



1. Absence Procedures, Rules and Pay

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Employees must ensure that any time off (other than in the case of sickness) is authorised in advance by their manager. Employees should follow the relevant procedures at all times as detailed in the Employee Handbook or Contract of Employment (as appropriate).

1.1 Medical and Dental Appointments

Employees are requested to arrange any medical or dental appointments outside working hours. Where this is not possible, employees must obtain permission from management before taking any time off and appointments should be arranged for first thing in the morning or last thing at night to minimise any disruptions to the Company. Following the appointment,

employees should complete a self-certificated Sickness Absence Notification for any appointment where the absence from work is half a day or longer in duration.

1.2 Sickness Absence Procedure

Employees are required to notify the Company as soon as possible of their sickness absence and the reasons for it. They should do this personally by telephone at the earliest opportunity and by no later than 8.30 a.m. on the first day of the absence.

All Consulting employees are required to notify their Engagement Manager in the first instance. In addition, Consulting employees are required to send a notification email of their sickness absence to their Line Manager. Where applicable, employees should also advise their client manager of their absence.

It is essential that employees keep the Company updated on a daily basis on the circumstances of the absence and of its estimated duration.

Where the absence lasts for seven calendar days or fewer, the employee must complete and submit a self-certificated Sickness Absence Notification immediately upon return to work.

Where an employee's absence lasts more than seven calendar days, a Medical Certificate completed by a medical practitioner must be forwarded to HR to cover the absence. The employee is also required to submit a self-certificated Sickness Absence Notification on the first day back at work.

Every employee who has been absent (other than those authorised in advance) may be interviewed by management immediately upon return to work. The reasons for the employee's absence will be discussed and the completed Sickness Notification will be considered. Management must decide whether to authorise the absence or not. The onus is on the employee to satisfy management that there was a genuine medical reason for the absence.

The Company will monitor each employee's attendance at work so that any unacceptable levels of absenteeism may be addressed.

1.3 Access to Medical Reports

From time to time it may be necessary for the Company to obtain a medical report from an employee's doctor or from a Company-authorised medical advisor in order to gather further information about the employee's medical condition and its probable effect on the employee's future attendance at work or the ability to do his or her job.

Employees have certain rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988. Should the Company find it necessary to obtain a medical report concerning an employee's fitness for work or any other relevant matter the employee will be asked for his or her written consent.

At the time of the request for consent the employee will be advised of his or her rights under the Act.

1.4 Statutory Sick Pay

Employees who are absent from work because of sickness or injury will normally be entitled to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from the Company providing they meet the relevant criteria.

Once the criteria have been met, SSP is payable for the first day of sickness absence, unless the employee has been absent and in receipt of SSP within the previous eight weeks. Thereafter the Company will normally pay SSP at the statutory rate in force for a maximum of 28 weeks.

In order to qualify for SSP the employee must notify the Company on the first qualifying day, and submit a certificate of absence as soon as practicable. The Company reserves the right to withhold payment of SSP where an employee fails to follow the correct procedure.

There is no lower earnings limit for SSP eligibility

The provisions relating to SSP are extremely complex. Employees who have any questions about it should approach the Head of Operations (alex.bywater@woodhurst.com).

1.5 Company Sick Pay

In addition to the Statutory Sick Pay provisions at paragraph 1.4 the Company also operates a Company Sick Pay Scheme. Any payments made under this scheme shall include SSP payments where they fall due.

The Company Sick Pay Scheme is designed to alleviate hardship and worry in cases where an employee is unable to attend work due to illness or injury and the scheme operates on the trust, integrity and honesty of the employee to comply with the spirit of the scheme. Employees who are suspected or caught abusing the scheme will be subject to disciplinary

action under the Company's Disciplinary Procedure which may result in a formal warning or, in serious cases, dismissal with or without notice or pay in lieu depending on the seriousness of the case.

Entitlement to Company Sick Pay during any period or periods of properly certified sickness absence in any period of 365 days will be according to the following table:

Length of Service	Maximum Entitlement
Less than one year's service	Up to 5 working days sickness absence on full pay
After one year's service but less than three years' service	Up to 10 working days sickness absence on full pay
After three years' service	Up to 30 working days sickness absence on full pay

Employees should note that this is not an entitlement to additional holiday or paid time off for any reason other than an employee's genuine incapacity through illness or injury.

The calculation of Company Sick Pay will take into account any previous payments of Company Sick Pay made in the 12 months immediately before the first day of the current sickness absence.

The length of service qualification will be calculated in respect of the employee's service length on the first day of the absence.

Payment of Company Sick Pay will not be made unless the employee has complied fully with Company procedures relating to the notification and certification of absence. Statutory Sick Pay will still be payable regardless of compliance regardless of notification and certification of absence procedures

If an employee is suspended from work in relation to disciplinary matters, the Company reserves the right to pay Statutory Sick Pay only. Any such decision will be subject to review.

Company Sick Pay will not be paid where the sickness is self-induced or where the sickness or injury arises from an employee's misconduct at work.

Employees should claim any Social Security sickness benefits (such as incapacity or invalidity benefits) to which they may be entitled. Employees must notify the Company of all such payments, which the Company will deduct from the employee's Company Sick Pay.

An employee who, not being on sick leave, tenders their resignation and subsequently takes sick leave will not be entitled to Company Sick Pay in respect of such absence. In such circumstances, Company Sick Pay will be paid at the Company's discretion.

The rules of the Company Sick Pay Scheme do not imply that termination of employment may not take place before the payment of Company Sick Pay has been exhausted.

1.6 Statutory Rights to Time Off

Employees have the right to request time off work in the following circumstances:

1.6.1 Time Off to Receive Antenatal Care

Pregnant employees are entitled to take reasonable time off with pay during working hours to receive antenatal care. The Company may require an employee who wishes to take time off for this purpose to provide medical certification of her pregnancy and an appointment card, except for the first appointment.

1.6.2 Time Off for Accompanying a Pregnant Woman

Employees may take time off to accompany a pregnant woman to an antenatal appointment if they have a "qualifying relationship" with the woman or the child. This means that either:

- they are the baby's father;
- they are the pregnant woman's spouse, civil partner or cohabiting partner; or
- they are one of the intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement and expect to obtain a parental order in respect of the child.

Employees may take unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments in relation to pregnancy. The maximum time to be taken is six and a half hours for each appointment, including travel and waiting time. Additional unpaid time off may be taken at the Company's discretion.

As an alternative to taking unpaid leave employees may request annual leave to attend appointments.

Employees must give the Company as much notice of the appointment as possible. The Company may request from the employee a signed statement providing the date and time of the appointment and confirming:

- that they meet one of the eligibility criteria set out above;
- that the purpose of the time off is to accompany the pregnant woman to an antenatal appointment; and
- that the appointment has been made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, registered midwife or registered nurse.

1.6.3 Time Off to Attend an Adoption Appointment

An adoption appointment is an appointment arranged by an adoption agency (or at the agency's request) for an adopter to have contact with a child who is to be placed with them for adoption, or for any other purpose related to the adoption.

Employees may take time off to attend an adoption appointment once the agency has notified them that a child is to be placed with them for adoption but before the child is actually placed with the employee.

Where an employee and their partner are adopting a child, they must decide between them who will be treated as the primary adopter and who will be treated as the secondary adopter for the purposes of time off. The employee must inform the Company of their decision the first time they request time off for an adoption appointment. This will affect how much time they can take off.

If an employee is adopting a child alone, they will be treated as the primary adopter. If the agency is placing more than one child with an employee as part of the same arrangement, this is treated as one adoption and will not increase the number of appointments that the employee can take time off to attend. Any time off under this policy must be taken before the first child is placed with the employee.

If an employee is adopting on their own or has elected to be the primary adopter, they may take paid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to five occasions in relation to any particular adoption.

If an employee is the secondary adopter, they may take unpaid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to two occasions only.

Either way, employees must not take more than six and a half hours off for each appointment, including travel and waiting time.

As an alternative to taking unpaid leave employees may request annual leave to attend appointments.

Employees must give the Company as much notice of the appointment as possible. They may be asked to provide their manager with a signed statement or an email confirming:

- The date and time of the appointment.
- That the appointment has been arranged or requested by the adoption agency.
- Whether the employee is adopting a child alone or jointly with another person.
- If they are adopting with another person, whether they are electing to take paid or unpaid time off.

1.6.4 Family Friendly Leave

This includes maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave, parental leave and time off for dependants, details of which are set out in the relevant sections of this Handbook.

1.6.5 Time Off for Public Duties

An employee is entitled to ask for time off work for specified public duties. There is no statutory right to be paid for this time off (although there may be a contractual right). The permitted amount of time off is that which is reasonable in the circumstances.

The public positions for which there is a right to time off are as follows:

- Justice of the Peace
- Members of a local authority, e.g., local councillors

- Members of a statutory tribunal
- Members of a police authority
- Prison visitors
- Members of health bodies, e.g., NHS trusts, Health Authorities, etc.
- Members of education bodies, e.g., managing or governing bodies of Local authority educational establishments, grant maintained schools, etc.
- Members of the Environmental Agency

1.6.6 Time Off In Redundancy Situations

Employees are entitled to a reasonable amount of paid time off to look for other work or make arrangements for retraining if they are under notice of dismissal for redundancy.

1.6.7 Other Authorised Time Off

1.6.7.1 Jury Service

Employees are entitled to time off work for jury service in England, Scotland or Wales.

Employees must notify their manager and submit the jury service confirmation letter from the Court to the Human Resources Department as soon as he or she is called to jury service. The Company may, for legitimate business reasons, require the employee to attend work. In such circumstances, the Company reserves the right to write to the Court and require the employee to write to the Court to request that jury service be deferred. Employees who are still in their probationary period will not normally be paid for this time off, and are advised to claim those allowances granted by the Court in respect of compensation for loss of earnings and expenses.

Employees who have passed their probationary period are required to claim those allowances granted by the Court in respect of compensation for loss of earnings. Upon receipt of the payment from the Court, the employee is required to advise the Human Resources Department of the amount of this payment and forward the

relevant statements from the Court, which will be deducted from the employee's gross pay.

Any subsistence allowance or excess travelling costs claimed by the employee from the Court will not be deducted from the employee's pay, as they are designed to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

Where practicable, an employee is expected to return to work if he or she is not required to serve on any given day or part of that day. Employees should note that the Court only pays for time actually served.

1.6.7.2 Compassionate Leave

In addition to any statutory entitlements employees may have, the Company may, at its discretion; permit employees to take leave (either paid or unpaid) following the death of an immediate or close relative. Employees should contact their line manager as far in advance as possible to seek permission for this leave.

1.6.7.3 Special Leave

The Company may, at its discretion, permit employees to take leave (either paid or unpaid) on the occasion of their marriage, to move house or in similar special circumstances. Employees should contact their line manager as far in advance as possible to seek permission for this leave.

1.6.7.4 Carer's Leave

From April 2024, employees are entitled to one week of unpaid carer's leave per year. This leave is available to all employees from their first day of employment and can be used to provide care for a dependent who:

- Has a physical or mental illness or injury that requires care for more than three months,
- Has a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or
- Requires care due to old age.

A dependent is defined as a spouse, partner, child, parent, or any individual who relies on the employee for care.

Conditions of Carer's Leave:

- Employees must give as much notice as possible before taking carer's leave.
- Leave can be taken in blocks of one day or more, up to a maximum of five days per year.
- Carer's leave is unpaid, but employees may use annual leave if they wish to receive pay during this time.
- Employees are required to notify their manager of the reason for the leave and may be asked to provide reasonable evidence of the need for care.

Managers are encouraged to work flexibly with employees to accommodate carer's leave and ensure minimal disruption to business operations while supporting the employee's caring responsibilities.

1.7 Flexible Working

All employees have the statutory right to request flexible working from their first day of employment. Flexible working can include a variety of arrangements, such as changes to working hours, patterns, or locations (e.g., remote working).

1.7.1 How to Request Flexible Working

Employees must make their request in writing, stating the details of the flexible working arrangement they are seeking (e.g., reduced hours, compressed working week, remote working) and how they believe it can be accommodated without impacting their role or the business.

Employees are encouraged to include any anticipated effects on the company and how these effects might be mitigated.

1.7.2 Company Response

The Company will consider all requests reasonably and will respond within three months of receiving the request.

The request may be granted, rejected, or a compromise may be offered after discussing the request with the employee.

A request may be refused only on specific business grounds, such as:

- The burden of additional costs.
- A detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand.
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Detrimental impact on quality or performance.
- Insufficient work during the periods the employee proposes to work.
- Planned structural changes.

1.7.3 Limits on Requests

Employees are entitled to make one flexible working request per 12-month period.

If a request is refused, the employee will receive a written explanation outlining the business reasons for the decision.

1.7.4 Trial Periods

In some cases, the Company may agree to a trial period to assess whether the flexible working arrangement is suitable for both the employee and the Company.

This policy is designed to help employees balance their work and personal life, while ensuring that the Company's operational needs continue to be met effectively.