



Purpose

SES Group understands that employees may sometimes be unwell and that, as a result of ill-health or injury, they may be unable to work for a period of time. This policy is designed to assist employees who are absent from work due to illness or injury, as well as to enable SES Group to maintain effective staffing levels. SES Group aims to deal fairly and reasonably with all those who have either frequent periods or extended periods of absence due to illness or injury.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees who fail to attend work due to illness or injury. This is with the exception of those employed under inherent terms and conditions of employment (TUPE) who instead must adhere to their respective attendance policy. Employees who are in their probationary period will also be managed through the probationary period policy and procedure.

Principles

- Any action taken under this policy will be reasonable and necessary and each case will be treated on an individual basis fairly, consistently and in a confidential manner.
- SES Group will keep records of any action taken under this policy in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- All employees have a responsibility to ensure, to the best of their ability, that they are available for work when required under their contract of employment.
- Non-attendance at work will be investigated and managed in line with this policy.
- It is the responsibility of the employee to report their absence from work in line with business procedures.
- When employees are absent due to illness, the Company will support them in their return to work. HR will advise and assist in this process where appropriate.
- Both company and employees should maintain appropriate and regular contact with each other during sickness absence.
- Employees may be entitled to payment of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) during sickness absence in accordance with their contract of employment.
- The Company will consider any sickness absence related to a disability, as defined under The Equality Act 2010, on an individual basis, taking medical reports into account and through consultation with the employee.
- If, after medical advice has been sought, it is recommended that an employee should leave the Company on the grounds of ill health, then this will be discussed with the individual and if applicable, pursued through the relevant pension scheme.
- Absence extending beyond four weeks is usually defined as long-term sickness and if appropriate, an individual will be referred to the Company's HR Department.
- SES Group will monitor absence trends and take positive action to deal with causes of absence in line with health and safety management standards.
- Failure to comply with the provisions in this policy can in some cases lead to disciplinary sanctions, up to and including dismissal.
- Unauthorised absence may be regarded as gross misconduct.

Procedure

Sickness reporting

On the first day of absence the employee must notify their line manager/supervisor by telephone of their intention not to attend work. This should be done as soon as is practicable and no later than one hour before the start of the employee's shift / working day. For staff working on events please refer to the agreement of deductions of money.

The employee should make the call personally; it is not acceptable to leave messages with colleagues or reception or to notify the line manager of the absence via a text message. If the line manager is unavailable, the employee should instead contact an alternative senior manager. Under no circumstances should the employee not make contact. Managers will make employees aware of any alternative local arrangements for reporting absence if applicable. Only in extreme cases will it be accepted that the employee could not report their absence themselves.



The employee should confirm the reason for their absence and its likely duration. Employees must keep their line manager (or, if their line manager is not available, an alternative senior manager) updated and advised regularly of continued absence and likely return date.

Failure to comply with the notification requirements set out in this policy may result in an employee not being eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP). In addition, an employee's absence could be treated as unauthorised, which may result in disciplinary action, in serious cases this may result in dismissal.

Self-certification and Statement of Fitness for Work

In addition to notification of their absence, an employee must, upon their return to work, ensure that Section B, C and D of the sickness absence notification form held by their line manager are completed in order to self-certify their absence. Their manager will then forward the form to the HR department. This does not apply to staff working on Events.

If the absence exceeds seven calendar days, an employee must also provide a Statement of Fitness for Work, obtained from their medical practitioner, to cover any absence from the eighth day onwards. The employee must send this to their line manager as soon as possible. Where an employee is still absent on the expiry of a Statement of Fitness for Work, the employee must send another Statement to their line manager to cover any further absence. This Statement must arrive by no later than the day after the previous Statement expires. The employee's entire period of absence (from the eighth day forward) must be covered by appropriate Statements.

the SES Group reserves the right to require the employee to provide a Statement of Fitness for Work to cover an absence lasting less than eight days. If the employee is requested to pay for this Statement by their medical practitioner, and the Company's request is as a result of the employee repeatedly taking short term and frequent absences of three or more periods of absence in six months or six or more periods of absence in twelve months, then the employee will be expected to cover the cost of this Statement. If the request is for any other reason, in particular that concerned with health and safety when the Company is concerned about the fitness of an employee to return to work after a period of absence through illness or injury, then the Company will agree to cover the cost of obtaining the Statement.

Failure by an employee to provide a Statement of Fitness for Work may result in the employee not being eligible for SSP. In addition, the employee's absence may be classed as unauthorised, which may result in disciplinary action being taken including, where appropriate, dismissal for gross misconduct.

Nothing in this policy overrides the ability for SES Group to withhold company sick pay in its absolute discretion for those whose terms and conditions of employment state that the payment of company sick pay is entirely discretionary only.

Obtaining further medical information

SES Group may, ask the employee to attend a nominated doctor or other health professional; and ask permission to seek a medical report from an employee's own doctor. This is in order to obtain clarity with regards the diagnosis, prognosis and capabilities of the employee. The information obtained from a medical professional may be used to consider and implement measures aimed at assisting the employee to reduce their absence levels or return to work and / or to comply with health and safety obligations. It may also be taken into account when making decisions about continuity of employment.

Any associated costs will be paid by SES Group. If an employee fails to attend a planned appointment without a reasonable explanation or by providing prior notice, any fees for the missed appointment may be passed to the employee following investigation.

If the employee fails to co-operate in providing medical information, they should be aware that the Company will be forced to consider their case and make any decisions based on the information available. This includes a decision such as whether or not the employee's contract of employment should be terminated.



Keeping records

SES Group will keep records of any action taken under this policy for as long as is reasonable and necessary in the circumstances. In line with the Data Protection Act (1998) SES Group recognises medical information relating to an employee as sensitive data and processes the information provided on sickness absence notification forms and on Statement of Fitness for Works for the purposes of meeting its legal obligations.

In particular, individual data is disclosed to line managers for the purpose of responding appropriately and fairly to an individual's overall level of sickness absence and for the appropriate management of their health and safety at work. Aggregate data is produced to identify issues and trends in order to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees.

Return to work interviews

Irrespective of the length of absence, when the employee returns to work, a manager will hold a return to work interview with the employee; this should normally be within 24 hours of the employee's return to work. If the employee's direct line manager is unavailable then another Supervisor / manager in the business may conduct this meeting. If the employee is at a remote location to their or any other manager then this interview may be conducted via telephone. The return to work interview provides an opportunity to discuss the reason for the absence, any underlying problems and update the employee with regards any changes in the department.

The Company recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where an employee would prefer not to discuss the reason for their absence with their line manager, in which case the line manager should contact their HR representative. It is not acceptable for an employee to state "personal reasons / problems" or "sick / ill" and not provide any other details.

At this stage employees may be asked to provide a Statement of Fitness for Work which clearly states that they are fit for work and / or consent to obtain a doctor's report may be requested.

Suspension on medical grounds

Where there are serious concerns that an employee is at risk in the workplace due to their ill health it may be deemed appropriate to place the employee on medical suspension. Medical suspension is discretionary and will only be applied in exceptional circumstances where there are serious concerns regarding an employee's safety at work due to their health. Medical suspension is not a disciplinary action.

No employee will be placed on medical suspension without the approval of a member of the HR Department.

An employee who is on a period of medical suspension will not be permitted to attend work until they have authorisation from a certified medical practitioner.

Managing absence

Absence trigger levels

A 'trigger level' is used as guidance to identify those employees with absence records that give cause for concern. Absences will be dealt with under either the short-term or long-term procedure. At any time during the short term procedure the Company may, at its discretion, choose to move an employee into the long term procedure. Three or more periods of absence in six months six or more periods of absence in twelve months a total of six days in any six months a total of twelve days in any twelve months

Short term / intermittent absence

There are two types of short term absence: occasional short term absence and frequent short term absence.

Occasional short term absence is typically up to two occasions of absence totaling no more than five days in a six month rolling period. Occasional short term absence may be self-certified or medically certified. Whilst a certain level of absence is sometimes inevitable, SES Group does require regular attendance from employees in order to operate effectively. With this in mind, a fair review of the attendance records of all employees will be regularly conducted in order to identify any employee whose attendance does not meet the requirements or is a cause for concern.



Occasional short term absence will not, ordinarily, give rise to any concerns. However, SES Group reserves the right to require an employee to attend an informal discussion (discussed below) regarding occasional short term absence if it is considered appropriate in the circumstances. This may, for example, arise where SES Group determines an unacceptable pattern of absence such as absences on the majority of Tuesdays after a public holiday or regularly preceding a period of annual leave or regularly preceding or following rest days or pay days.

Frequent short-term absence involves patterns of absence due to minor illnesses that may, or may not, be connected. Such patterns could vary from a relatively large number of single days of absence, to fewer occasions of absence involving a loss of one week or more, or a mixture of individual days and longer periods of absence.

High levels of this type of absence may indicate problems which need to be explored and resolved. A total of three occasions of six days or more of absence within a six month rolling period will normally be regarded as frequent short term absence resulting in an informal discussion and subsequent procedure (detailed below). Frequent short-term absences may be self-certified or medically certified.

SES Group recognises that each individual case is different and therefore the above should be viewed as a tool to guide managers who may rely upon their own discretion after discussion with their HR representative.

To manage short term absence the following steps may be used and repeated:

1. Informal discussions

When an employee has reached one of the trigger points, or at any time the line manager views it necessary, the line manager may choose to hold an informal discussion with the employee, the contents of which will be noted in writing for reference / improvement purposes. This discussion allows the line manager an opportunity to ascertain any underlying problems, set clear expectations and identify and provide support where necessary. Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at these informal discussions.

Employees will be advised at this discussion that SES Group will continue to monitor their absence and, should the employee's absence level fail to improve, this may result in more formal action being taken (as detailed below). A note of the discussion will be retained on the employee's personnel file for as long as is reasonable and necessary in the circumstances. It may be appropriate to conduct more than one informal discussion with the employee prior to taking formal action.

2. Risk / workplace assessments

When it is suspected that there may be an underlying medical reason for an employee's persistent short term absence, which SES Group may not have been aware of, then a risk assessment or a workplace assessment may be conducted on the employee in their working environment in order to ensure standards of health and safety are maintained and to ascertain if any reasonable adjustments may be made to support the employee.

3. Formal action

Should the employee's attendance fail to improve following any informal discussion(s), and SES Group have provided any reasonable support necessary in the circumstances, there may be no alternative other than to apply formal procedures. These will either be through the disciplinary policy for cases of misconduct or the capability policy for cases of genuine ill health.

Long term absence

Long term absence is when a period of absence exceeds four calendar weeks.

To manage long term absence the following steps may be used and repeated:

1. Contact

It is SES Group's policy to maintain reasonable contact with employees during long-term absence, as well as short-term absence. When it becomes clear that an absence has or is likely to become long-term the line manager will agree with the employee how frequently they need to make contact. An employee on long term absence will normally be asked to maintain telephone contact on at least a weekly basis. By maintaining open and frequent



communication employees can be offered the assistance they need to help improve their state of health, return to work or to improve attendance levels as appropriate.

In addition to reasonable telephone contact between the employee and their line manager, arrangements may also be made to meet with the employee in person (see below).

An employee's co-operation is required at all stages of the long term sickness procedure, including the implementation of any rehabilitation measures. Should an employee refuse to comply with any reasonable request made by SES Group then any decisions or potential action will be taken with the information available at the time.

2. Informal stage one

When an employee has been absent from work for a period of no less than four weeks, an informal meeting will be arranged between the employee, the line manager and a HR representative where possible. This meeting will normally occur between the fourth and eighth week of absence and can either be held on site, or at the employee's home or a mutually neutral location if more appropriate. Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at these informal discussions.

The purpose of this meeting will be to ensure both employee and SES Group are fully aware of the situation and to determine any action deemed appropriate. Possible outcomes of this meeting, which will be confirmed to the employee in writing, may include but are not limited to the following:

Arrangements for a medical report to be supplied by the employee's own doctor; Consideration made with regards to making reasonable adjustments to the work place; Consideration given to a period of rehabilitation, with additional support if appropriate, in the employee's normal job; Suitable alternative employment may be identified within the Company if appropriate

A specific date may be set for return to work.

3. Informal stage two

If the employee's absence continues, another informal meeting may be arranged. This meeting will usually occur between the tenth and fifteenth week of absence and will be attended by the employee, the line manager and where possible a HR representative. Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at these informal discussions.

The purpose of this meeting will be to review the situation since the last meeting which may involve a review of any information provided by the employee's doctor or another health specialist. Possible outcomes of this meeting, which will be confirmed to the employee in writing, may include but are not limited to the following:

Arrangements for another medical report to be supplied by the employee's own doctor; Arrangements for an appointment with an occupational health specialist;

Consideration made with regards to making reasonable adjustments to the work place; Consideration given to a period of rehabilitation, with additional support if appropriate, in the employee's normal job;

Suitable alternative employment may be identified within the Company if appropriate

A specific date may be set for return to work.

4. Formal stage one

If the employee's absence continues, depending upon the individual circumstances, it may be necessary to conduct a further meeting with the employee to consider the options below. This will be a formal meeting and the employee will be offered the right to be accompanied at this meeting by either an accredited trade union representative or a SES Group work colleague.

The purpose of this meeting will be to review the situation since the last meeting which may involve a review of any information provided by the employee's doctor or any other health specialist. Possible outcomes of this meeting, which will be confirmed to the employee in writing, may include but are not limited to the following:

Arrangements for a medical examination / and or a report by an independent specialist nominated by the Company;

Suitable alternative employment may be identified within the Company if appropriate

A specific date set for return to work; and / or further postponement of final decision, but only when further

medical evidence is required.



It may be necessary to consider terminating the employee's contract of employment on the grounds of ill-health, giving due notice in accordance with the employee's contract of employment, in which case a meeting will be arranged to discuss the employee's continued employment. The employee will be offered the right to be accompanied at this meeting by either an accredited trade union representative or a SES Group work colleague.

Should the outcome of this meeting be to terminate employment on the grounds of ill-health the employee will have the details confirmed in writing and will be offered the right of appeal.

SES Group will consider every case individually and therefore it may be necessary to meet with the employee on more than three occasions depending upon their illness / condition. It may also be necessary to obtain several doctor's/medical expert's reports over a reasonable period of time in order to monitor progress.

All formal meetings and appeals will be held at a reasonable time and place. An employee who has been invited to attend a formal meeting or appeal must take all reasonable steps to attend. Any unreasonable failure to attend may result in the meeting or appeal going ahead, and a decision being reached, in the employee's absence. The Company will not unreasonably delay any formal steps of the procedure.

At any time during the long term absence procedure it may be appropriate or necessary to move between stages depending upon circumstances.

Appeals

If employment is terminated on grounds of ill-health, the employee can appeal against the decision. Appeals should be in writing, setting out the reasons for the appeal and should be sent to the HR department within seven calendar days of the decision being received in writing. A meeting will be held to discuss an appeal at which an employee can be accompanied by either an accredited trade union representative or a SES Group work colleague. The meeting may take place after the termination of employment has taken effect. If the outcome of the appeal is that the employee's employment is to be terminated then the original date of termination will remain.

Injury at work and injuries involving third parties

In the case of such absence, sums equivalent to the amount which would have been paid if the absence had been due to ordinary sickness may be paid as an advance, pending the outcome of any claim for damages. These sums will be repaid and / or deducted from an employee's pay, when, and to the extent that, the employee recovers damages from that third party for loss of earnings.

An employee who is absent from work as a result of an injury attributable to the negligence of a third party should, as soon as is practicable following the injury, provide their line manager with a report giving the date and place of the accident, a detailed account of the circumstances in which the injury was sustained and the name and address of the person(s) responsible. The submission of the report should not be delayed until the employee decides whether or not to make a claim against a third party. When a decision has been taken on whether or not to submit a claim, the employee should notify his / her line manager. Where the decision is to claim against the third party the employee should provide the name and address of his / her solicitor.

Where SES Group or another SES Group employee (acting in the course of their employment) is responsible for the employee's injury, the injured employee will be paid SSP, which will not be recovered.

Injuries from outside employment or activity

No CSP and no advance in respect of CSP, shall be paid in the case of absence due to injury attributable to active participation in sport as a profession or injury obtained during employment by a company other than SES Group, nor in a case in which the absence arises from or is attributable to an employee's own negligence or misconduct, unless SES Group in its absolute discretion decides otherwise.

Annual leave and sickness absence

Where an employee's illness or injury coincides with a period of pre-booked annual leave the absence due to illness or injury may override the annual leave. Provided the employee complies with the reporting requirements set out in this policy, the employee may receive SSP, where entitled, instead of holiday pay. In addition, the employee may be entitled to be credited in respect of holiday not taken due to sickness, up to the statutory entitlement. It is in SES



Group's absolute discretion that an employee will receive credit in respect of holiday entitlement above the statutory entitlement.

If an employee is absent long term through illness or injury and wishes to take a period of annual leave they must follow the normal annual leave request process and gain approval from their line manager to take their holiday.

Employees will only be permitted, after authorisation, to take their statutory entitlement to holiday during an extended period of sickness which covers an entire annual leave year, in most cases for SES Group employees this will be between 1 January and 31 December. If the employee's contract states that annual leave cannot be carried over into the following annual leave year and the employee does not request to take the holiday then this period of annual leave will be lost.

Only in circumstances where the employee has been prevented from taking their holiday by illness and returns from sick leave with insufficient time to take the remainder of their statutory holiday entitlement will the carry forward of their statutory holiday entitlement to the following leave year be permitted. The company does not permit the taking of any holiday entitlement over and above the statutory entitlement during a period of illness or for this to be carried forward in any circumstances.

In all circumstances the employee must continue to adhere to the absence reporting procedures and provide all necessary certificates, either with an authorised holiday request form or a Statement of Fitness for Work, covering the entire period of absence.

For cases of short term absence, employees will only be permitted to take holidays instead of sickness absence at the absolute discretion of a company director. Where a director has authorised this request, up to a maximum of three days holiday may be taken, however the absence will still be recorded on company records as sickness.

If you have any questions on any of the information within this policy or would like further details, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your line manager or HR representative.

Name:	Tony Ball
Signature:	
Date:	1 st April 2016

3	RJ - AS	TB - MD	01/04/16	Change of MD
2	RJ - AS	GH - MD	27/05/15	Website Address
1	SD - AS	TB - MD	01/03/14	N/A first issue
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