



Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure (Associates)

This policy is designed to provide a fair framework for managing sickness absence among NFER Associates. We recognise that, while assignments may be short-term in nature, the wellbeing of every individual remains important. We are committed to ensuring that associates are treated with dignity, understanding, and consistency when they are unwell. NFER aim to foster an environment where associates feel able to report sickness promptly, access appropriate support, and return to assignments safely when ready.

Introduction

Definition

Any period you are unable to undertake work at short notice due to illness, injury, or a health-related condition that prevents you from performing your agreed duties. It can include both physical and mental health issues, and can be short-term, long-term, or recurring in nature.

Applicable to

This policy applies to all NFER Associates.

This policy does not form part of your worker agreement. We reserve the right to amend or remove this policy at any time.

NFER will use this policy flexibly alongside other policies that might also be relevant to the issues presented.

Overview

The principles of this policy are:

- If you are unable to undertake the work due to ill-health, you are required to notify your assignment lead of your absence by following the sickness absence reporting procedure, as set out in this policy.
- It is your responsibility to maintain contact during periods of absence and to provide fit notes when required.
- Failure to comply with the notification and certification procedures set out in this policy may be treated as an unauthorised absence, and any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) entitlement may be withheld.

Procedure

Reporting absence

You must notify your assignment lead by email or telephone as soon as possible, and no later than 8am on the first day of absence.

You must provide the general nature of your illness, confirm your contact details and where possible, an expectation of your expected absence duration.

You must then maintain regular contact as agreed with your assignment lead.

You can self-certify for 7 days (including non-working days). From day 8 onwards you will be required to provide NFER with a fit note.

Failure to follow reporting procedures or provide certification may result in:

- SSP being withheld
- A letter of concern (where applicable)
- Termination of assignment and/or your Associate Framework Agreement.

Statutory sick pay

All workers, regardless of their earnings, are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) at a rate of either 80% of their usual earnings or the statutory flat rate from day-one of absence. You can find further details at the [Gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk).

Your average weekly earnings are calculated based on your previous 8 weeks earnings with NFER, and may vary depending on the hours you have worked and your assignment patterns.

If you have any queries on the calculation of your sick pay, please contact the finance team via finance@nfer.ac.uk.

Return to work

A return-to-work discussion may take place following absence to:

- Confirm your fitness to return
- Identify any appropriate support required
- Review absence levels.

Where an absence impacts assignment delivery your assignment may be ended in line with your assignment terms.

Alternative work may be considered where appropriate.

Other considerations

Linking periods of sickness

Separate periods of sickness may be linked where:

- They are related; and
- Occur within 8 weeks of each other

Linked periods will be treated as a single period for SSP purposes. More information can be found on the [Gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk).

Planned absences

You are expected to notify us as soon as reasonably practicable of any planned medical treatment or scheduled hospital stays which may affect your availability for work.

As Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is intended to provide support during periods of unexpected incapacity for work, the organisation will not normally pay SSP in respect of pre-planned

medical treatment or scheduled hospital admissions where the absence is known in advance.

Such periods of unavailability will not adversely affect your status within our associate pool. You will remain an active candidate for future assignments and will continue to be considered for suitable work opportunities following your recovery and return to availability.

Disabilities and reasonable adjustments

We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. Particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a work assignment or working arrangement that would provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which impacts your ability to undertake your work assignment, you should inform the associates team. Any information you provide will be handled in a confidential manner.

Meeting our project requirements

If your level of sickness absence is considered excessive, we reserve the right to no longer offer you further work assignments and/or terminate your current assignment in order to meet project and operational requirements.

Version: 1 Date: August 2026 Last Updated By: Frankie Abrahart

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please email associates@nfer.ac.uk