



## SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

### NOTIFICATION

Any nursery staff absent due to illness **must** inform their Manager/Room Manager by telephone in person at least one hour before their shift is due to start on the first day of illness, if on an early shift. If on a late shift the Manager/ Room Manager must be informed by 8am. Staff should inform their Manager/ Room Manager of the reason for their injury or illness, their expected length of absence from work, contact details and any outstanding or urgent work requiring attention.

Leaving of messages on answerphones does not guarantee that the message is received. If a message is left a second call must be made during the first day of absence to ensure that the message has been received.

Contact by e-mail or text message is not acceptable and only in extenuating circumstances should someone else call in for a member of staff e.g., if the member of staff has been hospitalised, imprisoned, or is suffering from severe mental health issues.

Administrative Staff must notify their line manager if they are absent due to illness.

Failure to comply with the company sickness notification procedure will result in the absence being considered as unauthorised leave and will therefore be unpaid.

During the first five working days of sickness absence staff must contact the Manager/ Room Manager by 3pm each day to indicate whether or not they will be returning to work on the following day to enable alternative staffing arrangements to be made. If there is some uncertainty, it is likely that nursery staff returning from sickness absence will be asked to work a late shift, to ensure that the nursery is sufficiently staffed the following morning. For sickness covered by a medical certificate they must telephone the Manager/ Room Manager by 3pm on the day before the certificate runs out to confirm that they will be returning to work.

All staff must complete a self-certification form (this can be found on the website or requested from the Nursery) for any sick-leave up to five working days and obtain a doctor's fit note for longer periods of sickness.

Any staff becoming ill on holiday must telephone on the first day of illness and may be required obtain a doctor's fit note for the whole period of sickness.

All fit notes must be forwarded to HR.

Staff attending hospital will normally use half a day's sick leave, unless the appointment states that a full day is required. Appointment confirmation must be shown to the Manager/ Room



Manager. (If staff do not wish to return to work following an appointment, they may request time back or annual leave in the usual way.)

### **STATEMENT OF FITNESS FOR WORK**

These have replaced the Medical certificates which were previously issued by GP's. Staff will either be advised that they are:

**Not fit for work** – which has the same meaning as the old-style sick note and is the doctor's advice that someone is too ill to work.

**May be fit for work** – which advises the patient that they may be able to return to work with suitable support from their employer.

Should staff receive a '**may be fit for work**' statement then their Manager will discuss the suggested adjustments indicated by the doctor with them and should it be possible to accommodate these, then they may return to work. Should this not be possible then the statement will be used as if the doctor had advised '**not fit for work**'.

### **RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS**

Each time an employee returns to work following an absence due to illness, a return to work interview will be carried out by the Manager/ Room Manager as soon as is practical and HR informed.

### **PAYMENT DURING SICK LEAVE**

During the first 6 months of employment York Childcare (YC) offers full time staff 2 separate occurrences of paid sick leave (up to a maximum of 5 days). Any sick leave over 2 occurrences (or over 5 days) within this period will then only attract Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), if qualifying. Throughout this policy, part time staff's entitlement will be on a pro rata basis to full time staff and any reference to entitlement will be pro-rated accordingly.

After completing the 6 month probationary period, YC offers all full time staff 5 separate occurrences of paid sick leave (up to a maximum of 20 days) paid (i.e., company) sick leave within any 52 week period of time. This is known as a rolling or cumulative sick leave system. The sick leave year starts on the first day an employee is off sick and keeps moving subject to further sickness absence. It means that if at any point in time, a member of staff is off sick for more than 5 occurrences (or 20 days) within any 52 week time period, the additional days will be paid at the SSP rate, if qualifying.

For the first 5 occurrences or 20 days of sick leave (5 if within probationary period), SSP will be topped up to full basic pay by YC. Any further period of sickness will be covered by Statutory



Sick Pay only, providing that the absence qualifies for SSP. For further information on the regulations surrounding SSP please refer to: <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

**Management have the discretion to increase or reduce sickness payments beyond these limits.**

### **ABSENCE MONITORING**

Any member of staff who is absent from work regularly or on 5 or more occasions in any one year period will be given the support of absence monitoring to ensure their health needs are not being overlooked. They should expect to be contacted from time to time by their Manager in order to discuss their wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and any work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.

The employee will be notified in writing that their sick leave is being closely monitored, and a meeting will be arranged with the employee and their Manager for an informal discussion about their health needs.

Certain recommendations may be made following this conversation, such as advising an employee to seek professional medical advice. It may also be beneficial to write to the employees' doctor for a professional opinion as to whether it is in the best health interests of the employee to continue trying to meet the demands of the post. Employees will be asked to give their written permission for their doctor to be contacted. However, if this consent is not forthcoming and the required information from a doctor cannot be provided, this could lead to:

- medical capability assessment
- commencement of disciplinary procedures (according to the circumstances) for not complying with company policy.

The Management Board will be kept informed as to which employees are being monitored.

If an employee's absence through illness suggests that further help is needed YC will attempt to arrange this.

It may also be appropriate to ask an independent doctor or occupational health specialist for a professional opinion.

### **ABSENTEEISM**

If, following the absence monitoring, it is decided that the level of absence is too high to be acceptable to YC then the situation will be reviewed. If there are no acceptable health related reasons for the absence the Company may treat this as a conduct issue and deal with this under the disciplinary procedure.



### **PROLONGED ILL HEALTH**

YC is a small organisation with a small work force split into small units. Unfortunately, for this reason, prolonged periods of absence cannot be accommodated indefinitely.

Should an employee be absent from work due to prolonged ill health, a review of their suitability for the post may be required. YC reserves the right to engage the services of an occupational health specialist to identify whether an employee is medically able to return to work.

If, after review, it is concluded that the employee is unable to continue in his/her present role, the issue becomes one of capability and will be dealt with under YC's Capability Procedure.

### **PRESENTEEISM**

Presenteeism is a term used to describe the issue of employees coming into work while not physically or mentally well, instead of staying home and recuperating.

Employees' productivity drops off significantly when they are unwell, either physically or mentally. There is a lack of attention and engagement which could create safety hazards and, if they have an infectious disease, they could pass it on to children and to other employees, increasing the disruption. As an employer, YC therefore encourages people who are sick to take time off work until they are well again.

### **SOVEREIGN HEALTH CARE SCHEME**

YC pays for every member of staff who is contracted to work for a set number of hours each week to participate in the Sovereign Health Care Scheme. Staff are automatically enrolled into this scheme on commencement of employment. Full details are provided by Sovereign on enrolment. The cash plan scheme is designed to pay out for everyday health care costs such as dental treatment, eye tests, glasses/contact lenses, physiotherapy, chiropody and many preventive measures such as health screening.

Through this scheme, staff also benefit from membership of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Benefits of the EAP include:

- A 24-hour telephone support helpline – available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Online support service – provides a wealth of information and advice across a range of topics including home life support, work life assistance and physical and emotional health.
- Face to face counselling – includes up to 8 sessions of face to face counselling, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) where clinically appropriate.
- 24-hour medical information – qualified nurses are on hand to offer advice on a range of medical or health related issues
- Access to legal, financial and consumer information



- Support for managers – telephone support and guidance to help managers deal with workplace challenges.