STAFF ABSENCE POLICY

Early notification, safe cover, health support and fair records

EFFECTIVE: SEPTEMBER 2026 | REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2027 | IMPACT AP

1 | PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Manage staff absence fairly while maintaining safe learner supervision and continuity. Applies to employees; volunteers and contractors must report unavailability under their agreed arrangements. Kate Willis manages absence and cover, with an independent route where she is affected. Use this policy alongside employment terms, Fitness for Work, Safeguarding and equality duties.

2 | REPORTING UNEXPECTED ABSENCE

Tell Kate directly as soon as absence is known and, where possible, before transport or sessions begin. Explain expected duration, immediate work risks and essential handover needs without unnecessary medical detail. If Kate cannot be reached, contact Kirsty or the designated duty lead. A message through a learner or informal group chat is not a reliable reporting route.

3 | SAFE COVER AND PRIORITIES

The duty lead checks transport, practical activities, first aid, medication support and individual supervision before reallocating work. Use suitably checked and competent cover; do not fill a gap with an unchecked adult or unsafe lone working. Inform commissioners and families promptly if delivery must change and agree safe alternatives and accurate attendance records.

4 | SICKNESS EVIDENCE

Staff self-certify sickness for up to seven calendar days. A fit note is normally needed for longer absence, subject to current rules and individual circumstances. If obtaining evidence is delayed, explain and agree the next update. Managers consider the functional advice and possible adjustments rather than demanding a diagnosis or treating a fit note as a complete risk assessment.

5 | CONTACT DURING ABSENCE

Agree reasonable contact frequency, method and a named person, taking account of health and safeguarding needs. Keep updates supportive and focused on likely duration, cover and help with return. Do not pressure someone to work while medically unfit or require sensitive information to be shared broadly. Keep a factual record of agreed contacts and actions.

6 | PLANNED LEAVE AND APPOINTMENTS

Request leave through the authorised process early enough to plan cover, while recognising urgent and statutory leave may arise without notice. Confirm approval, pay treatment and arrangements in writing according to contract and current law. Do not use this policy to remove statutory rights for family, pregnancy, disability or other protected circumstances.

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7 | REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND PATTERNS

Review repeated or prolonged absence sensitively, exploring work-related factors, disability and support needs. Consider adjustments to duties, hours, breaks, contact or a phased return with suitable advice. Do not apply automatic sanctions solely from a numerical trigger. Record the discussion, evidence, agreed support and fair review point.

8 | RETURN-TO-WORK DISCUSSION

After absence, hold a private proportionate discussion about readiness, changes, support and essential updates. For significant illness or safety-critical work, review relevant risk assessments and professional advice before deployment. Agree temporary arrangements and review dates. Brief colleagues only on the practical information they need for safe cover and teamwork.

9 | RECORDS, PAY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Record dates, reason categories, contact, evidence and return arrangements accurately with restricted access. Health information must be protected and retained under the appropriate schedule. Explain pay and reporting decisions using current statutory and contractual rules; do not promise an unverified entitlement or rate. Correct errors and provide a clear route for questions.

10 | UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE AND FAIR ACTION

Where staff cannot be contacted, check welfare and immediate safeguarding risks and follow proportionate escalation. Distinguish illness, capability, conduct and emergencies before formal action. Seek appropriate HR advice, give the person an opportunity to respond and explain any review or appeal route. Concerns about an adult's suitability follow Managing Allegations separately.

11 | POLICY CONTROL AND REVIEW

Policy owner: Kate Willis, Principal and Proprietor. Effective date: September 2026. Scheduled review: September 2027, or sooner after relevant changes, incidents or feedback. Record actual governance approval and implementation decisions and brief staff on their duties. These policy dates do not assert that approval, staff training or operational checks have already occurred. Use the Complaints or independent reporting route for concerns about implementation.

12 | SOURCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Acas: Fit notes and proof of sickness; relevant current employment and equality law.

acas.org.uk/fit-notes-and-proof-of-sickness; Impact Fitness for Work Policy

Check current versions and apply according to Impact's legal and commissioning status.