

Sickness Absence Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines Creative Lives approach to managing sickness absence, ensuring staff are supported while maintaining business continuity.

While Creative Lives supports flexible and remote working, we recognise that this can sometimes blur the lines between being unwell and ‘pushing through’ a working day. We encourage all staff to take proper sick leave when they are unwell, rather than continuing to work from home. Taking time to rest and recover helps protect wellbeing and supports long-term productivity. Staff should follow the usual sickness reporting procedures and not feel obliged to be online or respond to messages when off sick.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, regardless of contract type or working hours.

Reporting Absence

- Staff must notify their line manager before 9.30am on the first day of absence.
 - This can be via telephone/instant messaging/ email or Slack
 - Line managers must inform the HR Director via email of each staff absence to ensure they are accurately recorded in the individual staff member’s sickness log
- Staff should provide an estimated return-to-work date where possible. If an estimated date is not available, they must contact their line manager daily to confirm whether they will continue to be absent from work
- Staff can self-certify sickness for the first 7 consecutive calendar days (including weekends and non-working days).
 - From day 8 onwards Creative Lives is legally entitled to request medical evidence, typically a fit note (also known as a Statement of Fitness for Work) from a GP or another authorised healthcare professional.

Sickness Absence Pay

- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be provided if employees meet eligibility criteria.
- Following the successful completion of their probationary period, staff are entitled to enhanced company sick pay, which currently provides up to 12 weeks at full pay, subject to the provision of appropriate medical certification from a doctor

Return to Work Process

- Employees must inform their manager before returning to work.
- A Return to Work meeting will be held after any absence of seven consecutive days or more.

Sickness Absence Policy

- Any reasonable adjustments to support the employee's return will be considered.

Absence Triggers & Management

To ensure fair and consistent absence management, the following trigger points will prompt an absence review:

- 3 separate instances of absence within a rolling six-month period.
- 10 or more days of absence within a rolling 12-month period (continuous or cumulative).
- Any pattern of absence (e.g. frequent absences on Mondays or Fridays).

When a trigger point is reached, the following steps will be taken:

1. Informal discussion – The line manager will discuss concerns with the employee and explore any underlying issues.
2. Formal absence review meeting – If absences persist, a meeting may be arranged to identify support options and set improvement expectations.
3. Occupational Health referral – If appropriate, the employee may be referred for professional advice.
4. Capability review – In cases of ongoing, excessive absence, formal capability procedures may be considered including the implementation of the Creative Lives Performance Improvement Plan in line with our standard procedures

Long-Term Absence

- Absences lasting four or more consecutive weeks are classified as long-term.
- Regular check-ins will be held, and an Occupational Health assessment may be arranged.
- A phased return to work may be considered if needed.

Reasonable Adjustments & Support

- The organisation will consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 for employees with disabilities or long-term conditions.
- Wellbeing support, including our Employee Assistance will be signposted.

Disciplinary Action

- If absence is found to be fraudulent or unauthorised, disciplinary action may be taken in line with the Disciplinary Policy.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with employment law and best practices.