

Sickness Policy

Aim of the Policy

This policy is designed to assist Grafton Childcare in effectively managing sickness-related and other staff absence. Grafton Childcare recognises the importance of ensuring that employees are supported through any periods of absence and their subsequent return to work. Through an effective Sickness and Absence Policy, Grafton Childcare will be better positioned to identify any potentially unsafe work practices, any issues affecting employee morale and any other underlying problems employees may be facing.

Sickness

Notification of Sickness

If an employee is unable to come to work for any reason, they must inform Grafton Childcare by contacting the Manager, Mrs Denise Tupman at least one hour before the time they would normally be due to start work on the first day of absence.

Employees should speak to their manager **personally** i.e. calls on the employee's behalf from a friend/partner/parent will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. Texting or emailing the manager will not be acceptable under **any** circumstances.

The employee should indicate the reason for their absence, it's likely duration and when the illness started.

In the event that the employee's absence continues for a number of days or weeks, they must maintain regular contact with Grafton Childcare to keep the Manager informed of the reasons for their ongoing absence and the date when they expect to be able to return to work. In such cases the employee should specify how the Manager can contact them if necessary, ideally leaving a landline number on which they can be contacted.

Certification of Sickness

All periods of absence through sickness must be certified by the statutory Form SC2. The completed form should indicate actual days of sickness, even if they include days when the employee would not normally have worked e.g. weekends and public holidays.

For sickness absences of up to 7 calendar days, the self-certification form should be completed by the employee upon their return to work and handed to the manager, Mrs Denise Tupman.

For sickness absence of more than 7 calendar days, the employee must also provide a medical certificate the statutory Form Med 3 also referred to as a 'fit note'. This will provide us with more information about your condition, and let us know whether your GP or medical provider considers that you are not 'fit for work,' or 'may be fit for work taking account of the following advice'. Subsequent medical certificates must be produced as necessary to cover the total duration of the period of absence. As a minimum, employees should contact their manager on a weekly basis to provide an update on the injury or illness.

Long-term and Persistent Absence

Grafton Childcare will treat as long-term absence any period of extensive absence due to serious or significant illness over a prolonged period. Persistent absence may consist of a series of unconnected short-term illnesses. Where Grafton Childcare is of the opinion that a period of absence is long-term, it will inform the employee of such and:

1. require that the employee keep in regular contact with Grafton Childcare, at such intervals as agreed between Grafton Childcare and the employee; and
2. ensure that the employee is kept informed as to any possible threat to their employment.

Grafton Childcare reserves the right to request a home visit where the illness is long-term. The purpose of the visit will be to discuss possibilities for a return to work and to discover whether Grafton Childcare can assist in facilitating this.

Grafton Childcare will treat as persistent absence a series of unconnected short-term illnesses.

It may be necessary in incidences of long-term or persistent absence to treat the matter as an issue of capability or conduct. In such circumstances Grafton Childcare will:

3. investigate the absence through "Return to Work Interviews" and the obtaining of medical reports;
4. set time limits on the assessment of the employee and keep him or her informed of such;
5. consider adjustments to the job in order to facilitate a return to work or to allow the employee to do their job more easily, for example the implementation of flexible working arrangements;
6. consider whether the illness amounts to a disability. Where it is found to do so the employee shall fall under the scope of Grafton Childcare's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and Grafton Childcare shall make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary; and
7. keep the employee informed in all the circumstance of any threat to their employment.

Where Grafton Childcare requires medical reports relating to an absence it will either:

8. request that the employee undergo an independent medical examination with the Occupational Health Service; or
9. obtain a report from the employee's doctor and/or the Fit for Work assessment service, subject to employee consent.

In either case the employee may refuse to attend or refuse to consent to the release of a medical report, or request that corrections are made. Employees are reminded however that any decision regarding their future which could result in dismissal will be taken on the basis of the information available to Grafton Childcare.

Grafton Childcare will hold all medical reports and related information obtained as private and confidential.

Grafton Childcare stresses that dismissal will only ever be taken as a last resort. Where however the absence is found to be a matter of misconduct, the employee will be subject to Grafton Childcare's Disciplinary Procedure.

Sickness Which Occurs Whilst the Employee is on Holiday

Where an employee is incapacitated through sickness or injury during any period of pre-booked holiday (whether in whole or in part), Grafton Childcare will, subject to the correct notification and certification, allow the employee to transfer to sick leave and take replacement holiday at a later date. This policy is subject to the following conditions, which will be strictly applied:

10. The total period of incapacity must be fully certificated by a qualified medical practitioner;
11. The employee must contact the Manager, Mrs Denise Tupman (in person and by telephone if possible) as soon as they know that there will be a period of incapacity during the holiday; and
12. The employee must confirm in writing to the Manager, Mrs Denise Tupman no later than 5 days after returning to work how much of the holiday period was affected by sickness or injury and the amount of leave that the employee wishes to take at another time.

Any requests for replacement holiday must be made in accordance with the Grafton Childcare's holiday policy and the employee should try to take the replacement holiday in the holiday year in which it was accrued. Where this is not possible, Grafton Childcare will allow the employee to carry forward the leave into the next holiday year.

Grafton Childcare may require the employee to take all or part of their replacement holiday on particular days to be specified by Grafton Childcare.

Return to Work Interviews

Grafton Childcare shall decide, after any absence due to sickness, whether the employee is required to attend a return to work interview with their manager in order to:

- ensure the employee's fitness to return to work;
- agree any necessary actions required to facilitate the employee's return to work;
- ensure the proper certificates (e.g. Fit Note or Fit for Work return-to-work plan) have been completed/obtained in respect of the entire period of absence; and
- discuss any problems that may exist.

At the return to work interview, employees may be set reasonable targets and time limits for an improvement in attendance. A failure to improve may result in disciplinary action.

Sick Pay

Statutory Sick Pay ("SSP")

In order to be eligible for SSP, employees must be ill for four days or longer (this can include weekends and bank holidays), and must have average weekly earnings equal to or more than the lower earnings limit. Please see relevant government websites such Gov.uk for details of the current lower earnings limit.

Employees must use the statutory Form SC2 to provide Grafton Childcare with details of their illness.

The present weekly SSP rate can be found on relevant government websites such as Gov.uk

Grafton Childcare will record all details of SSP payments made to employees using Statutory

Form SSP2 in conjunction with legal requirements.

Where Grafton Childcare is not required to pay SSP or SSP comes to an end, Grafton Childcare will provide the employee with Form SSP1 to support the employee's claim for Employment and Support Allowance.

Other Absence

Jury Service

Any employee called for jury service should inform the manager as soon as possible. Employees called for jury service will not be paid by Grafton Childcare for the period of their absence. Employees should instead claim all available allowances from the Court.

Public Duties

Grafton Childcare is legally obliged to permit any employee time off to complete their public duties including, but not limited to, magistrate or school governor duties. The employee should inform their manager of their duties, meetings or rotas as soon as possible in order to allow Grafton Childcare time to plan for their absence.

Employees carrying out public duties will not receive pay for time off taken to complete their duties.

Emergency, Maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption Leave

Emergency leave (time off for dependants), maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave are all dealt with in their respective policy documents, available from the Manager.

If employees are uncertain about any other type of absence they must ask for advice from the Manager. Other types of absence may be covered by separate Grafton Childcare policies and procedures and/or by statutory rights. Unauthorised absence is likely to be treated as a disciplinary offence.

Trade Union

Grafton Childcare is legally obliged to allow employees time off to carry out their trade union duties. Any time taken off will be paid unless the carrying out of such duties occurs outside working hours.

Monitoring

Grafton Childcare will monitor and record levels of absence and reasons for absence in order to help identify abuse of this policy, which places additional stress on colleagues. So that Grafton Childcare will be better positioned to identify unsatisfactory work practices and to distinguish between different types of absence.

Grafton Childcare will obtain consent from each employee, either in their Terms and Conditions of employment, or on a separate consent form to comply with the relevant Data Protection legislation.

All information gathered through absence monitoring under this Policy will be held and treated in confidence.