Executive Director.

Approved by the board of directors: October 26th 2022

Jonathan Wells
Chair of Directors

Date: October 26th 2022

Lois Sidney
Executive Director

Date: October 26th 2022

Date for review: October 2025

Responsible Officer: Executive Director