



For better
mental health

Richmond Borough Mind

Sickness and Absence Policy

1. Scope of policy

Richmond Borough Mind (RB Mind) aims to secure the attendance of all employees throughout the working week. However it recognises that a certain level of absence is inevitable due to sickness. It is Richmond Borough Mind's policy to offer security of employment during such periods, subject to operational requirements.

- 1.1 This policy is designed therefore to cope with the majority of situations but RB Mind cannot undertake to support indefinitely those who need prolonged periods of time off. Furthermore, RB Mind would wish to keep short term absence within reasonable limits. As a small voluntary organisation RB Mind does not have the financial resources to budget for staff complements with built-in absence factors.
- 1.2 It is important that RB Mind's procedures are followed and it is important that employees are familiar with the workings of this policy for their benefit and the benefit of RB Mind. These procedures are therefore designed to protect both the interests of individual staff and also RB Mind as an organisation.
- 1.3 RB Mind undertakes to ensure the health and well-being of its entire staff. Its aim is to provide a good working environment for staff and to look at flexible ways of working. In this way it is hoped that we will be able to take measures to minimise and prevent sickness. Short-term absences can be indicators of many things, for example, temporary or general poor health, addictions, early signs of a more serious illness, physical/mental distress symptoms or environmental problems. As a good employer, RB Mind has a responsibility to help its staff to identify if any of the above are applicable and to encourage them to seek appropriate assistance.
- 1.4 Employees also have responsibility to do everything they can to safeguard their own health and ensure they are fit to do their job; to come into work unless they are not well enough to do their job and / or their attendance would be detrimental to clients or colleagues and to follow the organisations procedures for reporting sickness absence. When away from work and covered by a Doctor's certificate, staff are not expected to return to work before the certificate expires, unless

there is a corresponding note from the Doctor advising that the staff member is fit to return to work.

- 1.5 This policy and procedure applies to all employees, including those in their probationary period. Where there has been prolonged or repeated sickness absence this may be taken into account when confirming an employee in post or extending the probationary period.
- 1.6 Where an employee becomes incapacitated as a result of a violent incident in the course of their work the resulting absence will be regarded sympathetically and will not be counted in the calculation of the employee's entitlement to sick pay from RB Mind.
- 1.7 Illnesses related to pregnancy are not grounds for dismissal and in cases where there is doubt over whether illness is linked to the pregnancy expert medical advice will be sought. RB Mind will do everything possible if an employee's work poses a threat to them during pregnancy, shortly after the birth or whilst breastfeeding, to find alternative, suitable work. If this cannot be found, the employee may be asked to remain on leave on full pay, until it is safe to return to work.
- 1.8 It is important that all employees are familiar with all procedures within this policy as failure to comply could result in non-payment of sick pay. Instances of failure to contact RB Mind by an employee will be discussed with the Director and recorded on their personnel file.

2. **Sickness Absence**

- 2.1 **Sickness** is defined as incapacity to carry out the duties and responsibilities which the employee is contractually obliged to do because of their own illness or accident.
- 2.2 This policy therefore applies to absence caused by personal illness or accident, not to the need to take time off work because of the illness of others, children or partners. This policy also operates outside of compassionate leave.

3. **The Procedure to Follow**

3.1 **Notification**

Any member of staff who is unable to attend work due to sickness/injury must inform their line manager before 10.00am (and if there is a good reason why this is not possible, as soon as possible thereafter) to explain:

- Why you are unable to come to work
- How long you think the sickness absence might last
- What action you are taking to mitigate the effects of the illness, for example, visiting the doctor

- Where you can be contacted during the day should RB Mind need to get in touch with you.
- If any there are any pertinent activities currently taking place that needs to either be rescheduled or if there is need for external coverage.

3.2 Where it is not possible for an individual to telephone in person, they should arrange for someone else to telephone on their behalf. If the employee's line manager is not available they should leave a message with their line manager's manager, or other colleague who then has the responsibility to inform the line manager. The employee should aim to speak to a member of staff rather than leave a message on an answer machine. Reporting absence via text message or email is not acceptable.

3.3 If a member of staff discovers that they are going to be absent for longer than originally estimated they should telephone their line manager to inform them.

3.5 It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that all individuals are seen on their first day back to work from sickness absence and enquiries made regarding the individual's illness and how well they have recovered. This is the return to work meeting.

3.6 The line manager will ask the staff member to complete and sign a self-certificate for the first seven days of illness, including weekends and bank holidays. This certificate must be countersigned by the line manager if the individual is to receive any sick pay for which they may be eligible. No matter how short a period of sickness, it must be covered by a self-certificate and, if over 7 days of absence, a doctor's certificate will be required.

4. Return to Work Interview

4.1 When an employee returns to work after an absence of any length, their line manager must hold a return to work meeting. The aim of this meeting is not to imply any criticism of the employee but to check that they are really fit to return to work and to check that there are no issues regarding action such as stress or lack of motivation, harassment, the need for a phased return to work etc. At the meeting the manager will:

- Find out the reason for the absence and whether it is likely to recur
- Find out whether there are any issues at work which affect or are affected by the health of the individual
- Update the employee on any developments at work during their absence

4.2 The manager should also review an employee's absence record to ascertain if any pattern is emerging to any absence trigger point has been reached.

4.3 Notes from the return to work interview will be kept on the employee's personnel file.

5. **Identifying poor attendance**

5.1 Managers will monitor and review sickness records. Poor attendance is defined as follows:

- Accumulated sporadic absences exceeding 10 days in any 12 month period or;

- Four working days or more, on more than one occasion, of sickness absence over any six month period or:

- A pattern of absence, for example, sickness on Mondays or Fridays or persistently on any other particular day of the week or;

- Good attendance during a monitoring period, which deteriorates when it ends.

A note will be held on the individual's personnel file about the discussions held in the return to work meeting.

6. **Medical Certification Requirements**

6.1 An employee should complete a RB Mind sickness self certification form and give this to their line manager on their first day back at work.

6.2 You should bring with you on your return to work a certificate from your doctor if you have been absent for more than 7 days (including weekends and public holidays). This should explain the nature of your illness and confirm that you are fit to return to work.

6.3 The seven days includes those days on which you do not normally work e.g. weekends and public holidays.

6.4 Should a member of staff receive treatment from their doctor during the first week of sickness, a doctor's medical certificate may be issued. However, a self certificate form must still be provided by the member of staff for the first week of sickness in order to qualify for RB Mind's sick pay and Statutory Sick Pay.

6.5 All medical certification should be given by the employee to their line manager who will forward this to the Finance Officer. Failure to comply may result in non-payment of sick pay.

7 **Sickness in relation to annual leave entitlement**

7.1 Where a member of staff is prevented from taking full holiday entitlement through sickness, they will still accrue holiday entitlement

8. **Sickness during annual leave**

8.1 Where sickness occurs during paid annual leave, the normal notification procedures should be followed. The employee's may credit an employee with an equivalent number of days' holidays following the satisfactory return to work meeting. Managers will refer the matter to the Director for ratification.

9. **Medical and Dental Appointments**

9.1 As far as possible, appointments should be made out of working hours, particularly in the case of part time workers. Appointments for dependents will require the employee to take annual leave. RB Mind reserves the right to request proof of appointments.

10. **Pay while off sick**

10.1 **Statutory sick pay**

RB Mind is obliged to make payments on behalf of the State in respect of statutory sick pay (SSP). This scheme is governed by regulations published and updated from time to time by the Department of Works and Pension. The current rates can be found at www.dwp.gov.uk

10.2 The current qualifying period for statutory sick pay is more than 3 days of absence.

10.3 **Occupational Sick Pay**

RB Mind has an Occupational Sick Pay (OSP) scheme. To qualify, you must have been employed for six months, and complied with the correct notification procedure (as set out above) and the provision of medical certificates. This means that for the first six months of employment during sickness absence you would only be entitled to receive SSP.

After six months of employment your sick pay entitlement in any rolling year will be 1 month on full pay, and one month on half pay. Part time employees will receive pro-rated benefits.

In cases of serious illnesses this will be referred to a panel comprising the director and two Management Committee members. A written medical report would be required from the employee's doctor and if necessary to RB Mind's Occupational Health Consultant.

10.4 Sick pay from RB Mind includes any entitlement you may have to SSP. Once payment from RB Mind ceases you may be entitled to SSP (for up to 28 weeks' sickness in total).

- 10.5** RB Mind reserves the right to refuse to pay sick pay (including SSP) if it has reasonable cause to believe that you are not genuinely sick, or if it has cause to believe that you are abusing the sick pay scheme.

11. Long term / Chronic illness / incapacity

- 11.1** While RB Mind is concerned to assist employees who are sick, it cannot offer indefinite support. If an individual's attendance levels are regularly affected by sickness, and RB Mind believes that this has become unacceptable, their capability to continue to do the job may be investigated. If necessary they will ask your permission to approach your doctor or ask you to see a specialist of RB Mind's choosing. If an employee refuses to see a doctor, RB Mind will make their decision on the evidence they already have.

If it appears that it may be a long time before you are able to work again RB Mind will discuss the situation with you and it is possible that, after following all necessary legal procedures, your employment will be terminated.

Should this happen, you will receive pay in lieu of your contractual or statutory notice period, whichever is the longer, and any outstanding holiday pay.

- 11.2** If the employee's absence is found not to be due to sickness, the matter will be investigated under the disciplinary procedure and the sick pay levels may be reduced or possibly withdrawn after an appropriate warning has been issued.

12. Disabilities

If your illness leaves you in a mental or physical condition which falls within the definition of a disability, RB Mind will try to make reasonable adjustments to your job to enable you to carry on working. If effective adjustments cannot be made, your employment with RB Mind may be terminated.

If you have a disability, and require time off for rehabilitation, this will be referred to a panel comprising the Director and two Management Committee members. A written medical report would be required from the employee's doctor and if necessary RB Mind's Occupational Health Consultant.