

**ACAS Advisory Booklet – Managing Attendance and Employee Turnover –
Sample Absence Policy**

This is a sample policy which you should adapt to suit the particular circumstances of your organization.

Policy statement

We are committed to improving the health, wellbeing and attendance of all employees. We value the contribution our employees make to our success. So, when any employee is unable to be at work for any reason, we miss that contribution. This absence policy explains:

- what we expect from managers and employees when handling absence
- how we will work to reduce levels of absence to no more than xx days per employee per year.

This policy has been written after consultation with employee representatives. We welcome the continued involvement of employees in implementing this policy.

Key principles

The organisation's absence policy is based on the following principles:

1. As a responsible employer we undertake to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness. (See the Company Sick Pay scheme.)
2. Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment – we ask each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.
3. We will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes:
 - a. 'special leave' for necessary absences not caused by sickness
 - b. a flexible approach to the taking of annual leave
 - c. access to counsellors where necessary
 - d. rehabilitation programmes in cases of long-term sickness absence.
4. We will use an occupational health adviser, where appropriate, to:
 - a. help identify the nature of an employee's illness
 - b. advise the employee and their manager on the best way to improve the employee's health and well-being.
5. The company's disciplinary procedures will be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.
6. We 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.

Notification of absence

If an employee is going to be absent from work they should speak to their manager or deputy within an hour of their normal start time. They should also:

- give a clear indication of the nature of the illness and
- a likely return date.

The manager will check with employees if there is any information they need about their current work. If the employee does not contact their manager by the required time the manager will attempt to contact the employee at home.

An employee may not always feel able to discuss their medical problems with their line 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.

Evidence of incapacity

Employees can use the company self-certification arrangements for the first seven days absence. Thereafter a doctor's certificate is required to cover every subsequent day.

If absence is likely to be protracted, ie more than four weeks continuously, there is a shared responsibility for the Company and the employee to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

Return to work discussions

Managers will discuss absences with employees when they return to work to establish:

- the reason for, and cause of absence
- anything the manager or the company can do to help
- that the employee is fit to return to work.

A more formal review will be triggered by:

- frequent short-term absences
- long-term absence.

This review will look at any further action required to improve the employee's attendance and well-being. These trigger points are set by line managers and are available from Personnel.

Absence due to disability/maternity

Absences relating to the disability of an employee or to pregnancy will be kept separate from sickness absence records. We refer employees to our Equality Policy – covering family policies and disability discrimination policies.