

Sickness Absence Policy

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2.0 Purpose and Legal Basis

This Sickness Absence Policy is a foundational document for the charity. It is strategically important for ensuring the well-being of the charity's personnel, maintaining operational continuity, and upholding our legal obligations. Fulfilling these commitments is essential for the charity to effectively pursue its mission to support the Beneficiary Community, as set out in our constitution.

The core purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, consistent, and supportive framework for managing sickness absence fairly and effectively for all personnel of the charity.

The policy is designed to adhere to the legal framework governing employment in the UK. Specifically, it complies with:

- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) regulations
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010

The following section, Scope, defines precisely who is covered by these legal and procedural standards.

3.0 Scope

Defining the scope of this policy is crucial for clarity and ensures that all individuals connected with the charity understand their respective rights and responsibilities regarding sickness absence. The charity's power to employ staff, and therefore its need for this policy, is established under Clause 4(4) of its governing constitution.

This policy applies in full to all future employees of the charity named in its governing constitution..

For other roles within the charity, the principles of this policy apply as follows:

- **Charity Trustees:** As office holders, Trustees are not employees and are therefore not typically eligible for Statutory Sick Pay. However, they are expected to follow the principles of reporting absence from their duties to ensure the effective governance and management of the charity's affairs.
- **Volunteers:** Volunteers are not employees and are not entitled to sick pay under this policy. They are encouraged to follow the notification procedures to ensure the smooth running of any activities they support and to allow for alternative arrangements to be made.
- **Contractors:** Contractors and other external service providers are governed by the terms of their individual contracts with the charity. They are responsible for their own sickness and absence arrangements.

This section defines *who* is covered by the policy; the following sections detail the charity's overarching commitments and the procedures that put them into practice.

4.0 Policy Statement

This policy statement anchors all subsequent procedures in the values of the charity and our duty of care towards our people. It serves as our public and internal commitment to managing health-related absence with professionalism and empathy.

The charity is committed to:

- Managing sickness absence in a fair, consistent, and empathetic manner.
- Supporting the health and well-being of its employees is a core priority.
- Meeting all statutory obligations regarding sick pay and employment rights.
- Maintaining the strictest confidentiality regarding health information, treating it as sensitive personal data in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

To ensure the consistent application of this policy statement, clear definitions of key terms are necessary.

5.0 Definitions

Clear and unambiguous definitions are essential for the correct interpretation and implementation of this policy by all parties. The following terms are used throughout this document.

Term	Definition
Sickness Absence	Any period of time an employee is unable to work due to their own illness or injury.
Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)	The minimum amount employers are required by law to pay to qualifying employees who are absent from work due to illness.
Fit Note	The official Statement of Fitness for Work is provided by a registered medical practitioner as evidence of an employee's fitness for work.
Incapacity	The inability of an employee to perform their normal work duties due to a medical condition, illness, or injury.
Qualifying Days	The days an employee normally works. These days are used to calculate an employee's entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay.

These terms provide the foundation for the specific procedures that all employees and managers must follow.

6.0 Procedures

Clear, step-by-step procedures are strategically important for ensuring that sickness absence is managed with fairness, consistency, and full legal compliance at every stage.

6.1 Notification of Absence

To ensure operational continuity and meet the requirements of the Employment Rights Act 1996, employees must report their absence by telephone to their direct line manager (or a designated Trustee) as early as possible, and no later than their normal start time, on the first day of absence. The employee should state the nature of the illness and the expected date of return, if known.

6.2 Certification of Absence

Medical certification is required to provide evidence of incapacity for work.

- **Self-Certification:** For absences of seven calendar days or less, the employee must complete a self-certification form upon their return to work.
- **Fit Note:** For absences lasting longer than seven calendar days, the employee must obtain a Fit Note from their doctor and provide it to their line manager as soon as possible. Ongoing Fit Notes must be provided for the duration of the absence.

6.3 Sickness Pay

The charity is committed to meeting its statutory duties regarding pay during sickness.

- The charity will pay Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) to all eligible employees in accordance with the prevailing government regulations. Eligibility depends on factors including an employee's earnings and their compliance with the notification and certification procedures outlined in this policy.
- The charity does not currently offer a contractual (occupational) sick pay scheme that provides pay over and above SSP. The provision of such a scheme may be considered by the Board of Trustees in the future.

6.4 Return to Work

To ensure a smooth transition back to work and provide necessary support, a return-to-work interview will be conducted by the employee's line manager on their first day back. This is a supportive meeting to discuss the reason for the absence and identify any support or adjustments that may be needed. In line with the Equality Act 2010, the charity will always consider making reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working environment to support their return to work following a period of ill health.

6.5 Confidentiality

All information relating to an employee's sickness absence, including the reason for absence and any medical details, will be treated as sensitive personal data. It will be kept strictly confidential and managed in full compliance with the charity's Data Protection Policy, the UK GDPR, and the Data Protection Act 2018. This commitment reflects the

findings of our governance review, which highlighted data protection as a critical area of compliance.

These procedures are executed by individuals in specific roles, whose responsibilities are detailed below.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The clear allocation of responsibilities is fundamental to the effective, fair, and consistent implementation of this policy.

- **The Board of Trustees:** The Board holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring this policy is legally compliant, fit for purpose, and contributes to the charity's objectives. They are responsible for its formal adoption and regular review, in line with their overall function to manage the affairs of the charity as described in Clause 9(1) of the constitution.
- **Employees (Future):** All employees have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with this policy and to follow the procedures for notifying and certifying their absence in a timely manner.
- **Line Manager / Designated Trustee:** This role is responsible for the day-to-day application of the policy. This includes recording absences, maintaining appropriate and supportive contact with the absent employee, conducting return-to-work interviews, and ensuring all procedures are followed fairly and consistently.

These defined responsibilities ensure that the procedures are not just documented but are actively owned and implemented, forming the practical basis for the policy's success.

8.0 Implementation

This section outlines the practical steps for embedding the Sickness Absence Policy into the charity's operations, ensuring it is effective from the first day of employing staff.

- **Board Adoption:** This policy will be formally adopted by a resolution of the Board of Trustees, and the date of adoption will be recorded.
- **Integration:** The policy will form a key part of the induction pack for all new employees and will be referenced within their contracts of employment.
- **Training:** Any individual with line management responsibilities, including designated Trustees, will receive training on the correct, fair, and empathetic application of this policy.
- **Resources:** As the charity currently has no employees, no additional resources are required for the immediate implementation of this policy. This will be reviewed as part of the charity's operational planning when recruitment commences.

Following its initial implementation, the policy's effectiveness will be subject to ongoing monitoring.

9.0 Monitoring

Ongoing monitoring is essential to ensure this policy remains legally compliant, fit for purpose, and effective in supporting both employees and the charity's mission. Regular review is a cornerstone of good governance.

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through the following mechanisms:

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Anonymised data on sickness absence levels, duration, and frequency will be reported to the Board of Trustees at least annually to identify any trends or areas for concern.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** The designated Trustee or manager with HR responsibilities will report to the Board on the application of the policy and any issues arising from its implementation.
- **Review Schedule:** This policy will be formally reviewed by the Board of Trustees at least annually, or more frequently if there are significant changes in relevant legislation or the charity's structure. This aligns with best practice for proactive policy management, as recommended in the charity's recent governance review.

This policy does not operate in isolation and should be read in conjunction with other related documents.

10.0 Related Policies

This Sickness Absence Policy operates within a wider framework of the charity's governance and HR documentation. A cohesive approach requires cross-referencing to ensure consistent and integrated people management. This policy should be read alongside the following documents, some of which are currently under development as part of the charity's governance enhancement programme.

- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy