



# RCH Group Policy: Attendance & Absence Management

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Approval Body	RCH Group Remuneration and Nominations Committee
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This policy is available, on request, in different languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required.

## 1. Scope

- 1.1 This is a Group policy and therefore applies to Staff, Board and Committee members of The RCH Group of companies. As of February 2024, RCH Group consists of River Clyde Homes and its subsidiary, Home Fix Scotland Ltd.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 RCH Group recognises that on occasions it may be necessary for employees to be absent from work. However, we also have a duty to provide a reliable service to our customers and thus we need to ensure that we help you maintain the highest possible level of attendance.
- 2.2 This policy is designed to help all employees achieve good attendance, and to ensure that a consistent and fair approach in managing attendance is adopted throughout the organisation.
- 2.3 RCH Group will ensure that all absences will be managed within the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- 2.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:
- RCH Group Attendance & Absence Management Procedures
  - RCH Group Discipline Policy and Procedures
  - RCH Group Capability Procedures
  - RCH Group Grievance Policy and Procedures
  - RCH Group Health & Safety Policy

## 3. Policy Statement and Responsibilities

- 3.1 RCH Group requires good attendance from all employees to meet its objectives.
- If your level of attendance is unsatisfactory you will be informed what improvement is required and possible consequences of failure to do so (which may include disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal).
  - The attendance management process is not concerned with reasons for absence but with number of periods of absence/ days absent (excluding underlying health conditions protected under the Equality Act 2010).
  - If you have an underlying health condition causing absence(s), then we will consider reasonable adjustments.
  - Managers will conduct "return to work" interviews for every period of sickness absence within the spirit of this policy.
  - You need to adhere strictly to our absence reporting procedures. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and organisational sick pay being withheld.
  - Managers will maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records for all staff to manage absence effectively.

### 3.2 **Absence Monitoring**

A fundamental feature of good attendance management is the accurate and timely recording of all absences. This is essential for processing the requirements of statutory and occupational sick pay arrangements and the process of managing attendance and absence. Good information allows patterns to be identified and can be an early indication of underlying health conditions. The sooner these issues are identified and acted upon – the more likely a successful conclusion for both you and the organisation can be achieved.

Accurate recording is also an essential element in satisfying potential concerns over the fairness of any actions taken by line managers.

### 3.3 **Absence Reporting Procedures**

If you cannot come to work, either due to illness or for any other reason, not already authorised, you must phone and speak to your line manager (or, if not available, another manager) by 9.00 am for office-based staff and 8.00 am for out of office staff.

### 3.4 **Fit Notes**

If you continue to be absent due to illness or injury for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note (which can be obtained from your GP) as soon as possible to your line manager.

If the fit note states 'may be fit for work' your line manager will contact you and arrange a meeting with you to discuss any adjustments suggested. Although RCH Group are not obliged to follow the doctor's advice, we will do our best to accommodate this and maintain a good attendance record. Both HR and Occupational Health advice will be provided and if RCH Group cannot agree reasonable adjustments, you will remain off sick.

If RCH Group agree a phased return to work, the days you are still off sick within the agreed period will count as one period of absence.

You are permitted to return to work before the expiry of your fit note (as long as your GP does not state they wish to see you again before returning to work), even if this is before your fit note expires. You do not need to go back to your doctor first to be signed fit for work. If you come back to work before the expiry of your fit note, RCH Group may seek occupational advice.

### 3.5 **Keeping in Touch**

You are responsible for phoning your line manager to let them know the reason for your absence. If, in the event of an emergency you cannot get to a phone on day one of your absence, you should make sure that someone else calls on your behalf. After this, you should contact your line manager as agreed between you and your line manager i.e., calling once every 5 working days.

While keeping in touch we would expect you to let us know: the reason for your absence, the predicted recovery and/or treatment, when you expect to return to work and, the best contact details which can be used during your absence.

If you fail to keep in contact as detailed above, your line manager will contact you.

### 3.6 **Failure to Comply**

Where you do not follow reporting, certification, or keeping-in-touch arrangements we may withhold RCH Group occupational sick pay. Failure to comply with these requirements may also lead to disciplinary action against you in accordance with our discipline procedure. Similarly, if we suspect that you have falsified your absence or have deliberately misled us, we will investigate this, and it may result in disciplinary action being taken against you. In serious and/or repeated cases, it may lead to a dismissal.

### 3.7 **Return to Work**

A thorough return to work meeting will be carried out after every period of unplanned sickness absence. The purpose of a return-to-work interview is to establish if you are fit to return to work. This will be done by your line manager or another manager if he/she is not available) on the first day of your return to work at the start of your working day or shift. Completed forms will be kept with your absence information. Return to work interview forms contain confidential information and will only be viewed by those authorised to access it, normally your line manager or any other manager who deals with the case.

A self-certification form, is required to be completed whether or not you are entitled to any sickness allowance and whatever the length or reason for absence.

### 3.8 Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

If eligible for SSP this is irrespective to your entitlement to occupational sick pay. The scale of entitlement to SSP is reviewed by the government, normally at the beginning of each tax year. It is not paid for the first three days of absence and runs for 28 weeks after that.

If you are no longer entitled to SSP, you may be entitled to an incapacity benefit. You can enquire about this at your local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). RCH Group will tell you if you are not entitled to SSP and send you the appropriate government form, it is however your responsibility to claim any other Government benefit/s that you may be entitled to.

### 3.9 Occupational Sick Pay (OSP)

OSP is calculated based on a 12-month rolling programme. Providing that you have followed RCH absence reporting procedures, payment for sickness, absence and/or injury will be as set out in the table below as follows:

Service at first date of sickness*	Full Allowance +	Half Allowance
26 weeks or under	0 weeks	0 weeks
Over 26 weeks but less than 1 year	5 weeks	5 weeks
1 year but less than 2 years	9 weeks	9 weeks
2 years but less than 3 years	18 weeks	18 weeks
3 years but less than 5 years	22 weeks	22 weeks
5 years or more	26 weeks	26 weeks

\*For HFS employees, the first three days is paid as SSP.

OSP will not be paid in the following circumstances:

- Where the employee is in legal custody
- Where the absence is due to the employee's misconduct, active participation in sport for payment or payment for injury while working for another employer
- If an employee becomes ill while on strike. The employee will be excluded from Organisational Sick Pay only for the duration of the strike action.

### 3.10 Attendance Management

This refers to dealing with unacceptable levels of attendance, with no reference to reasons for absence or medical condition. Where this fails to secure a required improvement, we will invoke the terms of the discipline

procedure. Unsatisfactory attendance reviews can result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

RCH Group's Attendance Review Triggers are:

- Actions may be taken for 3 periods or 10 days of absence within a rolling 12-month period. This will be recorded on an "Improvement Notice."
- A further period of absence within a 6-month period may result in formal actions i.e., the issue of a first written warning.
- A further period of absence within a 6-month period may result in the issue of a final written warning.
- A further period of absence within a 12-month period may result in dismissal from employment.

If at any stage during this process it becomes apparent that an underlying health condition is involved, medical information will be sought, and further discussion will take place prior to deciding on any appropriate action, if any. Absence periods related to pregnancy or underlying health conditions classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 will not be considered for the purpose of attendance management process.

### 3.11 **Absence Management**

RCH Group will adopt a sympathetic approach to employees with a long-term and/or underlying health condition. If you find yourself in such a position, you should be confident that your manager will support you.

If a medical professional makes suggestions for any reasonable adjustments, these will be discussed prior to your return to work to determine if these can be accommodated, along with any suggestions you or we may also have made. Although we are not bound by the doctor's suggestions, we will make all possible efforts to accommodate your prompt return and good attendance seeking both HR and Occupational Health advice. If we agree, any reasonable adjustments, we will also set time scales and reviews to assess if they are still required and suitable.

When managing a long-term absence, it is possible that termination of employment for the reason of ill health capability may be considered where all other options have been exhausted, and the organisation can no longer sustain the absence. RCH Group will ensure that we seek the appropriate advice if and when necessary.

### 3.12 **Dishonest Absence**

If you are found to falsify or exaggerate your absence, this will be treated as gross misconduct. An investigation will be carried out in accordance with our

discipline procedure and disciplinary action may be instigated, including dismissal or future withdrawal of the occupational sick pay benefit.

### 3.13 **Absence and holidays**

If during an authorised period of annual leave, you fall ill, and you produce a self-certificate or fit note RCH Group may count the period as sick leave and not as annual leave. You must speak to your line manager on the first day of your return to work or earlier if possible and provide them with the necessary certification.

If you are on sick leave and go on holiday you should contact your line manager to seek authorisation and to let them know how long you will be away for and to ensure communication resumes upon your return.

### 3.14 **Doctor/hospital/dental appointments**

Doctor and dental appointments should be arranged out-with working hours or by working flexibly to cover appointments if during core hours. Staff will be given up to a maximum of 2 hours for hospital consultations and proof of appointment must be shown to line managers for authorising time off.

### 3.15 **Conduct Whilst off Sick**

When on sick leave, employees are still expected not to breach any points of their contract of employment. They are still bound by the duties of fidelity and are expected not to participate in activities that would be at odds with their medical condition, whilst off sick. Any breach in respect of this will be dealt with under the discipline procedure.

### 3.16 **Cosmetic Procedures**

Absence due to cosmetic procedures (whether carried out in the UK or abroad) will not fall under the sick leave or pay. In these cases, the employee should request time off and agree with their line manager how the absence will be processed, e.g., annual leave or unpaid leave.

### 3.17 **IVF Treatment**

Absences resulting from IVF treatment will not be processed as sick leave or pay. The same relates to a partner of a person that is undergoing such treatment. Instead, employees should discuss with their line manager how time off for the treatment could be accommodated, e.g., annual leave, flexi time or unpaid leave. Absences relating to IVF treatment will also not be treated as relating to pregnancy unless the employee falls pregnant.



### 3.18 **Stress Management**

Stress is not an illness but a state. It can result from an illness or lead to one and can become excessive and prolonged and develop into a mental and/or physical illness. The same relates to “nervous debility”. If an employee goes off sick with stress, the manager will endeavour to find out the underlying cause so that it could be determined whether conditions at work cause or contribute to stress and whether something could be done to help the situation. If the absence is certified by a doctor, the manager may ask the employee’s doctor to clarify the underlying cause for stress through RCH Group’s occupational health adviser.

### 3.19 **Data Protection**

RCH Group will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and RCH Group’s Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in RCH Group’s employee privacy notice.

### 3.20 **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Employees**

Employees should be familiar with the contents of this policy and ensure that they comply with this policy and the related procedures.

#### **Line Managers**

Line managers should be familiar with the contents of this policy and ensure that they record and manage absence fairly and consistently in line with this policy and the related procedures.

#### **HR Team**

The HR team will promote and provide advice and guidance on this policy to support line managers, where appropriate.

## **4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The RCH Group will apply this policy fairly and consistently. In implementing this policy, we will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other grounds. Our commitment to equality and fairness will apply irrespective of factors such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or other personal attributes.

## 5. Review

This policy will be reviewed in its entirety every 3 years, unless an earlier review is required due to changes in legal, regulatory or best practice requirements, or because monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.