



Managing sickness and absence

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to set down Stretton Pre-school's approach in managing sickness in the work place, and to offer guidance to Managers. The following procedure is designed to be a fair way of dealing with both frequent periods of short-term absence and long-term absence and provides a standard which ensures that problems attending work are managed in an equitable and consistent manner.

Stretton Pre-school treats the health and well-being of all staff extremely seriously and recognises that members of the public visiting and using the services will benefit from a provision by staff whose health needs are strictly monitored.

All staff will receive a copy of this policy as part of their Induction and should demonstrate an understanding of the correct procedure for any periods of absence.

Data protection

In the implementation of this policy, Stretton Pre-School may process personal data and/or special category personal data collected in accordance with its GDPR and data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which this policy is invoked will only inform Stretton Pre-School for the benefit of implementing this policy. All data is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of this policy. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with Stretton Pre-School's GDPR and data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under Stretton Pre-School's disciplinary procedure.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

Stretton Pre-school's absence policy is based on the following key principles:

2.1 As a responsible employer, Stretton Pre-school undertakes to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness subject to the following:

- Only SSP (Statutory Sick Pay) is paid to employees. Details of the current rate of SSP can be obtained from the Pre-school manager.
- Stretton Pre-School will follow the COVID-19 government guidelines,
- While receiving sick pay (including SSP) employees are not allowed to undertake any form of paid alternative employment and/or self-employment without prior consultation. Any breach of this rule will be regarded as gross misconduct, which could result in dismissal.

- Stretton Pre-school reserves the right to withhold sick pay in circumstances where there is sufficient reason to doubt the validity of an employee's sickness absence claim or the employee has not produced the relevant sickness certificate from a registered nurse, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists (as well as GPs and Drs) may also provide a Statement of Fitness to Work Certificate (Fit Notes) after they assess a patient's fitness for work.
- 2.3 Regular and continuous attendance is a contractual requirement for all staff. Stretton Pre-school asks that each employee takes responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.
- 2.4 Stretton Pre-school will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support could include:
- 'Special Leave' for necessary absences which may not be caused by sickness (e.g. appointments for dental, doctor/hospital appointments, etc.) In these circumstances, employees are encouraged to try and take this 'special leave' either at the beginning or end of a day or shift. Staff who work part time are requested to make appointments around their hours if possible.
 - A Flexible approach to the taking of annual leave
 - Rehabilitation programmes in cases of long-term absence
- 2.5 Stretton Pre-school may consider a referral to an Occupational Health advisor where appropriate, to:
- Help identify the nature of the an employee's illness
 - Advise the employee and manager on the best way to improve the employee's health and well-being.
- 2.6 Stretton Pre-school disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for absence and absence notification is not forthcoming and thought to be satisfactory.
- 2.7 Stretton Pre-school respects 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.

3. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SICKNESS

Any member of staff unable to perform their normal daily duties must inform their manager as soon as possible and no later than the expected start time. A phone call by 7.30am must be made to the Pre-school manager, messages left on an answer phone must always be followed up by a direct conversation with the manager. Failure to follow the correct absence notification procedure will invoke the disciplinary procedure.

An employee may not always feel able to discuss their medical problems with their Manager. Managers will be sensitive to individual concerns and make alternative arrangements, where appropriate. For example, an employee may prefer to discuss health problems with a person of the same sex.

4. CERTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR SICKNESS

For sickness absence up to seven days completion of a Self-Certification Form is required. (See Appendix A) This should be undertaken on your first day back at work.

Absences lasting over seven days require a GP Statement of Fitness to Work Certificate (Fit Note) or Hospital medical certificate in addition to Stretton Pre-school Self Certification Form to be signed on return to work.

All GP Statements of Fitness to Work certification and Self Certification Forms must be provided promptly to the Manager. If certificates are not received by 9.00am on the Monday following the period of sickness, or if the Manager is not notified within the specified time Stretton Pre-school reserves the right to withhold payment of sick pay.

It is important to keep Managers informed and updated during all periods of sickness especially where extra cover is required in order for normal services to be maintained.

5. RETURN TO WORK DISCUSSIONS

Managers will discuss absences with employees when they return to work (See Appendix B) to establish:

- The reason for, and cause of absence
- Anything the manager or Stretton Pre-school can do to help
- That the employee is fit to work

A more formal review will be triggered by:

- Frequent short-term absence
- Long Term Absence

All employees absent from work due to ill health for longer than seven days or returning to work with a 'may be fit for work' GP statement will be interviewed in person by their Manager on their return to ensure that they are fit to resume work, and where appropriate to give consideration to a phased return and/or amended responsibilities.

6. PERIODS OF SHORT TERM ABSENCE

6.1 Once the level of absence reaches three episodes of sickness within three months the Stretton Pre-school will write to the employee requesting that they attend a meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to explore why the employee has such a frequent number of short term absences from work due to illness, how long that this is likely to continue and what if anything can be done to assist an improvement in attendance. At the meeting the Pre-school Manager will outline the effects high absence has on the employee's team and Stretton Pre-school as a whole. The Pre-

school Manager and the Committee member will be present at this meeting and notes should be kept.

6.2 Following the meeting Pre-school Manager will write to the employee stating what action Stretton Pre-school intends to take. This may include i) accepting that there is a valid and justifiable reason for the absence and therefore accepting why the level of absence has occurred on this occasion, ii) offering a redeployment or change of hours to accommodate the level of absence, iii) requesting a medical report, and the possibility of disciplinary action iv) disciplinary action.

6.3 Where disciplinary action is viewed as the next step, a letter will be sent to the employee requesting attendance at a disciplinary consultation meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting, by a colleague or Trade Union representative.

7. CONTINUOUS LONG TERM ABSENCE

7.1 Once an employee is absent from work for four weeks continuously, the Pre-school manager will write to the employee requesting that they attend a meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to find out why the person has been absent, how long they think this will continue, the likelihood of a return to work, and what if anything can be done to assist a return to work. The Pre-school Manager and the Line Manager will be present at this meeting and notes should be kept.

7.2 Following the meeting, the Pre-school will write to the employee stating what action Stretton Pre-school intends to take. This may include; i) accepting that this will be a long term sickness, ii) offering a redeployment or change in hours to assist with a return to work, iii) a request for a medical report and the possibility of disciplinary action.

7.3 Where long term sickness is accepted, the situation will be monitored, and follow up meetings will be held where absence continues and it is appropriate to do so. The purpose of these meetings is to review any support that is being offered to the employee to ensure it is still appropriate.

7.4 Where it is deemed necessary to request a medical report the employee shall on request allow himself/herself to be examined at any time by a Doctor as nominated by Stretton Pre-school or by the employee's GP or consultant, at the expense of Stretton Pre-school Upon completion of such a report the employee shall allow one copy to be sent direct to Stretton Pre-school so that it may be considered and, where appropriate, attend a meeting to discuss the contents of the same. In some instances it may be appropriate to obtain more than one report. The employee has the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting, by a colleague or Trade Union representative.

8. SICKNESS DURING ANNUAL LEAVE

Where an employee falls sick or is injured while on holiday, the employer will allow the employee to transfer to sick leave and take replacement holiday at a later time. This will be subject to the following strict conditions:

- The total period of incapacity must be fully certificated by a qualified medical practitioner.
- The employee must contact the employer (by telephone if possible) as soon as he/she knows that there will be a period of incapacity during a holiday.

- The employee must submit a written request no later than 10 days after returning to work setting out how much of the holiday period was affected by sickness and the amount of leave that the employee wishes to take at another time.
- Where the employee is overseas when he/she falls ill or is injured, evidence must still be produced that the employee was ill by way of either a medical certificate or proof of a claim on an insurance policy for medical treatment received at the overseas location.

Where the employee fulfils all of the above conditions, the employer will grant the employee the same number of days' replacement holiday leave as the number of holiday days lost due to sickness or injury.

If an employee is ill or is injured before the start of a period of planned holiday, the employer will agree to the employee postponing the holiday dates to another mutually agreed time. Any period of sickness absence will then be treated in accordance with the employer's normal policy on sickness absence. The employee must submit a written request to postpone the planned holiday and this must be accompanied by a letter from his/her doctor confirming that he/she is unfit, or is still likely to be unfit, to take the holiday.

An employee must request to take any replacement holiday in accordance with the employer's normal holiday policy, and should endeavour to take the replacement holiday in the same holiday year in which it was accrued. However, where an employee has good reason for not being able to do so, the employer will allow the employee to carry that leave forward into the next holiday year. These reasons should be discussed with the Manager.

The employer may require an employee to take all or part of his/her replacement holiday on particular days and it is not required to provide the employee with any minimum period of notice to do this, although it will aim to provide reasonable notice.

9. ABSENCE DUE TO DISABILITY/MATERNITY

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records.

10. ABSENCE DUE TO THIRD PARTY NEGLIGENCE

Any salary paid by Stretton Pre-school in respect of any period of incapacity resulting from negligence of a third party shall be recoverable by Stretton Pre-school out of any damages that may be awarded against or on behalf of a third party. The sick pay will be regarded as a loan, which would be repaid if and when the employee was to receive compensation for loss of earnings. The employee must keep their Manager informed of the progress of any resultant litigation.

This policy was adopted by

Stretton Pre-School

On

30 November 2022

Date to be reviewed

Annually

Signed on behalf of the provider

E. Greenfield

Name of signatory

Emily Greenfield

Role of signatory

Chair person
