

Sick Leave Policy

Youth Start Limited

Company Number: 16864238

Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB

Website: youthstart.co.uk

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1 January 2026

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1 January 2026

Introduction

This Sick Leave Policy sets out Youth Start Limited's approach to managing sickness absence for staff, mentors, and volunteers. Youth Start recognises that individuals may occasionally be unable to work due to illness or injury, and is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all individuals involved in its operations.

This policy outlines the procedures for reporting sickness absence, the entitlements to sick pay, the support available during periods of illness, and the process for returning to work following sickness absence. Youth Start is committed to managing sickness absence fairly, consistently, and in accordance with UK employment law.

This policy applies to all staff members employed by Youth Start. Separate arrangements may apply to mentors, volunteers, and candidates, as outlined in this policy.

Purpose of This Policy

The purpose of this Sick Leave Policy is to:

- Outline the procedures for reporting sickness absence
 - Explain entitlements to Statutory Sick Pay and any additional sick pay provided by Youth Start
 - Describe the support available to individuals during periods of illness
 - Outline the process for medical certification and fit notes
 - Explain the return-to-work process and support available
 - Describe how Youth Start manages long-term sickness absence
 - Ensure compliance with the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, and other relevant UK legislation
 - Promote a supportive and understanding approach to sickness absence management
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Legal Framework

Youth Start operates in compliance with the following UK legislation:

- **Employment Rights Act 1996:** Governs employment rights including sick pay and unfair dismissal
 - **Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations 1982:** Sets out the rules for Statutory Sick Pay
 - **Equality Act 2010:** Requires reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities and prohibits discrimination
 - **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR:** Governs the handling of personal and health data
 - **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:** Requires employers to protect the health and safety of employees
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Reporting Sickness Absence

Notification Requirements

If you are unable to work due to illness or injury, you must notify Youth Start as soon as possible, and no later than one hour before your scheduled start time on the first day of absence.

Notification should be made by:

- **Telephone:** Calling 07470435603 and speaking directly to your manager or supervisor
- **Email:** If you are unable to reach your manager by telephone, you may send an email to contact@youthstart.co.uk, but you must follow up with a telephone call as soon as possible

When reporting sickness absence, you should provide:

- Your name
- The reason for your absence (a brief description of your illness or injury)
- The expected duration of your absence (if known)
- Any urgent work matters that need to be covered during your absence
- Contact details where you can be reached during your absence

Ongoing Notification

If your absence continues beyond the first day, you must contact Youth Start:

- **Daily:** For the first three days of absence, you must contact Youth Start each day to provide an update on your condition and expected return date
- **Weekly:** If your absence extends beyond one week, you must contact Youth Start at least once per week to provide an update

If your condition changes or your expected return date changes, you must notify Youth Start immediately.

Failure to Notify

Failure to notify Youth Start of your absence in accordance with this policy may result in:

- Loss of entitlement to sick pay for the period of unreported absence
- Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal

If you are physically unable to contact Youth Start yourself (for example, if you are hospitalised or incapacitated), you may ask a family member or friend to contact Youth Start on your behalf.

Medical Certification

Self-Certification

For absences of up to seven consecutive calendar days (including non-working days), you may self-certify your illness. You will be required to complete a self-certification form when you return to work, providing:

- The dates of your absence
- The reason for your absence
- Confirmation that you were unfit for work

Fit Notes (Medical Certificates)

For absences of more than seven consecutive calendar days, you must provide a fit note (also known as a Statement of Fitness for Work) from your GP or other medical practitioner.

The fit note must:

- Cover the entire period of absence beyond the first seven days
- State whether you are “not fit for work” or “may be fit for work” (with recommended adjustments)
- Be provided to Youth Start as soon as possible, and no later than the eighth day of absence

If your absence continues beyond the period covered by your initial fit note, you must provide further fit notes to cover the ongoing absence.

“May Be Fit for Work” Fit Notes

If your fit note states that you “may be fit for work” with adjustments or modifications, Youth Start will:

- Discuss the recommended adjustments with you
- Consider whether the adjustments can be reasonably implemented
- Agree on a phased return to work or modified duties where appropriate
- Review the arrangements regularly to ensure they are effective

Youth Start is committed to making reasonable adjustments to support your return to work, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Eligibility for SSP

You are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if:

- You are an employee (not a volunteer or self-employed)
- You have been sick for at least four consecutive days (including non-working days)
- You earn at least the Lower Earnings Limit for National Insurance contributions (currently £123 per week for 2025-26)
- You have notified Youth Start of your absence in accordance with this policy
- You have provided any required medical certification

SSP Rates and Duration

SSP is paid:

- At the statutory rate set by the UK Government (currently £116.75 per week for 2025-26)
- From the fourth qualifying day of sickness absence (the first three days are “waiting days” and are not paid)
- For up to 28 weeks of sickness absence in any three-year period

SSP is paid on your normal payday and is subject to tax and National Insurance deductions.

Ineligibility for SSP

You are not entitled to SSP if:

- You earn less than the Lower Earnings Limit
- You have already received 28 weeks of SSP in the current three-year period
- You are receiving Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, or other statutory payments
- You are in custody or on strike

If you are not entitled to SSP, Youth Start will provide you with form SSP1, which you can use to claim Employment and Support Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions.

Youth Start Sick Pay (Company Sick Pay)

Enhanced Sick Pay Entitlement

In addition to Statutory Sick Pay, Youth Start provides enhanced sick pay (company sick pay) to eligible employees, subject to the following conditions:

Probationary Period (First 6 Months): - Employees on probation are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay only - No enhanced sick pay is provided during the probationary period

After Probationary Period (6 Months to 2 Years of Service): - Full pay for the first 5 working days of sickness absence in any 12-month period - Statutory Sick Pay for any additional sickness absence

After 2 Years of Service: - Full pay for the first 10 working days of sickness absence in any 12-month period - Half pay for the next 10 working days of sickness absence in any 12-month period - Statutory Sick Pay for any additional sickness absence

Enhanced sick pay is paid at your normal rate of pay and includes SSP (it is not paid in addition to SSP).

Conditions for Enhanced Sick Pay

Enhanced sick pay is subject to the following conditions:

- You must comply with the notification and certification requirements set out in this policy
- You must not engage in any activity that could delay your recovery or is inconsistent with your stated illness
- You must cooperate with any reasonable requests from Youth Start, including attending occupational health assessments
- Youth Start reserves the right to withhold enhanced sick pay if there is evidence of abuse or misconduct

Discretionary Sick Pay

In exceptional circumstances, Youth Start may exercise discretion to provide additional sick pay beyond the standard entitlements. Any such discretionary payments will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will take into account:

- The nature and severity of the illness or injury
- The individual's length of service and absence record
- The individual's personal circumstances
- The financial impact on the individual

Managing Sickness Absence

Keeping in Touch

During periods of sickness absence, Youth Start will maintain appropriate contact with you to:

- Check on your wellbeing and recovery
- Provide updates on work matters (where appropriate)
- Discuss your expected return date
- Discuss any support or adjustments you may need

The frequency and method of contact will be agreed with you and will be proportionate to the length and nature of your absence. Youth Start will respect your privacy and will not make excessive or intrusive contact.

Occupational Health Referrals

Youth Start may refer you to an occupational health service if:

- You have been absent for more than four weeks
- You have frequent or repeated absences
- You have a long-term health condition that may affect your ability to work
- Your fit note recommends workplace adjustments
- There are concerns about your fitness to return to work

The purpose of an occupational health referral is to:

- Obtain independent medical advice on your fitness for work
- Identify any reasonable adjustments that may support your return to work
- Assess whether your condition constitutes a disability under the Equality Act 2010
- Provide recommendations for managing your absence and supporting your wellbeing

You will be asked to consent to the occupational health referral and to the sharing of relevant medical information. Occupational health reports will be treated confidentially and will only be shared with relevant managers on a need-to-know basis.

Medical Appointments

Youth Start recognises that you may need to attend medical appointments during working hours. Where possible, you should:

- Schedule appointments outside of working hours or at the beginning or end of the working day
- Provide as much notice as possible of the appointment
- Provide evidence of the appointment (such as an appointment card or letter)

Time off for medical appointments will normally be granted as:

- **Paid time off:** For essential medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of working hours (e.g., hospital appointments, specialist consultations)
- **Unpaid time off or annual leave:** For routine appointments that could be scheduled outside of working hours (e.g., dental check-ups, optician appointments)

Youth Start will take a reasonable and flexible approach to medical appointments, particularly for individuals with long-term health conditions or disabilities.

Return to Work

Return-to-Work Discussions

Following any period of sickness absence, you will be required to attend a return-to-work discussion with your manager. The purpose of the discussion is to:

- Welcome you back to work
- Confirm that you are fit to return to your normal duties
- Discuss any ongoing health concerns or support needs
- Review the reason for your absence and update absence records
- Identify any patterns or trends in your absence
- Discuss any adjustments or support that may help prevent future absences

Return-to-work discussions are conducted in a supportive and non-judgemental manner and provide an opportunity for open communication about your health and wellbeing.

Phased Return to Work

If you have been absent for an extended period or have a serious illness or injury, Youth Start may agree to a phased return to work. A phased return typically involves:

- Reduced working hours (e.g., starting with half days and gradually increasing to full days)
- Modified duties (e.g., lighter or less stressful tasks)
- Additional breaks or rest periods
- Temporary adjustments to your working environment

A phased return will be agreed in consultation with you, your manager, and any relevant medical professionals. The arrangements will be reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary.

During a phased return, you will normally be paid for the hours you actually work. Youth Start may exercise discretion to provide additional pay in exceptional circumstances.

Reasonable Adjustments

If you have a disability or long-term health condition, Youth Start will make reasonable adjustments to support your return to work and enable you to perform your role effectively. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Modifications to your working hours or pattern (e.g., flexible start and finish times, part-time working)
- Modifications to your duties or responsibilities
- Provision of specialist equipment or assistive technology
- Modifications to the workplace (e.g., accessible facilities, ergonomic furniture)
- Additional support or supervision

Youth Start will consult with you and, where appropriate, with occupational health professionals to identify suitable adjustments.

Long-Term Sickness Absence

Definition

Long-term sickness absence is defined as any continuous absence lasting more than four weeks.

Management of Long-Term Absence

Youth Start will manage long-term sickness absence proactively and supportively, with the aim of facilitating your return to work wherever possible. The management process includes:

- Regular contact to check on your wellbeing and recovery
- Occupational health referrals to obtain medical advice
- Discussion of reasonable adjustments and phased return options
- Exploration of alternative roles or redeployment opportunities (where appropriate)
- Regular reviews of your absence and progress

Medical Retirement or Termination

In exceptional circumstances, where:

- You are unable to return to work due to ill health
- All reasonable adjustments have been explored and exhausted
- There is no reasonable prospect of a return to work in the foreseeable future
- Continued employment is not sustainable

Youth Start may consider medical retirement or termination of employment on the grounds of capability. Any such decision will only be made after:

- Obtaining up-to-date medical evidence
- Consulting with you and giving you the opportunity to provide your views
- Considering all alternatives, including redeployment
- Following a fair and transparent process

Youth Start will provide appropriate notice and will support you in accessing any benefits or support you may be entitled to, such as ill health retirement benefits or Employment and Support Allowance.

Absence Monitoring and Management

Absence Records

Youth Start maintains records of all sickness absence, including:

- Dates of absence
- Reason for absence
- Whether medical certification was provided
- Return-to-work discussion notes

Absence records are treated confidentially and are stored securely in accordance with the Data Retention Policy.

Absence Triggers

Youth Start monitors sickness absence to identify patterns or trends that may require intervention. Absence triggers include:

- **Frequent short-term absences:** Three or more separate periods of absence in a rolling six-month period
- **High levels of absence:** More than 10 working days of absence in a rolling 12-month period
- **Patterns of absence:** Absences that occur on particular days (e.g., Mondays, Fridays) or around holidays or events

If your absence reaches a trigger point, your manager will arrange a meeting with you to:

- Discuss the reasons for your absence
- Explore whether there are any underlying health issues or other factors contributing to your absence
- Identify any support or adjustments that may help reduce future absences
- Set expectations for attendance going forward

Absence trigger meetings are conducted in a supportive manner and are not disciplinary in nature. However, if absence levels do not improve or if there is evidence of abuse, formal action may be taken under the Disciplinary Procedures.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence is considered unauthorised if:

- You fail to notify Youth Start of your absence in accordance with this policy
- You fail to provide required medical certification
- You engage in activities that are inconsistent with your stated illness
- You refuse to attend occupational health assessments or return-to-work discussions without good reason

Unauthorised absence may result in:

- Loss of sick pay
- Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal

Sickness During Annual Leave

If you become ill during a period of annual leave, you may request to convert the annual leave to sick leave, subject to the following conditions:

- You must notify Youth Start as soon as possible during your annual leave
- You must provide a fit note from a medical practitioner covering the period of illness
- The illness must be sufficiently serious to prevent you from enjoying your annual leave

If your request is approved, the days of illness will be treated as sick leave (and will be subject to sick pay entitlements), and the equivalent number of annual leave days will be returned to your annual leave allowance.

This provision applies to illness during annual leave taken in the UK. Different rules may apply to illness during annual leave taken abroad, and you should seek advice before travelling.

Sickness and Pregnancy

Pregnancy-related sickness absence is recorded separately from other sickness absence and does not count towards absence triggers or disciplinary thresholds.

If you are pregnant and absent from work due to a pregnancy-related illness, you should:

- Notify Youth Start in the normal way
- Specify that the absence is pregnancy-related
- Provide medical certification if required

Pregnancy-related sickness absence in the four weeks before your expected due date may trigger the start of your maternity leave. You should discuss this with your manager and refer to the Maternity Policy (if applicable).

Support for Staff, Mentors, and Volunteers

Staff Support

Youth Start provides the following support for staff members during periods of illness:

- Statutory Sick Pay and enhanced sick pay (where eligible)
- Access to occupational health services
- Reasonable adjustments and phased return arrangements
- Counselling and mental health support (through Employee Assistance Programme, if available)
- Flexible working arrangements (where appropriate)

Mentors and Volunteers

Mentors and volunteers are not entitled to sick pay, as they are not employees. However, Youth Start will:

- Take a flexible and understanding approach to absence due to illness
- Provide support and adjustments to enable mentors and volunteers to continue their involvement when they are well
- Maintain regular contact during periods of absence
- Welcome mentors and volunteers back when they are ready to return

Mentors and volunteers should notify Youth Start as soon as possible if they are unable to fulfil their commitments due to illness.

Candidates

Candidates who are absent from their placement due to illness should:

- Notify their employer in accordance with the employer's sickness absence policy
- Notify their Youth Start mentor as soon as possible
- Provide medical certification if required by the employer

Youth Start will support candidates during periods of illness by:

- Liaising with the employer to ensure appropriate support and adjustments
- Providing mentorship support and guidance
- Discussing any concerns or challenges related to the absence
- Supporting the candidate's return to work

Candidates are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay from their employer (if eligible), in accordance with the employer's sick pay policy.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All information relating to sickness absence, including medical information, is treated as confidential and sensitive personal data under the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Youth Start will:

- Only collect and process medical information that is necessary for managing sickness absence
- Store medical information securely and separately from general personnel files
- Only share medical information with relevant managers and professionals on a need-to-know basis
- Obtain your consent before sharing medical information with third parties (such as occupational health services)
- Retain sickness absence records in accordance with the Data Retention Policy (typically for six years after the end of employment)

You have the right to access your sickness absence records and medical information held by Youth Start, in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

Review and Monitoring

This Sick Leave Policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains current and effective. The review considers:

- Changes to UK legislation or statutory sick pay rates
 - Changes to Youth Start's operations or workforce
 - Absence trends and patterns
 - Staff feedback and suggestions
 - Industry best practice and guidance
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Contact Information

If you have any questions about this Sick Leave Policy, or if you need to report sickness absence, please contact Youth Start Limited using the following contact details:

Youth Start Limited

Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB

Email: contact@youthstart.co.uk

Telephone: 07470435603

Website: youthstart.co.uk

Relationship with Other Policies

This Sick Leave Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Health & Safety Policy
 - Annual Leave Policy
 - Code of Conduct
 - Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures
 - Data Retention Policy
 - GDPR Compliance Policy
 - Equality Act Compliance (within Equal Opportunities Policy)
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Acknowledgment

By accepting employment or a role with Youth Start, you acknowledge that you have read this Sick Leave Policy, understand it, and agree to comply with all sickness absence reporting and certification requirements.

Last Updated: 1 January 2026

Next Review Date: 1 January 2027