



# Attendance & Absence Management Policy

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## **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Ardenglen Housing Association can provide this procedure on request, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in other non-written format, and in a variety of languages.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Ardenglen recognises that on occasions it may be necessary for staff to be absent from work. However, we also have a duty to provide a reliable service to our customers and thus we need to ensure that we help you maintain the highest possible level of attendance.

This policy is designed to help all employees achieve good attendance, and to ensure that a consistent and fair approach in managing attendance is adopted throughout the organisation.

This policy and the guidelines it contains are not intended to replace other policies, such as Discipline & Grievance, Dignity at Work, Health & Safety, Managing Stress, etc.

### **2. AIMS OF THE POLICY**

- To manage attendance in a way that reflects genuine concern for staff, and to develop a positive attitude towards attendance.
- To set clear expectations for standards of attendance that we require from our staff
- To separate two processes: attendance and absence management and provide guidelines for staff and managers.
- To identify the causes of absence and, where possible, develop a programme of preventive measures.
- To ensure training and support is available to those involved in the process.

### **3. PRINCIPLES**

Ardenglen requires good attendance from all staff in order to meet its objectives.

- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory then you will be informed what improvement is required and possible consequences of failure to do so (which may include disciplinary action, including dismissal).

- The attendance management process is not concerned with reasons for absence but with number of periods of absence/ days absent.
- If you have an underlying medical condition causing absence(s), then we'll make efforts to put reasonable adjustments in place, where possible.
- Managers will conduct "return to work" interviews within the spirit of this policy.
- You need to adhere strictly to our absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in a disciplinary action and withholding of the organisation sick pay.
- Managers will maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff.

#### **4. ABSENCE MONITORING**

A fundamental feature of good attendance management is the accurate and timely recording of all absences. This is essential for processing the requirements of the statutory and occupational sick pay arrangements and the process of managing attendance and absence. Good information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health problems. The sooner these problems are identified and acted upon – the more likely a successful conclusion for both you and us can be achieved.

Accurate recording is also an essential element in satisfying potential concerns over the fairness of any actions taken by the line managers.

The responsibility for maintaining such records rests with the Finance and Business Support Section.

Having maintained attendance records, managers will be expected to provide and regularly discuss aggregated statistics at Management Team Meetings and at Departmental Meetings with Staff.

The Board will receive a Quarterly Report from the CEO, detailing staff absence and a calculation detailing the "lost time rate" which confirms the percentage of work time which has been lost due to absence within a given period.

Your individual case will not be discussed as it forms your confidential record.

## 5. RETURN TO WORK

A thorough return to work interview will be carried out after every period of unplanned absence. This will be done by your line manager (or another manager if he/she is not available) on the first day of your return to work. Completed forms will be kept in your personal file. The return to work interview forms contain confidential information and may only be viewed by authorised personnel, normally your line manager or any other manager who deals with the case.

If a medical professional makes suggestions for any adjustments, these will be discussed at a return to work interview, along with any suggestions that you or we may also have made. Although we are not bound by the doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to accommodate your prompt return and a good attendance, if possible. If we agree any adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews.

## 6. ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURES

### Reporting

**For the avoidance of doubt, if you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, you must phone your line manager (or if not available, another manager) as soon as is reasonably possible. You should do this before you are due to start your shift and if not possible, within one hour of your starting time.**

You must fill in a self-certification form, whether or not you are entitled to sickness allowances and whatever the length or reason for absence.

Every unplanned absence will be followed with a Return to Work Interview (RTWI).

### Fit Notes

If you are off due to illness or injury for more than 7 (seven) consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note as soon as possible.

If the Doctor ticks the 'may be fit for work' box, you will meet with your line manager to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although employers are not obliged to follow the doctor's advice, we will do our

best to help you return to work and keep a good attendance record. However if we cannot agree about the adjustments you will remain off sick.

If we agree a phased return to work, the days you are still off sick within the agreed period will count as one period of absence.

### **Keeping in Touch**

You are responsible for letting your manager know the reasons for any absence and when you expect to return to work. If you cannot get to a phone on day one of your absence, you should make sure that someone else calls on your behalf. After this, you should contact your line manager as soon as you can and maintain regular contact by calling daily during the first week of your absence (unless otherwise agreed with your line manager) and weekly thereafter.

Where you fail to keep in contact as outlined above, we will initiate and maintain contact with you.

We expect that you let us know the following information: the reason for your absence, when you expect to return to work and your contact details. We are entitled to request this information and therefore, if you don't give us it, we will contact you to find it out.

### **Failure to Comply**

Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold the company sick pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also lead to a disciplinary action against you in accordance with Ardenglen's disciplinary procedure.

Similarly if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will take a disciplinary action against you. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

### **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)**

You are entitled to SSP irrespective to your entitlement to company sick pay. The scale of entitlement to SSP is reviewed by the government, normally at the beginning of each tax year. It is not paid for the first three days of absence and runs for 28 weeks after that.

If you are no longer entitled to SSP, you may be entitled to an incapacity benefit. You can enquire about this at your local Department of Social Security. We will tell you if you are not entitled to SSP and send you the appropriate government form but it is then your responsibility to claim any other State Benefit which you may be entitled to.

### **Organisational Sick Pay**

The requirements and benefits of Ardenglen's Sickness Benefit Scheme are contained in the Terms and Conditions of Service Section A5.

## **7. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT**

This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of attendance, with no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition.

We will aim to assist you in securing good attendance record. This will involve maintaining good records, ensuring return to work interview and helping investigate and address any identified underlying causes of absence.

Where this fails to secure a required improvement, we will invoke the terms of the disciplinary procedure. Unsatisfactory attendance reviews can result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

If at any stage during this process it becomes apparent that an underlying health issue is involved, medical information will be sought and an appropriate action will follow.

Absence periods related to pregnancy or underlying medical conditions classed as a disability under the Equality Act will not be counted for the purpose of attendance management process.

## **8. ATTENDANCE TRIGGERS**

Triggers are a tool for ensuring that the monitoring of absence treats everybody fairly and highlights when additional action to manage attendance should start.

Trigger levels are a guide to when to take action. The trigger levels should also be used as the standard to establish if the employee is back to maintaining an acceptable attendance level.

There are times when action needs to occur even though the absence level has not reached the trigger level. Absence patterns that suddenly get worse or don't appear random may prompt earlier action.

A trigger level can be thought of as the level of non-attendance that is so disruptive that it begins to affect efficient service delivery and puts extra pressure on colleagues still at work.

The agreed trigger levels are as follows:

- Three occasions of absence (of any duration) in a rolling 12 month period, or
- Two occasions each of two consecutive weeks (pro-rata for part time staff) in a rolling 12 month period, or
- A recognisable pattern of absence (e.g. frequent Monday absence)

These are the triggers which will require formal action from the appropriate Senior Manager, who will carry out a formal attendance review.

Where this fails to secure an improvement Ardenglen will invoke the terms of the Disciplinary Procedures. Unsatisfactory attendance reviews may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

## **9. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT**

Ardenglen will adopt a sympathetic and understanding approach to any staff member dealing with a long-term and/or chronic health problem. If you find yourself in such a position you should be confident that your manager will react in a supportive fashion when approached.

The following points will always be considered in relation to long term absence: -

- The nature of the illness
- Any contributing factors
- The likely duration of the employee's absence
- The nature of the employee's duties in relation to his/her health problems
- The business needs of AHA and the impact that the employee's absence is having upon these
- The entitlement to Sickness Benefit

Throughout the duration of your absence it will be expected that you will keep in touch and advise of progress. Managers will also seek to obtain medical reports and assessments at appropriate junctures during the absence and will arrange to discuss these when received. Medical reports may also be requested where the employee may be suffering from an underlying medical condition even though he/she has not been off sick for a prolonged period.

The line manager may ask the employee for consent to obtain a medical report or refer the employee to an occupational health provider for a medical assessment. Where the staff member disagrees with the nature of any medical reports, he/she will be free to seek and offer alternative medical evidence. Where the staff member refuses access to medical records or does not turn up at an independent medical assessment, the process will be managed and decisions made based on the information available.

Along with considering any medical reports, the manager will keep the staff member fully appraised as to whether/for how long the absence can be borne by Ardenglen. In cases where dismissal through medical incapacity is being considered, full discussions with the employee will take place first, and he/she will be afforded the opportunity to express views on such a course of action. Alternatives to dismissal will always be considered where appropriate such as reasonable adjustments and/or any current vacancies Ardenglen may have will be considered, in line with business needs.

In cases where staff members do leave Ardenglen due to ill health, managers will make every effort they can to help secure appropriate access to their pension scheme and/or other relevant financial benefits that may be available.

## **10. DISHONEST ABSENCE**

If the employee is found to falsify or exaggerate their absence, this will be treated as gross misconduct. An investigation will be carried out in accordance with Ardenglen's disciplinary procedure and disciplinary action may be imposed, including dismissal or future withdrawal of Ardenglen's Sick Pay.

## **11. OTHER PROVISIONS**

### **Absence on Holidays**

If you are on annual leave and fall sick or have an accident, we may apply a sick leave instead if we believe that your illness/accident has stopped you from proceeding with your planned holidays. We will however require a medical certificate to confirm your illness.

If you are on sick leave and go on holiday, your line manager will investigate whether this is appropriate considering the reason for your absence. Depending on the outcome, the disciplinary procedure may be instigated.



## **Doctor/hospital/dental appointments**

- As AHA provides flexible working procedures employees should refer to the Flexible Working Policy. Doctor, dentist and hospital appointments should be arranged outside “Core Hours” using flexi time. If it is not possible the employee should request time off from their line manager. Arrangements could include using annual leave, TOIL or unpaid time off. In some circumstances managers could also use their discretion and consider giving paid time off.
- The timing of hospital and other specialist clinical or outpatient appointments is usually outside an employee’s control. This type of appointment may be taken in core hours and recorded as working hours. Employees should return to work after, or attend work before the appointment where possible. No more than a standard working day can be claimed when attending such an appointment. In all such cases the employee should notify their manager as early as possible and must be supported by an appropriate hospital or doctor’s letter.

## **Home Visits**

Where an employee is off long term sick it will usually be necessary to visit them in their own home. The visit will discuss the ongoing absence from work and what if any support can be given to facilitate a return to work. The meeting may also take place within AHA’s offices or another mutually agreed venue

## **Conduct Whilst Off Sick**

When on sick leave, you are still bound by your contract of employment with us and all our policies including the code of conduct and your duty of fidelity. We also expect that you do not participate in activities that would be at odds with your medical condition. Any breach in respect of this will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. This includes conduct on social networking sites and any other publicly made remarks regarding Ardenglen, its customers, work colleagues, partners and anyone else who is connected with us.

## **Cosmetic Procedures**

Absence due to cosmetic procedures (whether carried out in the UK or abroad) will not fall under the sick leave or pay unless it is recommended by health professionals. Employees should therefore request time off and agree with their line manager how the absence will be processed, e.g. annual leave or unpaid leave.

## **IVF Treatment**

Absences resulting from IVF treatment will not be processed as sick leave or pay. The same relates to the partner of a person that is undergoing such treatment. Instead, employees should discuss with their line manager how time off for the treatment could be accommodated, e.g. annual leave, flexi time or unpaid leave.

Absences relating to IVF treatment will also not be treated as relating to pregnancy unless the employee actually falls pregnant.

## **Stress Management**

Stress is not an illness. It can result from an illness or lead to one but it is not an illness itself. The same relates to "nervous debility" or any other diagnosis of that type. If you go off sick with stress, your manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that an appropriate action could be taken (if any) and in particular to determine whether conditions at work cause or contribute to stress and whether something could be done to help the situation. If the absence is certified by a doctor, your manager will ask your doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress.

## **10. TRAINING**

The Association through its Internal Management Plan is committed to training and developing staff and committee members to their full potential in order to deliver a high quality of service in all areas of its business.

The AHA induction programme includes an overview of this policy, including responsibilities for the promotion and delivery of openness and confidentiality as relevant to their job descriptions. Committee and staff members will receive updates on these issues and specific training as required.

## **11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**

This policy will be implemented in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy and is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment to assess the likely or actual effects of the policy to our customers in respect of their disability, age, gender, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation or gender identity to ensure equal and fair access for all.

## **12. MONITORING AND REPORTING**

The Association will use appeals, complaints, comments or suggestions from users of this policy to monitor its effectiveness. These will also be used to prompt a review of the policy where necessary.

## **13. REVIEW**

This Policy will be approved by the Board. It will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, or monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in Policy is required sooner.

## **14. DISTRIBUTION**

This policy will be made available to every employee and committee member and will be made freely available to any tenant or interested party.

## **15. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- Equality Act 2010

## **16. RELATED POLICIES**

- Terms and Conditions of Employment

**--- END OF POLICY ---**