



# **SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY**

**We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non written format.**

## **Short Term Sickness Absence**

Dunedin Canmore aims to encourage its employees to maximise their attendance at work while recognising that, from time to time, they will be unable to come to work for short periods due to sickness. Other procedures are in place to deal with long term absence and time off work for other reasons.

While Dunedin Canmore understands there will be some short-term sickness absence, it must also pay due regard to its business needs. If an employee is persistently absent from work, this can damage efficiency and productivity, and place additional work on the employee's colleagues. By implementing this procedure, Dunedin Canmore aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of its business needs and the genuine needs of employees to take occasional short periods of time off work because of sickness.

### **Reporting Absence**

If an employee is unable to attend work they must contact their Line Manager (or agreed alternative) at least one hour (Hostel employees at least two hours if on an early shift and four hours if on back or night shift) before the normal start time, on the first day of absence, giving full medical reasons for non-attendance, the anticipated date of return (if known) and any deadlines or work issues which might be affected by their absence.

Employees should contact their Line Manager by telephone. Only if it is impossible to make contact personally a message may be passed by a relative or friend. Texting, voicemails, emailing and/or faxing Line Managers to inform them of absence is not acceptable.

If an employee is sent home during a working day or requests to go home as a result of sickness, having worked less than half a shift, that day will count as a full day of absence and a half day will be recorded for leaving work during the last half of their shift.

The Line Manager should record the absence when an employee is unable to come to work due to sickness. This includes when the call was made, reason for the absence and how long the employee expects to be absent.

### **Maintaining Contact**

The employee must keep their Line Manager advised on a daily basis if their absence continues. If an employee anticipates being absent for more than three consecutive days, they must agree a time to contact their Line Manager to provide an update.

If the employee fails to keep in touch, Dunedin Canmore reserves the right to initiate and maintain contact with them.

### **Self-Certification and Fitness for Work certificates**

If the illness lasts less than seven days, the employee will need to complete a self-certificate, which will be completed at the return to work interview.

If the illness lasts eight or more consecutive days, the employee will need to obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work Certificate (or Fit Note) from their GP or Hospital Medical Certificate (as appropriate) and pass to the Line Manager immediately upon receipt and not retained until they return to work. This also applies to subsequent certificates that may be issued. The Statement of Fitness for Work must cover the whole period of absence.

The "Fit Note" allows the doctor to advise if the employee is 'unfit for work' or 'may be fit for some work'. GPs now have to advise on fitness for work in general rather than fitness for the employee's specific job.

If Dunedin Canmore specifically requests a "fit note" for a period of sickness absence not exceeding seven days, the employee will be reimbursed for the cost if it has to be obtained privately.

### **Return to work**

Line Managers will conduct a "return-to-work interview" each time an employee returns following a short-term absence, to discuss the reason for the absence in a fair and factual way.

This will alert the employee that their absences are being monitored and may deter future casual absences. The Line Manager should be supportive towards the employee and, where appropriate, identify ways to assist the employee to improve his/her attendance in the future.

Use the return-to-work interview forms:

- to welcome the employee back, check they are well enough to resume duties, focus on their value to your business and update them on any changes.
- if they have a Fit Note, to discuss the details. If it says 'may be fit for some work', you will need to discuss a new working arrangement. For example, if it says the employee must avoid lifting, you might be able to get them to do more administrative duties until they are feeling better.
- to get a better understanding of their problem. They may tell you, for example, that their sickness is a result of them being run-down through having to care for an elderly relative or through stress caused by bullying at work. If being a carer is the root of the problem, see if they have any ideas for overcoming it so it does not affect their work, or you could make suggestions. If the root cause is bullying, you need to discuss it with them and then consider your next move. But deal with these matters - they are only likely to recur if you don't.
- In cases where there is room for improved attendance, an employee must be told what is expected and the likely consequences if this does not happen. They should also be told if their level of absence is putting their job at risk.
- If the latest absence means the employee's absence levels are approaching the trigger points where formal action will be taken, the Line manager should confirm the meeting taking place is the informal disciplinary procedure. The Line Manager should also confirm any further absences may lead to the formal disciplinary process being invoked.
- Ask the employee to complete and sign a self-certification form at the meeting.
- Complete the RTW interview form.

Contact the Employee Relations team for advice and guidance at any stage of the process.

## **Medical Advice**

Seek medical advice, if appropriate, to determine whether there is any underlying medical cause for the employee's frequent absences.

Contact the Employee Relations team for advice and guidance to obtain consent to access medical records to authorise the release of any medical report from the doctor to Dunedin Canmore or to arrange an Occupational Health examination. Dunedin Canmore will meet all costs associated with any such examination and/or medical reports.

## **Short Term Absence Trigger Points**

The following trigger points have been specified at which formal action will be taken in response to recurring short term absence :

- Three instances of absence in any rolling six month period
- 5 days absence in any rolling six month period
- Any unusual type or pattern of absences that gives cause for concern

## **Formal Action**

Should an employee reach one of the trigger points the Line Manager should arrange to conduct an investigation meeting with the employee into the reasons for their absences, and also to provide assistance and support where appropriate.

Before taking any formal action in respect of an employee who has had frequent absences from work, the Line Manager/supervisor should take the following action:

- Review all the medical certificates, including any information from the GP or Occupational Health specialist.
- Review all the return to work interview meeting notes to identify anything that needs to be taken into account.
- Check the employee's absence record to obtain an accurate number of days' absence.
- Check the number of separate occasions the employee has been absent.
- Compare the employee's absence record to see if it is worse than other employees in the department.
- Check what action has been taken in other similar cases.
- If the employee is disabled or becomes disabled, you are legally required to make reasonable adjustments to enable the employee to continue working. If absence is related to disability, keep the record separate from other sickness absence.
- Check with the Employee Relations to obtain advice and guidance on the appropriate action to take in line with Dunedin Canmore's procedures.

The Senior Manager may then decide on one of three courses of action:

a) no action taken or

b) alternative course of action/support to the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, resulting from recommendations made by his/her doctor and/or the Occupational Health Advisor. Sit down with the employee and discuss what actions may be required to help them improve their attendance.

or

c) progression to disciplinary as per Dunedin Canmore's Disciplinary procedures.

Employees will be provided with copies of the investigation notes of any such formal meetings within 10 working days & will have the opportunity to raise queries over the records in a specified time period.

### **Follow up actions**

Set reasonable targets and time-limits for improvement in attendance and ensure that the employee is committed to achieving them. Advice is available from the Employee Relations team.

Warn the employee of the consequences of continuing unsatisfactory attendance, ie that he/she may eventually be dismissed.

Keep confidential records of all absences, discussions and medical certificates and make sure that the records clearly identify the reasons for an employee's various absences.

Schedule a follow-up meeting at an agreed time to monitor the on-going situation.

### **Further Information**

If an employee has any queries, they should speak with their Line Manager in the first instance.