

Global Sickness, Health and Wellbeing Policy

1.0 Introduction and scope

- 1.1 Sightsavers considers the physical and mental wellbeing of its employees to be of the highest importance and it is in the interests of both employees and Sightsavers to prevent sickness absence wherever possible. Sightsavers promotes health at work through supporting preventative health measures, reducing risks to health caused by work and by offering support to those who are absent from work for health reasons.
- 1.2 Sightsavers is committed to supporting the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. Sightsavers 'Empowerment and inclusion Strategic Framework 2015' includes a commitment to scale up efforts to achieve diversity in the workplace and are focused on ensuring that Sightsavers is an employer of choice for people with disabilities.
- 1.3 It is recognised by Sightsavers that from time to time employees may be absent from their place of work due to sickness. The length of time lost by employees through sickness will be monitored to ensure that each employee is able to do their job effectively and without putting themselves or others at risk. Whilst Sightsavers supports employees who are sick wherever possible, it must be recognised that an employee who is medically unfit to carry out their contractual duties may not be able to continue in that employment. Absence of employees due to sickness also has a direct impact upon Sightsavers. This impact includes replacement costs, disruption to work and increased workload for colleagues, which in turn can lead to increased tensions, anxieties, stress and low morale.
- 1.4 Employees and line managers have an important part to play in the management of sickness absence and this policy is designed to enable effective management by both parties, to ensure that all employees are treated in a fair and consistent way when they are unwell. Sightsavers has, therefore, resolved to introduce standard procedures for managing and recording sickness absence.
- 1.5 Sightsavers maintain a global policy that applies to all employees and, in addition, Sightsavers will also meet the legal requirements of each country locally. Employees should refer to this global policy and the appropriate local policy or staff handbook for the country they work in.
- 1.6 Sick pay is intended to alleviate hardship and anxiety when an employee is unable to carry out their duties because of an illness or injury. In return Sightsavers expects employees to act responsibly regarding absence and to keep themselves as fit and ready to work as they are able, and to follow the procedures set out below.

- 1.7 This Global Sickness, Health & Wellbeing Policy sets out Sightsavers' procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way. These procedures apply to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and Sightsavers reserves the right to amend it at any time and/or to deviate from the policy or take such action as Sightsavers deems appropriate in its entire discretion.
- 1.8 In relation to cases of unauthorised absence the **Global Disciplinary Policy and Procedures** will apply.
- 1.9 Time off to deal with the unexpected illness of dependants or bereavement is not addressed in this policy. Please refer to the **Global Leave Policy**.

2.0 Definitions

A “trigger point” is a term used to highlight key points, levels or patterns of sickness absence that require further attention or may have an impact on pay.

A “Disability” as defined by the UK Equality Act 2010, is “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse negative effect on a person’s ability to undertake normal day-to-day activities.”

3.0 Principles

- 3.1 Cases of genuine sickness will be treated empathetically.
- 3.2 Every effort will be made to ensure that an absent employee’s workload is covered if practically possible during their period of absence and that they are (where appropriate) eased back into work following their return to work.
- 3.3 All cases of short-term, repeated, frequent and long-term sickness absence will be dealt with in accordance with the Global Sickness, Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures and local policies/staff handbook.
- 3.4 Information and records relating to sickness absence are sensitive personal data and special conditions apply to their processing. All information, records, discussions and correspondence relating to sickness absence must be treated in the strictest confidence between the employee and Sightsavers.
- 3.4 The procedures will operate within the context of Sightsavers equality and diversity policies and approach.

4.0 Monitoring of sickness absence and sickness records

- 4.1 Sickness absence can vary from short or intermittent periods of ill-health to a continuous period of long-term absence and have a number of different causes (for example: accidents, injuries, recurring conditions, disability or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment).

Sightsavers need to ensure that the reasons for sickness absence are understood in each case and investigated where necessary, in order that appropriate support and adjustments can be made to assist employees when they return to work.

- 4.2 Sickness absence is monitored on a monthly basis by the HR team and discussed with line managers as appropriate, to ensure consistency of approach and compliance with relevant legislation. There are set sickness absence levels, which once exceeded, will require management action. These levels are known as 'trigger points' for further investigation and may potentially be deemed as unacceptable levels of absence:

- 4 separate periods of sickness absence within a 12-month period; or
- Any occasion of sickness absence that is 10 days or more; or
- Any regular pattern of sickness absence that causes concern e.g. regularly being sick on a specific day, or absences directly before or after a period of authorised holiday; or
- Any other absence which Sightsavers (at its sole discretion) feels is a trigger point for further investigation.

- 4.3 All sickness should be notified and properly certificated, whether that is self-certificated or medically certificated and managers should use the 'return to work' form at Appendix 1 as soon as the employee returns to work following sickness absence.

- 4.4 Personal information and individual employee records relating to sickness absence and fitness for employment will be held centrally by the HR Operations Team in a secure manner and should not be retained locally by managers at office or department level. Managers must forward details of all absences, including any supporting documentation (i.e. GP 'fit notes' or return to work interview notes).

5.0 Notification Procedure

- 5.1 If illness or injury prevents an employee from coming to work, they must telephone their line manager and speak to them by their normal start time. If they are personally unable to make the call then someone else must do so on their behalf.

Email or text messages are not suitable methods of communication when first making contact with your manager, unless in an emergency or exceptional

circumstances and should be followed up by a telephone call as soon as possible to ensure the message has been received. The employee should give the general nature of the illness and an estimate of how long they think they will be absent. The manager and employee should also agree when the next update should be provided and the method of communication to be used.

- 5.2 Employees should keep their line manager regularly updated as to their absence and health and when they expect to return to work. If the line manager cannot be contacted, the employee should contact their managers' manager or a member of the HR Operations team. Any employee who becomes sick during the working day should inform their line manager before leaving work.
- 5.3 If an employee fails to keep their manager updated, their manager may contact the employee to request an update. If an employee has not regularly updated their manager and cannot be directly contacted, the manager may contact the next of kin for further information. Next of kin details are held on Select HR or can be requested from the HR Operations team and employees should ensure that if there are next of kin changes during their employment, that they update Select HR or advise the HR Operations Team.
- 5.4 As well as being an important part of the overall management of sickness absence, maintaining and monitoring accurate records of sickness absence also enables line managers and/or HR to identify any areas that may be of concern and put appropriate measures in place to address them. To support accurate record keeping, it is therefore essential that line managers update Select HR. (If you do not have access yet to Select HR, you should advise the HR Operations team when an employee is absent on the first day of sickness and the date the employee returns to work).
- 5.5 After returning to work following a period of sickness absence all employees must record their absence using the appropriate certification form process for their country. This form should state the dates and reasons for absence and needs to be signed by the line manager and then forwarded to the HR Operations team to be retained. For longer periods of absence a doctor's note or certificate is required.
- 5.6 If occupational health, an employee's doctor, specialist or other medical professional recommends any adjustments to the employee's duties, hours or working conditions to facilitate the employees return to work, the employee is required to co-operate with regards to the possible implementation of such changes. Sightsavers will try to accommodate any reasonable adjustments but with consideration to what is practical and reasonable for the organisation and the employee.
- 5.7 In the event an employee does not follow the reporting procedure, any absence will be treated as unauthorised absence and Sightsavers reserve the right to not pay sick pay. Sightsavers may also commence disciplinary proceedings which could result in a disciplinary sanction, up to and including dismissal.

6.0 Sick pay entitlements

For details on sick pay entitlements please refer to the relevant country office staff handbook and individual contracts of employment.

7.0 Sickness related to maternity

- 7.1 For employees that are pregnant and who are absent due to sickness, either pregnancy related or not, they will still be subject to the Global Sickness, Health & Wellbeing Policy. However, they should also refer to the **Global Maternity Policy** and their country specific handbook.
- 7.2 If an UK employee has pregnancy related absence within 4 weeks of the due date then Sightsavers may determine that maternity leave should start immediately. Outside of the UK please refer to the country specific handbook.

8.0 Return to work discussion

- 8.1 Employees may be required to attend a return to work meeting with their line manager.

When an employee returns to work after a period of sickness absence, the line manager is responsible for ensuring that a return to work discussion takes place on the employee's first day back, or as soon as possible thereafter and no later than one week after the employee's return. The discussion should be handled with sensitivity and discretion. The purpose of the return to work discussion is:

- To ensure the employee has recovered sufficiently to return to work.
- To give the employee an opportunity to express any concerns they may have about returning to work and identify any areas where support might be needed.
- To discuss the employee being referred to either Occupational Health or an independent doctor, where in the judgement of the Sightsavers it seems appropriate.
- To update the employee on any developments during their absence and agree work priorities.
- To ensure the employee has provided the appropriate certification

The line manager is responsible for completing the Return to Work form at Appendix 1 and forwarding a copy the HR Service Desk along with any relevant certification or documentation provided by the employee, pertaining to the absence or health issue.

9.0 Occupational Health or Specialist Assessment

- 9.1 In order to gain an understanding of any underlying health issues, to facilitate an employee's return to work, establish fitness for work or to make any

recommendations with regard to reasonable adjustments, Sightsavers may decide to seek health advice from our Occupational Health provider, InterHealth or another doctor or specialist. Sightsavers may require employees to consent to a medical examination by Occupational Health and/or a doctor nominated by Sightsavers for an assessment to be undertaken and a report provided to Sightsavers. Employees may be asked to agree that any report provided in connection with any such examination may be disclosed to Sightsavers and that Sightsavers may discuss the contents of the report with its advisers and the relevant doctor. Depending on the nature of the assessment required, location and mobility of employee, an assessment can be carried out either over the telephone, at InterHealth's offices in London or Kenya, or can be arranged on-site at the Haywards Heath office.

The point at which health advice is obtained may vary and will depend upon individual circumstances. Sightsavers will pay for any costs incurred in seeking advice in relation to recommendations regarding occupational health and ability to undertake work. The report and costs only covers workplace health and advice for the individual and Sightsavers, it does not extend to diagnosis, investigations or treatment.

9.2 Once the Occupational Health or doctor's report has been received, Sightsavers will consider whether any further action is required and will normally discuss the report with the employee. There will be a number of options available depending on the circumstances of the case. These may include but are not limited to:

- The employee remaining on sick leave with an agreed date for a further occupational health assessment.
- The employee returning to work in the same job, with or without reasonable adjustments and a further occupational health review or specialist assessment, if deemed necessary
- Considering suitable alternative employment, if available, either in the department or elsewhere in Sightsavers.
- Cessation of employment with Sightsavers.

9.3 If an employee does not give consent to be referred to occupational health or a doctor nominated by Sightsavers, consent for any subsequent occupational health or doctor's report to be released then Sightsavers may be required to make decisions based on limited information.

9.4 Referral to Occupational Health and/or a doctor can be requested by Sightsavers at any time. It is not necessary for Sightsavers to wait until a specific level of sickness absence before taking formal action. Each case will be assessed on its own circumstances in terms of the nature of the illness or condition, the likelihood of returning to work, any support that may benefit the employee and the disruption caused to Sightsavers service by the absence.

10.0 Making reasonable adjustments

- 10.1 Where occupational health or specialist advice states that an employee is unable to continue with their full duties for health reasons or in order to rehabilitate the employee back into the workplace after a period of ill-health, Sightsavers will consider any reasonable adjustments to the employee's current position or working environment, to enable them to continue working. Reasonable adjustments may include, but are not limited to, considering temporary adjustment to hours worked ('phased return') retraining, redeployment, extra supervision or provision of special equipment. Sightsavers will seek specialist recommendations and advice as appropriate and at Sightsavers discretion.
- 10.2 To establish whether an adjustment is reasonable, factors such as (but not limited to) financial implications, how easy or practical it is to make the change, the impact on delivery of objectives and available resources will be considered. Where appropriate, specific advice should be obtained from HR Business Partners, occupational health or other designated specialist, however ultimately it is a management decision to determine and agree if an adjustment is reasonable.
- 10.3 A managed return to work (or 'phased return') may be advised by occupational health, G.P. or other specialist healthcare professional and Sightsavers will support this wherever practical and reasonable as an effective way to support a return to work, to the mutual benefit of the employee and Sightsavers. Phased returns will be considered on a case by case basis. Whilst undertaking a phased return to work, the hours not worked will be recorded as sickness absence and you will not usually be paid for hours not worked unless you have an outstanding entitlement to enhanced sick pay.

11.0 Doctor, dentist, and hospital appointments

- 11.1 Sightsavers encourages employees to take responsibility for their own health and employees will be given reasonable time off to attend doctor, dentist and hospital appointments but these should be notified to the line manager in advance, except in the case of an emergency. Wherever possible these appointments should take place either outside working hours or at the beginning or end of the working day, to cause the least disruption to the working day.

Sightsavers reserves the right to request to see appointment cards and/or letters prior to agreeing to an employee taking time off relating to the attendance of such appointments. Failure to comply with this request may result in disciplinary action or the removal of pay.

If you have been referred to Governments 'Fit for Work Service' by your GP, it would be helpful to let Sightsavers know. Please advise your line manager or HR Business Partner.

12.0 Dealing with short term and/or repeated sickness absence

- 12.1 Where levels of sickness absence give cause for concern or reach certain trigger points (see section 4.2), further investigation will take place. All cases will be treated empathetically and in confidence. In many cases informal discussion with the line manager may be sufficient to ensure a return to a normal working pattern.

Where resolution or a return to work has not been possible through an informal route, a more formal approach will be taken in line with the procedures and support outlined within this policy and with reference to the Global Disciplinary Policy as required. Please discuss with your HR Business Partner in the first instance.

13.0 Continuing absence

- 13.1 Employees who remain on sick leave for long periods may begin to feel isolated and out of touch with the workplace. In such cases, managers are expected to keep in regular contact as far as possible with employees but in a supportive way. This usually takes the form of an occasional telephone call to see how the employee is progressing or where appropriate and practical and with agreement with the employee, considering arranging a home visit. Employees must also keep their manager up to date regarding their absence and the employee continuing to provide doctors certificates to cover the period of absence.

Usually the immediate line manager is best placed to do this. However, this must be undertaken with sensitivity and discretion and without placing the employee under any pressure. In particular, this would not normally include involving them in any work matters. Line managers should, as far as possible, ensure absent employee's workloads are covered and not simply left until their return.

Managers are advised to keep a note of any such discussions undertaken whilst an employee is on sick leave.

For any further advice on contact during periods of continued absence please speak to your HR Business Partner.

14.0 Health & Wellbeing Support

- 14.1 Occupational Health Advice
If an employee is concerned about their health in relation to work and would like to seek advice or guidance, they should speak with their line manager or HR Business Partner to agree whether a referral to and consultation with occupational health may be appropriate.
- 14.2 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Professional advice and counselling is available to all Sightsavers employees in all locations. The service is provided by Unum Lifeworks and is professional, impartial, independent, confidential and free to all employees, 24 hours a day. They can be contacted on 0800 048 2702. For more information please visit the website: www.unumlifeworks.co.uk

14.3 Workstation Assessment

In order to comply with UK Health & Safety requirements, in the UK there is an online workstation assessment tool which demonstrates how an employee should set up their workstation – desk, chair and screen. The short course consists of educational modules, a short quiz and a personal assessment. If you are based in a country office please raise any concerns about your workstation directly with your line manager.

14.4 New and Expectant Mothers

The UK workstation assessment tool also gives access to an informative module for new and expectant mothers.

14.5 Eye Tests

As part of the Health & Safety Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992, Sightsavers provide support for eye tests. For current scheme details please contact the Corporate Services Team in Haywards Heath.

15.0 UK Procedures for the Sickness, Health and Wellbeing Policy

The following procedures (set out below) apply to **UK employees only**. Staff based in or employed by other international offices should refer to their local terms and conditions or staff handbook for further information.

15.1 Entitlement to Sick Pay

Employees may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if they satisfy the relevant statutory requirements. Qualifying days for SSP are the employee's normal working days, or as set out in the employee's employment contract. The rate of SSP is set by the government in April each year. No SSP is payable for the first three consecutive days of absence. It starts on the fourth day of absence and may be payable for up to 28 weeks.

Sightsavers runs an enhanced sick pay scheme that exceeds the statutory minimum sick pay. Employees must comply with this policy in all respects and meet the reporting requirements including providing Fit Notes where necessary in order to receive enhanced pay for sickness absence. Payments of enhanced sick pay will be covered for the following periods on a rolling 12-month basis:

Employees are entitled to 10 weeks full pay and 18 weeks half pay in any rolling 12 month period. This entitlement is pro-rata'd for part-time employees based on their normal weekly working hours. This payment is over and above the statutory sick pay entitlement and is therefore inclusive of SSP.

Further payments of enhanced sick pay (if any) are at the entire discretion of Sightsavers.

If a period of sickness absence is or appears to be occasioned by actionable negligence, nuisance or breach of any statutory duty on the part of a third party, in respect of which damages are or may be recoverable, the must immediately notify their manager of that fact and of any claim, compromise, settlement or judgment made or awarded in connection with it and all relevant particulars that Sightsavers we may reasonably require. If Sightsavers requires the employee to do so, the employee must co-operate in any related legal proceedings and refund to Sightsavers that part of any damages or compensation the employee recovers that relates to lost earnings for the period of sickness absence as Sightsavers may reasonably determine, less any costs the employee incurred in connection with the recovery of such damages or compensation, provided that the amount to be refunded to Sightsavers shall not exceed the total amount Sightsavers paid to the employee in respect of the period of sickness absence.

15.2 Certification Requirements

If you are absent due to sickness for less than 7 days, you must confirm the reason to your manager who will in turn ensure that Select HR is updated or that the HR Operations team are notified of the dates and reason so that records can be updated and payroll advised accordingly.

If you are away sick for more than 7 consecutive days (including weekends) you must obtain a certificate from your doctor (a “Statement for Fitness to Work” or ‘Fit Note’, previously referred to as a ‘sick note’) from your GP or hospital. Thereafter Fit Notes must be provided as often as required to cover all of the period beyond the first absence. Failure to provide such certificates may result in the organisation ceasing to pay any sick pay including payment of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

Sightsavers may require employees to ‘self-certify’ any absence, by completing, in conjunction with the line manager, the ‘Return to Work Discussion and Record’ at Section 16 of this policy.

Sightsavers may, at its discretion, require you to provide a Fit Note for absences of less than 7 days; in which case you will be reimbursed for the cost of the Fit Note on production of a receipt if a fee has been charged to obtain the note.

15.3 Line Manager Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for recording all episodes of sickness absence either through Select HR (where available) or by notifying the HR Service Desk of the absence dates and reason. Managers are required to raise any concerns about illness, injury or absences with their HR Business Partner.

Managers are advised to complete the form at Appendix A (page 12) of this policy 'Return to Work Discussion and Record' when an employee returns to work following an absence. Part A is to be completed by the employee and should be discussed with the Manager who will then complete Part B.

15.5 Sickness absence and pregnant employees

Pregnant employees are subject to the Sickness, Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures if they are absent during their pregnancy. However, if a pregnant employee is absent due to a pregnancy related illness after the fourth week before their expected week of confinement (EWC), they will not be paid sick pay but instead will automatically move onto maternity leave and receive maternity pay if applicable. Please refer to the [Global Maternity Policy and Procedures](#).

15.6 Sickness during annual leave

If an employee becomes ill during a period of booked holiday, they can potentially treat the period as sick leave and reclaim the holiday if:

- they notify their manager of their incapacity immediately; and
- they provide written confirmation or certification is submitted from the employees' doctor confirming the period of sickness.

Employees will continue to accrue their annual leave entitlement when off work due to ill health; consideration may be given to employees using holiday, if during longer term sickness absence they exhaust entitlement to sick pay.

Employees are deemed to have taken their statutory entitlement to holiday under regulation 13(1) of the Working Time Regulations 1998 (WTR) first when taking holiday in a holiday year. Additional holiday entitlement under regulation 13(a) of the WTR and any additional contractual holiday entitlement are taken thereafter.

If an employee's period of sick leave extends into the next holiday year, or if there is not enough time left in the current holiday year to make it practicable for the employee to take their remaining holiday entitlement, they may carry unused holiday entitlement over to the following holiday year. Carry-over is limited to four weeks' holiday per year less any leave taken during the holiday year that has just ended. Any such carried over holiday which is not taken within 18 months of the end of the relevant holiday year (whether or not the employee has returned to work) will be lost.

16. Return to Work Discussion and Record

Confidential - Return to work following sickness absence

Part A: To be completed by employee

First date of absence:

Return date from absence:

Reason for absence:

Are you 'self-certificating' your absence? (no Doctors certificate) Yes No

Do you have a Doctors certificate or 'fit note' to cover the absence? Yes No

If Doctors 'fit note' please confirm details of any adjustments or considerations:

Was the absence brought on or aggravated by work? Yes No

If yes, please provide further information:

Do you need any adjustments in the workplace to support your return to work? Yes No

If yes, please provide further information:

I confirm that the above information is correct and that I am fit and well to return to work

Signed:

Date:

Please print name: _____

(Employee)

Part B: To be completed by the line manager

Employee name: _____ Date of Meeting: _____

Was the sickness absence reporting procedure followed? Yes NoIf relevant, have received certification(s) to cover period of absence? Yes NoHave you checked absence levels in line with sickness policy? Yes No***If 'yes' to any of the statements below manager seek advice from HRBP as soon as possible:***Do you need to make or seek advice in relation to adjustments? Yes NoIs any further specialist health advice required? Yes NoHas an absence 'trigger' been reached (refer to policy) Yes NoIs employee within last 4 weeks of pregnancy prior to due date? Yes No**Signed:****Date:****Please print name:** _____

(Line Manager)

Please forward the completed form to your HR Business Partner.