

Absence Management Policy

1. General Points

- 1.1. First Explorers Ltd's procedure for managing absence MUST be followed. It is the responsibility of every employee to report any absence and only in exceptional cases should this procedure be carried out by someone else on their behalf.
- 1.2. If an employee knowingly gives any false information or makes false statements about their sickness it may be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken. In proven cases of gross misconduct it could lead to dismissal (e.g. absent on sick leave and working elsewhere).
- 1.3. Employees will not be entitled to an additional day off if they are sick on a statutory holiday.
- 1.4. First Explorers Ltd reserves the right to request a Doctor's Certificate for periods of absence of less than seven days in cases of short-term persistent absence. Where a cost is incurred, this will be reimbursed by First Explorers Ltd.
- 1.5. Any employee who unreasonably fails to comply with First Explorers Ltd's Absence Management policy and procedure may have their first three days of sickness money withheld.
- 1.6. First Explorers Ltd has the right to dismiss employees whilst they are receiving sick pay entitlement. Any decision to dismiss will be supported by medical advice. Employees who are dismissed are entitled to receive the full amount that would be equivalent to their occupational sick pay entitlement, plus the relevant notice and leave entitlement.

2. Employee Responsibilities

2.1. Reporting Absence

- 2.1.1. All employees must contact the manager before 7am on the first day of absence. The employee must make this call. The only exception is where it is clearly not possible for employees to ring personally – such as admission to Hospital.
- 2.1.2. Employees must talk directly to the manager and not leave messages with anybody else. If the manager is unavailable a message must be left with deputy manager giving the reason for the absence by 7.30am.
- 2.1.3. If an employee does not have a telephone at home alternative arrangements for reporting sickness must be made.
- 2.1.4. When reporting absence employees must give the following information:
 - 2.1.4.1. the reason for the absence (if known);
 - 2.1.4.2. the expected length of absence (if known).

2.1.5. An employee is required to contact the nursery by 4pm of each of the first three days of absence to inform whether or not they will be returning to work the next day.

2.2. Sickness Certification

2.2.1. If an absence lasts for seven calendar days or less, on the first day back at work, employees will be required to complete a Sickness Self-Certification Form giving the reasons for absence. The Form will be countersigned by the manager/supervisor and subsequently will be kept in the individual's personnel file.

2.2.2. If an absence exceeds seven calendar days a doctor's statement of fitness to work certificate must be submitted to the line manager, no later than the tenth day of absence, covering the absence from the eighth day.

2.2.3. If an absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial medical certificate, further medical certificates must be submitted to give continuous cover for the period of absence. On eventual return to work employees must complete First Explorers Ltd's Sickness Self-Certification Form in respect of the first seven days or less not covered by a doctor's medical certificate.

2.2.4. If the doctor's medical certificate does not specify the period of absence covered, it will be classed as covering a period of seven calendar days only.

2.3. Return to Work Interview

2.3.1. On returning to work, employees will be required to attend a return to work interview with their line manager to discuss their absence.

2.3.2. The discussion should allow for an exchange of information and be as frank and as open as possible as this will prevent any misunderstandings concerning the nature of the absence.

2.3.3. This will also enable the line manager to discuss any assistance that may be given to enable an employee to return to work or prevent further absence occurring.

2.3.4. A record of the interview should be kept by the line manager.

3. Sick Pay Regulations

3.1. The sick pay regulations are financial provisions and indicate an entitlement to sick pay and in no way indicate the amount of sickness absence to which an employee is entitled.

3.2. The sick pay entitlement is full pay for 3 continuous sick-leave days and at the Statutory Sick Pay rate thereafter up to the statutory number of total sick-leave weeks.

3.3. Abuse of this entitlement will mean disciplinary action that could lead to dismissal. Trigger points can lead to a review of the employee's sick leave entitlement for the first 3 days of absence (see 5).

4. Monitoring and Consultation

4.1. First Explorers Ltd operates an accurate method of recording and monitoring levels of absence. If the amount of time being taken off for illness is giving cause for concern, this will be discussed with employees at the return to work interview.

5. Trigger Points - Irregular Attendance

- 5.1. Trigger points are agreed levels of sickness absence which, when reached, will trigger management action.
- 5.2. Where someone is approaching a trigger point, it may be an early indication of a problem and line managers should informally discuss an employee's attendance record with him/her, including reminding him/her of the standards expected and of the support available to help his/her attendance improve, including early interventions.
- 5.3. Trigger points are used to remind line managers that the amount of sick leave being taken may be a problem and that it should be addressed.
- 5.4. Before considering action line managers should consider each case on its merits and take account of:
 - 5.4.1. Isolated illnesses/accidents which should not lead to formal action in an otherwise good attendance record
 - 5.4.2. Staff who are disabled, where special consideration may have to be given to a higher level of absence.
 - 5.4.3. Whether the absence has resulted from an injury at work or illness, in these circumstances further action may not be appropriate.
 - 5.4.4. Whether the absence is related to pregnancy or an assault in connection with their duties, in which case no further action should be taken.

6. Trigger Points – agreed levels of sickness absence

- 6.1. Line managers should consider taking formal action when:
 - 6.1.1. Self-certificated absences in any 12 month period exceed 14 days;
 - 6.1.2. Absences exceed 7 days in a 6 month period or less, although one isolated absence of 7 days would not necessarily require action;
 - 6.1.3. Absences fall regularly on specific days, e.g. a Friday and/or Monday;
 - 6.1.4. Eight or more spells of sickness absence are taken in a 12 month period, or four or more spells are taken in a six month period or less, irrespective of the length of the absences;
 - 6.1.5. Absences for frequent and unrelated non-specific illnesses, e.g. headache, stomach ache, back trouble, especially where these are self-certificated.
- 6.2. Trigger points can lead to a review of the employee's sick leave entitlement for the first 3 days of absence, i.e. no entitlement to full pay for first 3 days and only re-instated after the employee has attended work on a continuous basis for 12 months.

7. Continued Absence

- 7.1. If absence levels continue to cause concern, then employees should be referred to the Occupational Health Service for an independent medical examination.
- 7.2. If the absence is the consequence of an underlying medical condition then medical advice would be sought to identify any reasonable adjustments or assistance that First Explorers Ltd can provide.
- 7.3. Continued non-attendance may result in disciplinary action being taken if no underlying medical condition can be identified. This may be in the form of either a verbal, first written or final written warning, and could

ultimately lead to dismissal. As part of this process employees will be given the opportunity to improve their attendance.

8. Long-Term Absence

8.1. Consultation and Discussion

8.1.1. In cases of long-term absence line managers must arrange to conduct regular 'care and concern' interviews to discuss possible courses of action should the absence continue (these interviews should be recorded and notes sent to the employee concerned).

8.1.2. If employees are too ill to travel line managers may choose to conduct a home visit at a mutually convenient time.

8.1.3. In cases of long-term absence, regular medical assessments must be sought.

8.1.4. Where there is doubt regarding an employee's ability to return to work on a permanent basis advice must be sought from the Occupational Health Service Provider.

8.1.5. Employees must make themselves available to attend medical referrals.

8.2. Returning To Work

8.2.1. Wherever possible First Explorers Ltd will aid a return to work on a permanent basis. To establish the most effective way of doing this First Explorers Ltd may seek further medical advice.

8.2.2. This may include making reasonable adjustments to the employee's job, allowing a phased return to work, or by allowing the employee to return to work on a reduced or alternative hours basis.

8.2.3. Where a phased return to work is recommended through the medical assessment, the employee will be able to return to work on a part-time basis and receive their full pay. This will be for a maximum period of four weeks, after that the employee must substitute their annual leave for days not worked or receive payment only for the hours worked.

8.2.4. Where an employee requests a phased return to work themselves, annual leave should be taken for days not worked or they may opt to receive payment only for the hours worked.

8.3. Redeployment

8.3.1. If medical opinion is that an employee is unfit to return to their former employment, the possibility of alternative employment will be considered. However, depending on the availability of alternative posts, this may not be possible.

8.4. Ill-Health Retirement

8.4.1. Should the medical opinion indicate that an employee is permanently unfit, employees may have the option for applying for early retirement on the grounds of ill health, in line with the provisions of their pension scheme. This option should be discussed with individuals in full at the appropriate time.

8.5. Resignation

8.5.1. At any time during this process an employee may choose to resign from their employment. They are required to give their contractual notice and any outstanding accrued holiday entitlement will be paid

in lieu. Payment in lieu of notice may be agreed by the line manager.

8.6. Dismissal On The Grounds Of Capability

8.6.1. Should the dismissal of an employee be identified during the final care and concern meeting as the only appropriate option (i.e. all other options as outlined above have been investigated and found to be inappropriate) a formal capability review meeting must be held with the employee in question and their line manager to fully consider the situation again.

8.6.2. At this meeting the employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague.

8.6.3. Following the meeting if the employee is dismissed, they will be given a letter confirming the reason for dismissal, the date of dismissal, their right to appeal, any payment in lieu of notice and any other outstanding payments to which they are entitled.

9. Data Protection

9.1. All information relating to an individual's absence will be handled in line with Data Protection principles and will be used purely to carry out the management of their employment.

Sickness Self- certification Form

Fill out this form for all sickness absence of seven calendar days or fewer.

For periods of sickness lasting more than seven calendar days, please provide a 'Statement of Fitness For work' (Fit Note) which has been signed by a doctor or your GP.

This form must be completed on the day you return to work and then passed to your line manager.

Line managers to initial and send to the Manager for filing in employees records.

Name

About your absence: *Please give brief details of your sickness*

First day of absence owing to sickness

Date returned to work

Number of days away from work owing to sickness

Was your sickness caused by an accident at work?

If so, please provide brief details and date of the accident, inform the designated person and ensure the accident record book has been updated to include details of the accident.

Signature

Date

Line manager initials

Return to Work Interview Form

Name
Designation
First Day of Absence
Last Day of Absence
Total number of days absent
Total number of days off work
Is absence due to an injury at work? YES/ NO
Have you seen a doctor? YES/ NO
Reason for absence(Please give a brief description of the illness or other reason for absence)
Action Taken(please give a brief description of any action taken to date)
Proposed Course of Action
<p>I understand that if I knowingly provide inaccurate or false information regarding my absence it may result in disciplinary action.</p> <p>Employee's Signature:</p> <p>Line Manager's Signature:</p>