



Absence Management Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority recognize that there are occasions where individuals are unable to work/fulfil their duties due to reasons of sickness. This policy is intended to explain the process and to support a return to work.
- 1.2. You should stay away from work if you are too unwell to carry out your duties for us. We want to make sure that you understand our approach to sickness absence and know the processes that we follow for short-term and long-term absence.
- 1.3. This Policy:
 - a Explains how you should report any absences from work due to sickness.
 - b Sets out how you will be paid if you are off work due to sickness.
 - c Explains what we regard as an unauthorised absence and how such absences will be handled.
 - d Sets out our approach to short-term absence.
 - e Explains when we might seek a medical opinion in relation to your health and how we might go about doing that.
 - f Sets out our approach to long-term sickness absence.
 - g Sets out the support measures in place for any return to work following sickness.
 - h Sets out other reasons why you may need to take time away from work and our approach to them.
- 1.4. Please note that this Policy does not form part of your contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend or remove this, Policy.
- 1.5. This Policy applies to all employees.

2. Reporting your absence from work

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- 2.1. If you are unwell and unable to work, then you should phone your Line Manager (or Director/Business Services Manager if your Line Manager is unavailable) as early as possible and in any event by 10am to confirm that you are sick and will not be at work. You must not notify your absence by email, or via social media. You may be asked to provide some details about the reason for your absence, whether you are going to see a doctor and to let us know how long you may be unable to work. We realise that you might not know this straight away – we just ask that you keep us informed as your absence develops. The more information you provide to us, the easier it will be for us to manage and support your absence.
- 2.2. For the first seven days of absence (including any non-working days, weekends and bank holidays), you will be asked to self-certify. This means that you do not need to provide us with a fit note from your doctor. You will just be asked to complete a self-certification form on your return to work (Authority's blue sick form).
- 2.3. If your absence continues for longer than seven days, then we will need you to obtain a fit note from your doctor or other healthcare professional covering the remainder of your absence. You should send your fit note to the Business Services Manager.
- 2.4. A fit note includes details of the reason for your absence and allows your doctor or other healthcare professional to stipulate whether you are 'not fit for work' or whether you 'may be fit for work'. If the fit note states that you 'may be fit for work', then they are invited to provide details of any measures we could take to help you return. If your fit note provides this information, then we will generally arrange a meeting with you to discuss whether we are able to put these measures/reasonable adjustments in place (which will depend on the needs of the business and our resources and capabilities). If we are not able to facilitate your return, then you will continue to be treated by us as if you are not fit for work.

3. **Keeping in contact during sickness absence**

- 3.1. We expect you to maintain regular contact with us during any period of sickness absence. This will generally be by telephone with your Line Manager.
- 3.2. We, for our part, will maintain regular contact with you to discuss your wellbeing, the expected length of your continued absence from work and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.
- 3.3. This will usually be via telephone calls or emails from your Line Manager/Business Services Manager, but we will modify our contact arrangements if necessary to take account of the reason for absence.
- 3.4. We expect you to cooperate with our requests for updates on your condition.

4. **Sick pay entitlement**

- 4.1. Your contract of employment sets out your pay entitlements when you are off sick.

During 1st year of service: 1 month's full pay and (after completing
4 months' service) 2 months' half pay.

During 2nd year of service: 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half
pay.

During 3rd year of service:	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay.
During 4th and 5th years of service:	5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay.
After 5 years' service	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay.

5. Holidays and sickness

- 5.1. When you are off work sick, you continue to accrue holiday. You are able to contact the Authority to request holiday whilst you are off sick. In such cases, you will be paid holiday pay rather than sick pay for the days which you request to be treated as holiday.
- 5.2. If your sickness absence spans two holiday years, then you may be able to carry forward untaken holiday from one year to the next, subject to certain restrictions. Requests for holiday carry over will need to be authorised by the Chief Executive.
- 5.3. If you become unwell while on holiday, then we will usually allow you to convert your holiday into sick leave. You must report your absence as set out above and provide evidence of sickness, which we will request. If approved, you will be able to take your holiday at another time.

6. Unauthorised absence

- 6.1. If you fail to turn up for work without good reason, then your absence will be treated by the Authority as being unauthorised. Unauthorised absence includes any sickness absence which is not covered by required supporting evidence (for example, a fit note) or absence where you might be entitled to self-certify but you have not contacted us to tell us about your sickness absence.
- 6.2. If your absence from work is unauthorised, then you will not be entitled to receive pay or any other benefits. We reserve the right to deduct from your pay to take account of your unauthorised absence.
- 6.3. Unauthorised absence is a disciplinary matter which will be handled under our Disciplinary Policy and procedure and may result in the termination of your employment.

7. How we deal with short-term absence

- 7.1. Short-term absence can have a real impact on our services. Effective management of short-term absence to make sure that it does not happen too often is, therefore, important.
- 7.2. We will always take the time to discuss your absence with you. This will be done at return-to-work meetings following any period of absence regardless of duration. We will ask what we

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can do to help you to maintain good attendance and try and understand the reasons why you may be failing to reach our attendance standards. On occasion, this may involve asking for your permission to obtain information and support from a medical professional which may include your own GP or the Authority's Occupational Health provider.

- 7.3. We aim to manage short-term absence by following a trigger system which monitors short-term absence levels and triggers formal action if patterns begin to emerge.
- 7.4. Our triggers are 3 periods of sickness absence in a 6-month period or 10 days sickness absence in a 12- month period. You will be made aware of any trigger points that you may have reached during your return to work or during communication with your Line Manager whilst on long- term sickness absence.
- 7.5. If trigger points are hit then the process as detailed in the Authority's Capability Policy and procedure should be followed.
- 7.6. We will always take the time to understand the background to any absence and will not operate this system in a vacuum.
- 7.7. We will make reasonable adjustments to the above process to take account of individual circumstances and any disabilities. For example, absences relating to pregnancy will be discounted and absences relating to a disability will be considered alongside medical evidence such as Occupational Health reports.

8. **Disabilities**

- 8.1. We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the sickness absence meetings procedure (both long-term and short-term), particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.
- 8.2. If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which impacts your ability to undertake your work, you should inform your Line Manager along with the Business Services Manager. Any information you provide will be handled in a confidential manner and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

9. **Seeking a medical opinion**

- 9.1. We may, at any time in operating this Policy, require you to attend a medical examination by either or both of our Occupational Health Department and/or a doctor nominated by us (at our expense).
- 9.2. We will ask for your consent for us to have full access to medical reports and to discuss the contents with the relevant medical practitioner. You do not have to consent, but if you don't, we will make decisions based on existing medical and other information.

10. **How we deal with long-term absence**

- 10.1. We define long-term absence as any absence from work which lasts longer than 20 working days or pro rata for part- time employees. Once an absence has been continuing for a period of 20 working days or more, we will usually arrange an absence review meeting with you. This

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is an informal meeting at which we can discuss the reason for your absence and any help or assistance that we may be able to provide. This meeting can take place either at work or at home or in a mutually agreeable location.

- 10.2. We will maintain regular contact with you throughout any period of long-term absence. We will discuss with you the best way to do this, bearing in mind the reason for your absence, and we will be sensitive to your needs.
- 10.3. We may, at any point during your absence, seek to obtain a medical opinion regarding your condition and likely timescale for recovery. This request may be made at our first informal meeting with you or at any time during your absence from work. Any request will be processed in line with the 'Seeking a medical opinion' section.
- 10.4. We will hold regular absence management meetings with you during your long-term absence to keep up to date with your prognosis, any adjustments which we may be able to make to enable you to return, the impact that your absence is having on the business and any support we can provide. We will discuss the most appropriate way to hold these meetings with you – for example, we could agree to hold them at your home, at an agreed location or remotely via video conference.
- 10.5. If your absence continues and we believe (whether based on medical evidence obtained or otherwise) that you are unlikely to return to work for some time, then we may proceed to hold a formal absence management meeting with you. You are entitled to be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative. In the letter inviting you to this meeting, we will warn you that dismissal may result. At the absence management meeting, we will normally cover the following:
 - a A review of the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with you.
 - b Whether there have been any changes since the last meeting, regarding either your possible return to work or opportunities for return or redeployment.
 - c Whether there are any reasonable adjustments which could be made to allow you to return to work
 - d The impact that your absence is having on the Authority.
 - e Any further matters that you wish to raise.
 - f Whether there is a reasonable likelihood of you returning to work in a reasonable time
 - g The possible termination of your employment (termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice).
- 10.6. As with the formal meetings for short-term absence warnings for long-term sickness at each stage of this procedure generally remain live on your file for [6/12/24] months, although we reserve the right to extend the length of time that a warning remains live in appropriate circumstances.

11. Returning to work following absence

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- 11.1. We will hold a return-to-work meeting with you after sickness absence, even if it is only one day. A note will be taken of the meeting, which you will be asked to sign, and which will be retained on your personnel file for future reference.
- 11.2. At the return-to-work meeting, we will discuss the reason for the absence and any support we can provide to improve future attendance levels. A discussion will also take place if you have hit any of the sickness absence triggers. (10 or more days absent in a 12-month period or 3 separate cases of absence in a 6-month period).
- 11.3. If you are returning from a period of long-term sickness absence, then we will, where appropriate and possible, support your return by:
 - a Obtaining medical advice (if you agree that we are able to do so and sign all appropriate consents)
 - b Making reasonable adjustments to the workplace and/or your duties
 - c Considering redeployment
 - d Considering a phased return to work
 - e Undertaking the full induction process with you.

12. Other types of absence

12.1. Jury service

If you are called for jury service, you must tell your Line Manager & Business Services Manager as soon as possible. While you are on jury service, you will receive full pay, minus any allowances paid by the court.

12.2. Other public duties

We will allow you time off to carry out duties in some public roles, including magistrate and school governor. As soon as you know what your duties are and have dates for hearings/meetings you must attend, you should tell your Line Manager so that we can plan for your absence from work. While you are carrying out these duties, we will pay you your normal wage.

12.3. Family-related absences

We cover all other types of time off for family-related matters – including maternity, paternity, shared parental, parental and adoption leave – in our separate Worklife Balance Policy.

12.4. Carrying out trade union duties

If you are elected as a trade union official, you are legally entitled to reasonable time off to fulfil your obligations, and you will be paid at your full basic rate for all related absences during working hours. We will not pay you for duties carried out outside working hours.

13. Useful links and documents

13.1. The following internal policies contain additional information:

- a [Disciplinary Policy]
- b [Capability Policy & Procedure]

- c [Equal Opportunities Policy]
- d [Data Protection Policy]
- e [Worklife Balance Policy]

14. Administration of the Absence Management Policy

14.1. The Business Services Manager is responsible for the administration of the Absence Management Policy.