

Duncan Private Hire – Sickness Absence Policy

Supporting Employee Wellbeing & Operational Continuity

Policy Statement

At Duncan Private Hire, we recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy, supported, and productive workforce. We are committed to promoting the well-being of our employees and understand that, at times, absence due to illness is unavoidable.

This policy aims to balance the needs of the business with those of employees who require time off to recover from ill health. We are dedicated to managing sickness absence fairly, consistently, and with sensitivity.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all employees and forms part of the induction materials provided to new team members. It provides:

- Clear expectations for employee attendance.
- Duncan's responsibilities in managing and supporting employees through sickness.
- A fair and structured process for reporting, managing, and returning from sickness absence.

Note: This policy excludes workplace-related accidents, which are addressed under our Health & Safety Policy.

Core Principles

We are guided by the following principles:

- Regular attendance is a fundamental requirement of employment.
- Absence will be managed in line with ACAS guidelines and employment law.
- Reasonable sick pay will be provided in accordance with eligibility and certification.
- Sickness levels will be monitored to support early intervention and improve workplace conditions.
- We will work collaboratively with employees to identify support mechanisms to reduce absences.
- Consent will be sought before requesting medical advice or reports.
- All health-related information will be handled with strict confidentiality, in line with data protection regulations.
- Employees may request to speak with someone of the same gender regarding medical matters.
- Unexplained or unsubstantiated absences may result in disciplinary action.
- We will make all reasonable adjustments to support staff with disabilities, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Reporting Absence

Employees must notify their line manager by telephone as early as possible—no later than their normal start time—on the first day of absence. If possible, notice should be given the evening before to help arrange cover. If the manager is unavailable, a message should be left with a senior colleague.

When reporting absence, employees should confirm:

- The nature of the illness.
- An expected return date.

Certification Requirements

Day 1 to 7

Employees can self-certify for up to 7 calendar days (including weekends/non-working days). A Self-Certification Form must be completed upon return.

Day 8 and Beyond

A doctor's Medical Certificate (Fit Note) is required from the eighth calendar day. It must:

- Be received within 3 working days.
- Cover the entire duration of absence with consecutive dates.
- Gaps in certification may be treated as unauthorised absence.

Additional Guidelines

Leaving Work Unwell

If an employee leaves work due to illness:

- Less than 50% of the shift worked: time will count as sickness absence (Self-Certification Form required).
- More than 50% worked: time will not be counted as absence.

Sickness During Annual Leave

To reclaim annual leave due to illness:

- Notify your manager on the first day of illness.
- Submit a medical certificate, regardless of duration.

Medical Appointments

- Appointments should be scheduled outside work hours where possible.
- When not possible, they should cause minimal disruption.
- Evidence of the appointment may be required.
- Full-day absences for medical reasons must follow self-certification procedures.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Eligible employees will receive Statutory Sick Pay from the start of employment, provided the appropriate medical certification is supplied. For details, refer to HMRC guidelines.

Return to Work Procedure

Employees returning after 7+ days' absence must meet informally with their line manager to discuss:

- The cause and context of absence.
- Fitness to return to work.
- Any required support or adjustments.

A 'fit for work' note is required if the employee wishes to return before their Medical Certificate expires.

Managing Absence

Frequent or Short-Term Absences

If an employee has 3 or more instances of sickness within 12 months:

- An informal review will be held to discuss concerns and support options.
- A record of the discussion and agreed actions will be retained.
- If attendance does not improve, a medical report may be requested (with the employee's consent).
- Further review meetings will take place, and clear expectations for improvement will be set.

Failure to improve may result in formal action under the Disciplinary Procedure.

Long-Term Absence (Over 1 Month)

For absences exceeding one month:

- An informal welfare meeting will be arranged after two months, or sooner if appropriate.
- The employee may bring a colleague or representative.
- If unable to attend, alternative communication (e.g. home visit, email) will be used.

Medical reports from a GP or Occupational Health may be requested to:

- Understand the condition and likely recovery time.
- Explore necessary workplace adjustments.
- Assess fitness for return to work.

A formal meeting will be arranged to review the findings and agree on next steps, which may include:

- Return to current role.
- Adjusted role or duties.
- Redeployment or alternative role.
- If no reasonable adjustments can be made, and return is not feasible, a further meeting will be held to consider ending employment on medical grounds.

Disability & Terminal Illness Considerations

Disability-Related Absence

Absences relating to disability (e.g. treatment or equipment fitting) are managed separately from standard sickness and recorded as **disability leave**.

We will:

- Make reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- Offer rehabilitation periods or training where appropriate.
- Consider alternative roles if the existing role is no longer suitable.

Terminal Illness

Cases involving terminal illness will be handled with utmost compassion and flexibility. With appropriate medical guidance and employee consent, we will:

- Support continued work where possible (e.g. part-time or flexible).
- Extend sick pay at management discretion.
- Handle employment matters sensitively and on a case-by-case basis.

Confidentiality and Support

All medical information is handled with strict confidentiality in compliance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR. Duncan's is committed to supporting employee health through respectful dialogue, professional support services, and a commitment to wellbeing at work.

For questions about this policy, contact your line manager or the Director.