# **SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY GUIDELINES**

Because employers will have different rules and expectations with regard to reporting, monitoring and managing absence, it is advisable to adopt a policy which reflects your specific context and rules.

These guidelines are designed to help small charities consider the range of factors that may be relevant when drafting such a policy.

When drafting your organisation’s Sickness Absence Policy, use the following questions/points to guide the areas to cover:

* Who does the policy apply to?
* Statutory sick pay – explain what this is, the eligibility criteria and when it applies.
* Occupational sick pay – if you offer enhanced sick pay as a contractual benefit, explain what this is and whether it is linked to any particular length of service. Be clear about the limit of any enhanced sick pay and how it accrues (for example 10 days full pay within the past 52 weeks).
* Explain the procedure which employees must follow to report sickness absence. Who should they report to? By what time should they report? Should this be via any particular communication method (for example by telephone only or is a text adequate)? Can someone else make contact on their behalf? If they remain absent for a prolonged period of time, how often should they make contact?
* Certification – do you have a self-certificate to be completed for absences 7 days or less? What should the employee do if their absence lasts for more than 7 days? If you require them to obtain a doctor’s certificate who should they give it to? And by when?
* Return to work meetings – do you hold these? We recommend that you do because they may help to identify problems at an early stage. When should they be completed? Who by? What happens to the information obtained during the meeting? If you don’t hold return to work meetings then you should not put them into a policy.
* Do you have any particular health and safety rules around staff remaining off work following gastrointestinal upsets when working with food preparation or schools?
* Monitoring – how are absences recorded and monitored? Over what time period (frequently over a rolling 52 week period)?
* Long term absence – how do you define long term absence? What contact will the organisation have with an employee on long term sickness absence? If the absence persists, what procedure will be followed to manage their absence (for example do you have a specific long term sickness absence management procedure or will you follow the organisation’s performance improvement procedure)?
* Short term absence – how do you define short term absence? Do you have any ‘trigger’ points? If the absences are excessive, what procedure will be followed to manage their absences (for example do you have a specific short term sickness absence management procedure or will you follow the disciplinary procedure)?
* Medical examination – explain that you reserve the right to request employees to undergo a medical examination and that you will pay the cost of any such examination. Explain the employee’s rights with regards to Data Protection as well as the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988.
* Health and wellbeing – as part of your approach to health and wellbeing at work, you may provide support to staff via an Employee Assistance programme. You may want to refer staff to other sources of help and information such as the [Fit For Work website](https://fitforwork.org/).
* When managing absence, take care not to inadvertently discriminate against staff whose absence levels may be affected by maternity or disability.
* Employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities. Your policy should reflect your approach to supporting staff with disabilities.
* Data Protection – personal information regarding health is classified as sensitive data and legislation places stricter controls on collecting and processing sensitive information. The sickness policy should refer to the data protection and privacy notices.

The HR Services Partnership can help you draft a policy or procedure which is specific to your organisation. As an NCVO Trusted Supplier we offer preferential rates for members of NCVO.