



ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NWH Group Limited
Reviewed- January 2026

Policy Statement

NWH is committed to improving the health, well-being, and attendance of all employees. We value the contribution employees make to our success. So, when an employee is unable to attend work for any reason, we miss that contribution. This absence policy explains what we expect from managers and employees when dealing with absence.

Key Principles

Our absence is based on 3 key principles:

1. As a responsible employer, NWH undertakes to provide Statutory Sick Pay to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness.
2. Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment – we ask every employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance. This will improve teamwork, productivity, and overall business objectives.
3. NWH will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes:
 - 'special leave- domestic absence' for necessary absences not caused by sickness
 - a flexible approach to the taking of annual leave
 - rehabilitation programs in cases of long-term sickness absence.

To achieve the above:

We will consider any advice given by the employee's GP on the 'Statement of Fitness for Work'. If the GP advises that an employee 'may be fit for work' we will discuss with the employee how we can help them get back to work – for example, on flexible hours, or altered duties.

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We will use an occupational health adviser, where appropriate, to: help identify the nature of an employee's illness advise the employee and their manager on the best way to improve the employee's health and wellbeing.

The NWH disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.

NWH respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness. This policy will be implemented in line with all data protection legislation and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988.

Absence Procedures

1. Absence Reporting

Employees are required to contact their line manager by telephone no later than one hour before your scheduled start time on the first day of absence. Text messages are not acceptable and if you are unable to call personally then your next of kin should call on your behalf. The employee should advise his/her line manager of the reason for the absence and its likely duration.

Where the absence extends beyond one day, the employee should keep his/her manager updated on his/her progress. Contact must be made **daily** unless a doctor's certificate has been provided with a future end date.

Where the absence extends beyond one week, the employee is required to submit a doctor's certificate setting out the reason for the absence and its likely duration. Such certificates should cover all periods beyond a week that the employee is absent through ill-health.

Where NWH has a reasonable concern as to the employee's health, we may require the employee to obtain a certificate from their GP certifying that the employee is fit to return to work.

2. Short-term absences

Following every absence whether due to ill health, bereavement, or other emergency absences, employees are required to attend a 'Return to Work' interview with his/her line

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manager. These meetings are designed with the employee in mind to ensure that they discuss with their line manager the reason for the absence, their fitness to return to work, both physically and mentally; and whether any underlying medical or other problems require to be addressed.

Where we view the number or length of short-term absences as unacceptable, further meetings may be held with the employee. If relevant, the employee may be asked for permission to approach his/her GP so that a medical report on the employee's health is obtained.

Proceedings under the NWH disciplinary policy may be taken with respect of those employees whose attendance record is unacceptable.

3. Long- term absences

Where the employee's absence extends beyond four weeks, this will be viewed as a long-term absence.

Employees are expected to maintain regular contact with their line manager during all absences. In the case of long-term absences, we may request to meet with the employee to discuss his or her continued absence. Such meetings are not to discipline employees but rather are designed to explore the reasons for the absence and what steps can be put in place to allow the employee to return to work. If necessary, meetings can be arranged at an employee's home or on alternative premises.

In the case of long-term absence, we may request that the employee permits to attend a meeting with Occupational Health to obtain a report on their condition and likely ability and timescales for returning to work. As part of this process, Occupational Health may request permission to approach their GP or another doctor who is treating the employee to obtain further information. The doctor may also be asked for his/her prognosis on the employee's condition and what measures can be put in place to facilitate a return to work.

NWH will meet with the employee to discuss any medical information received, and considering this, discussions may take place on the employee's future employment with the company.

NWH will take all reasonable steps to facilitate a return to work, and to this end will gather as much relevant medical information as it considers necessary, together with regularly meeting the employee. Note that where the employee refuses permission for us to approach his/her doctors, and/or refuses to meet with us, a decision on the employee's

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continued employment may have to be made in the absence of this information or these meetings.

4. Access to Medical Records

Employees have certain rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988. Should the company find it necessary to obtain a medical report, then the employee will be asked for his or her written consent. At the time of the request for consent being made, the employee will be advised of his or her rights under the Act.

5. Sick Pay

All employees are entitled to payment of SSP in respect of absences on the grounds of ill-health, subject to them meeting the relevant qualifying conditions. The main qualifying conditions are that:

- The employee has commenced work with the company

Note that SSP is payable after day one of absence. SSP is paid up to a maximum of 28 weeks.

If employees have any queries in relation to SSP payments or qualification, employees should contact their Line Manager or HR for further support.

6. Self-Certification Records/Return to Work

On return to work from a period of absence that was not covered by a doctor's certificate, the Line Manager will complete a 'Return to Work Form' with the employee to record the absence and discuss issues or concerns. This will be signed by the employee and manager and returned to HR to be recorded in their personnel files.

This form must be completed and sent to HR in the first day of return from Sickness in order that Sick pay records are correct and to ensure that normal pay resumes thereafter.

If an employee requests to return to work prior to the end of their doctors certificate (Fit Note) then this may be possible provided the manager and employee meet and agree that they are fit enough to carry out their duties. Common sense MUST prevail and the NWH Return to Work Form should be completed detailing the decision and any alterations to duties that are to be made and the timescales if required.

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7. Trigger

Points & Disciplinary Action

If sickness is habitual and affects the performance of an individual and the business then their absence will be closely monitored and supported as referred to in the Policy Statement. However, if the absences do not improve or are not supported by medical reports then disciplinary action would be taken as a last resort. The formal procedures and 'Points' are as follows:

1. **The formal procedures for managing sickness absence will be triggered if an individual reaches 5 or more working days of absence, over three or more episodes of absence, during any rolling 6-month period or a single absence of 4 or more weeks of long-term sickness absence.**

E.G. 3 PERIODS OF ABSENCE TOTALLING 5 DAYS OR MORE IN 6 MONTHS

2. Before the formal procedures are triggered, the line manager should normally provide an informal indication to the employee that this may happen, for example during a previous return to work meeting. If, as part of this process, matters come to light that indicate that a member of staff has an impairment/condition that is directly relevant to the sickness absence, the manager should first seek advice from HR who may recommend a referral to Occupational Health for support.
3. A four-stage process is outlined below but it should be noted that each case will be treated individually and therefore some flexibility within the procedures may be required.
4. Where an employee has had a single period of long-term sickness absence, e.g. following an operation, it may be sufficient to hold a return to work interview, to support and facilitate a return to work and not proceed to formal procedures.
5. Where there are repeated patterns of long-term sickness or a combination of short and long-term sickness the formal procedure (stages 1 - 4) should be followed.

For circumstances where, following HR and/or Occupational Health advice, an employee is unable to return to work consideration should be given to ill health retirement.

Stage Procedures

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- Verbal Warning & targets set for improvement
- Formal Warning & targets set for improvement
- Final Written Warning
- Dismissal Date

6. At every stage, NWH will aim to provide as much support to the individual as is necessary for them to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of attendance.

7. If a target is set at any stage and has been met, but another Sickness Absence Meeting is then triggered within 6 months, this procedure can be restarted from the next stage.

8. If, with support, a satisfactory level of attendance has not been achieved or maintained it may become necessary to issue a formal warning, to inform the employee that his/her job may be at risk if attendance levels do not improve

9. If, with support, and following a formal warning, a satisfactory level of attendance has not been achieved or maintained, it may become necessary to dismiss the employee on the grounds of capability.

Signed:

Date: 15/01/2025

Gavin Money

Managing Director

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