

Sick absence

Report a sick absence

If you're unwell and can't work, you must follow the absence management procedures.

Find out how to manage and record medical and dental absences.

Find out how to record a full or part-day sick absence.

If you are absent due to illness, you should follow these five steps:

1. Inform your manager

You should phone your manager as soon as possible to let them know. If you work a standard working pattern this should be before 10am on the first day of absence. If you work a non-standard pattern such as shift work, phone before your scheduled start time to give as much notice as possible. If possible you should indicate your return date.

If your manager is unavailable, contact another equivalent grade manager.

Keep in touch with your manager while you're off, let them know your expected return date and advise of any changes.

2. Regularly update your manager

Keep in touch to advise your manager of your progress and any changes to your likely return date.

3. Provide self-certification or a fit note

If you're absent for seven calendar days or fewer, you must provide self-certification by recording your absence on [REDACTED]. Your manager should have already opened your sick absence in [REDACTED].

In exceptional circumstances there may be a reason you wish to keep your health issue confidential. If this is the case, contact HR Online.

Go to section 5 to find out how close the sick absence.

On your first day back, you will receive a notification of the short term sick journey assigned to you. The journey will outline each task required and guide you through the process. You can access your journeys from your 'me' page on [REDACTED].

If you're sick for more than seven days in a row, you must provide a Statement of Fitness for Work or 'fit note'.

Find out how to submit a fit note.

4. Return to work discussion

This should take place on your first day back. You're not required to discuss confidential information, but your manager may be able to support you better if they understand why you've been absent.

5. Close the sick absence

Your manager will have opened a sick absence on [REDACTED] when you first reported sick. On your return to work, check the details are correct. Scroll to the additional information section to add an absence related to disability or absence related to industrial injury or disease if required.

Once the details have been added, you can close your sick absence on [REDACTED]. To close an absence:

1. Go to [REDACTED].
2. Navigate to your 'me' page.
3. Access the 'existing absence' page either by selecting the 'quick action', or the 'time and absences' tile - that will open your absence dashboard.
4. Select 'existing absence'.
5. Enter date of return to work. Your manager may have added an estimated date of return. Before the 'expected date of return' field, there is a field that says 'open ended' and is ticked. You must remove the tick in this field to prompt another field to appear, which is the 'actual date of return'.
6. Select submit to close the absence.

The sick leave page has several sections, but only the two dates of start and end need to be entered to submit your request.

To view a guide on updating an absence, search for the guide named 'create, update, or delete an absence record (employee)', using the [REDACTED] help centre icon.

The accurate and timely reporting of sick absence enables us to monitor absence trends and determine what support and interventions might be needed.

Planned medical treatment

Where possible, advise your manager in advance of planned medical treatment and the length of any expected absence.

Sick absence and pay

If you're absent due to illness, you must follow the absence management procedures.

You may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), which is a benefit paid by employers on behalf of HMRC. SSP is paid on a weekly basis for a maximum of 28 weeks.

The Scottish Government operates a contractual sick pay scheme which tops up SSP payments. This scheme applies to all colleagues employed on a fixed term or permanent basis and who receive a regular monthly salary. Entitlements are:

- a maximum of six months of sick leave at full pay (182 calendar days)
- followed by a maximum of six months at half pay (183 calendar days)
- followed by nil pay

Colleagues working on a part-time or other flexible work pattern receive the same entitlements. These entitlements are adjusted to reflect the number of days which they work.

Sick absences are cumulative. In any rolling 12-month period, you may receive full pay for sick absence(s) of up to six months. In any rolling four-year period, you'll receive full or half pay for sick absence(s) of up to 12 months. Your entitlement to both contractual and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is determined by the sick absence history held within your [REDACTED] record.

Sick absence due to pregnancy-related issues does not count towards trigger points and will not result in formal HR or pay-related action.

Example sick pay calculations

Your entitlement to both contractual and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is determined by the sick absence history held within your [REDACTED] record. Depending on your absence history, it is possible for you to go directly onto nil pay without receiving any periods of full or half pay. The rolling four-year count takes precedence over the one year rolling count. This therefore means you could receive nil pay even if you've accrued fewer than 182 days sick absence at full pay in the one year rolling count.

A basic example of how sick pay is calculated is provided in the following example. It doesn't include all of the variables which can affect these calculations.

Your entitlement to full pay is determined using a 12-month rolling count, which begins 12 months before the first day of your current absence. Any absences at full pay are totalled up and deducted from your entitlement at full pay for your latest absence.

Example

Your latest absence begins on 1 January 2024. To calculate your sick pay:

1. Go back 12 months from 1 January 2024, which gives you 1 January 2023.
2. Total up all absences at full pay that fall within the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, which in this example will be 10 days.
3. Calculate remaining entitlement to full pay: 182 days – 10 days = 172 days.

How reduced pay dates are calculated

An assessment is carried out to determine if any absences included in the current count have now dropped out of the 12 month rolling period.

This involves going back 12 months from the current predicted half pay date and totalling up all absences within this 12 month period. This is to assess if any absences previously included should drop out of the count.

If an absence drops out of the count, these days are added onto the predicted half pay date to calculate a revised predicted half pay date.

A second assessment is carried out based upon the revised predicted half pay date to see if any absences included in the previous count drop out. This process is repeated until no further

absences drop out of the count and the predicted half pay date thus becomes the actual half pay date.

How nil pay dates are calculated

The same principles apply to the calculation of your nil pay date. All absences are included within this count, not just absences at full pay. The calculations are based upon a four year rolling period rather than a 12 month rolling period.

Due to the complexity and staff time involved to manually calculate reduced pay dates, HR are unable to provide estimates of when reduced pay may take effect.

Attendance requirements

We use a 'trigger point' system to help identify where absence requires investigation and possible action by your manager.

The trigger point for permanent and fixed-term contract colleagues is a total absence of 11 working days in any 12-month rolling period.

It makes no difference whether the absences are self-certified or you have a 'fit note' from a doctor.

Sick absence due to pregnancy related issues do not count towards trigger points and will not result in formal HR or pay-related action.

Longer absences

Your absence is likely to be treated as long-term and lead to possible action by your manager if you're off work for more than four weeks.

It may be appropriate to refer you to the occupational health adviser (Optima Health). Your manager can get advice on this from HR Online.

On your first day back, you will receive a notification of the long term sick journey assigned to you. The journey will outline each task required and guide you through the process to ensure a smooth transition. Full details of the sick absence journey steps are available in recording sick leave on [REDACTED].

You can access your Journeys from your 'me' page on [REDACTED].

Attendance requirements for probationers

As a probationer, you must demonstrate that you can meet an acceptable standard of attendance.

Sick absence will be investigated if:

- you're off work for seven working days or more during the nine-month probationary period
- there's a pattern to your absences, for example you're regularly off on the same day/occasion

It makes no difference whether the absences are self-certified or you have a 'fit note' from a doctor.

An HR adviser will decide what action to take if your attendance is giving cause for concern. They may first seek advice from the occupational health adviser (Optima Health).

Probation extension or termination

Where your attendance gives cause for concern, your probation may be extended. You'll be told the standard of attendance expected during that period.

Where a return to work within a reasonable period, or maintaining an acceptable standard of attendance is unlikely, your employment may be terminated.

Find out about the appeals procedure.

Sick absence and attendance

If you are unwell and have symptoms of a respiratory infection or a fever and high temperature, you should stay at home and follow normal sickness absence procedures. Select your reason for absence that closest fits your symptoms, for example if you think you've had coronavirus symptoms, record this as 'COVID-19 (post May 2022)' on [REDACTED].

Normal sick absence procedures now apply for those off sick with coronavirus symptoms. These absences are therefore no longer excluded for absence triggers or sick pay calculations.

Absences due to ongoing or 'long covid' ('post-covid syndrome') are treated in the same way as other long-term absences. If you have ongoing or long covid, contact the people advice team who can update your records once they've received medical advice.

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection but you're well enough to work, work from home if you can, to prevent the spread of respiratory infections to colleagues. If you can't work from home, talk to your manager about your options. Options may include changing your shifts or undertaking other work while you have symptoms.

Secondees, agency workers and contractors

If you're on secondment to the Scottish Government and are absent from work you must report your absence and reason to your Scottish Government manager. You should also contact your parent organisation and follow their absence management procedures.

If you're an agency worker or contractor working in a Scottish Government building and are displaying signs of respiratory infections or fever, you should tell your manager. You should follow the advice for Scottish Government employees and also notify your employment agency.

If you're working remotely and are ill, you must inform your manager and also contact your employment agency. Managers should contact the employing agency to discuss alternative cover arrangements, if required, to fulfil business critical functions.

Position management

For information about the position management impact for long and short term sickness absences, read recording sick leave.

