



## **STAFF SICKNESS POLICY**

*The Pre-School recognises the importance of having a healthy workforce. It seeks to complement statutory provision with a supportive response to any long-term sickness.*

### **Occasional Sickness**

Any member of staff who is unable to come into work because of ill-health should notify the manager at the earliest opportunity and keep the manager updated on a daily basis thereafter.

Staff suffering from stomach upsets or any other potentially infectious or contagious condition should not come into work until they are well. Some illnesses (e.g. Covid-19) may require additional, specific actions. Staff should refer to any Addenda (below) or, if in doubt, consult the manager.

The Pre-School does not pay staff who miss work because of occasional ill-health. Statutory sick-pay will be automatically activated by PayRoll as appropriate.

Every opportunity will be taken to offer staff, who have been affected by sickness, to make up any lost hours.

### **Longer Sickness**

Staff who find themselves off work for more than four consecutive days will be eligible for discretionary sick-pay. The following criteria will be applied:

- Has the member of staff been off work for more than four consecutive days?
- Is the member of staff unlikely to make up for lost hours within the next two months?

If the answer to both these questions is 'yes', the manager will consider a discretionary payment up to but not exceeding 90% of the average of the member of staff's last three weeks' pay.

If a member of staff returns to work, within a period where discretionary pay has been paid in advance, that discretionary pay will be deducted from the earned pay for that period.

Provision for one member of staff should not be seen as setting any precedent for possible future provision for others.

### **Longer-term Health Issues**

Staff who are affected by longer-term health issues, including conditions which require a time in hospital and a period of recuperation, are encouraged to discuss their situation with the manager at the earliest opportunity.

Taking each case as unique, the manager, in consultation with trustees, will:

- draw up an appropriate 'return to work' programme
- review working conditions

address the financial implications of the staff-member's absence and consider what strategies the Pre-School could adopt to ease any financial burden which the staff-member may experience.

Provision for one member of staff should not be seen as setting any precedent for possible future provision for others.

### **Quarantining**

Where a member of staff has been in close proximity to a family member or member of the public with a serious infectious condition, including symptoms requiring self-isolation or quarantining, that member of staff should not come into work until the appropriate quarantine period has passed as indicated by the official, medical authorities. The Pre-school will pay staff the equivalent of statutory sick pay from the first day of missed work for the duration of their quarantine.

Where possible, the Pre-school will seek full reimbursement for this financial outlay. Where this is not possible, the member of staff will be asked to work additional hours, on their return, to mitigate the cost to the Pre-School of their pay during quarantine.

If, during a period of self-isolation or quarantine, a member of staff then falls ill themselves, they are required to notify the Pre-School without delay. They will then become eligible for statutory sick pay with immediate effect.

**Drafted: November 2018**

**Re-drafted: March 2020**

**Ratified: February 2019**

**Reviewed: May 2023**

### **Policy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic**

*Sherwood recognises that, in the exceptional circumstances caused by a pandemic, normal individual freedoms are likely to be compromised as measures, to safeguard the majority are put into place. This policy seeks to balance an individual's circumstances with official directives in order to provide a setting which is as safe as possible and which is sufficiently robust to manage crises as they arise, minimising disruption. The terms of this policy may be over-ridden, in response to official, governmental or legal directives. If this occurs, any changes will be published promptly.*

#### **Context**

Emergency measures were imposed during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. As time has progressed, these measures have been relaxed by Government in proportion to the current threat. A pre-school is an environment where maintaining a 'social distance' (typically between 1 and 2 metres) between individuals is not compatible with the delivery of effective child care. Unless directed otherwise, staff at Sherwood will endeavour to provide as normal an environment as possible for the children in their care. However, at times, it may be necessary to group children in 'bubbles', to limit access to certain resources and to change the structure and organisation of the day, in an attempt to reduce the transmission of any infection. Such measures and any others adopted will reflect official guidance.

Wherever possible, trustees will endeavour to consult with staff in advance of imposing any extraordinary measures.

#### **Vaccination of staff**

It is necessary to have a flexible staff force which can respond rapidly to cases of infection or mandatory self-isolation as a result of the pandemic. Sherwood recognises that double-vaccination, supplemented by appropriate booster jab(s) provides the best available protection from catching Covid-19, falling seriously ill with it, and transmitting it to others. All members of staff are therefore expected to be double-vaccinated or to obtain an official medical exemption from double-vaccination by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022 or within five months of being appointed, if appointed after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Staff are also expected to take up all offers of appropriate booster jabs at the officially determined interval, following the completion of double vaccination.

The staffing profile, at all times, needs to ensure that there is never a significant number of staff who are not double-vaccinated working together. In this way, any requirement to self-isolate should not unduly affect staffing levels.

Staff who are not double-vaccinated and who are not medically exempt may, therefore, be subject to restrictions on when they can work in order to prevent, at any one time, the staffing in the setting being compromised.

Data collected, as a result of managing the response to Covid-19, is covered by data protection legislation.

### **Routine testing for infection**

In common with other educational settings where mixing in close proximity with one another is inevitable, staff will be expected to take regular lateral flow tests (or an officially recognised equivalent) to prove that they are not infected with Covid-19, including asymptotically. The frequency with which tests are to be taken will be at the manager's discretion but could be as frequently as prior to each shift. Evidence of a negative result may need to be shown to the manager, deputy or assistant manager on arrival or on demand.

Staff are reminded that cold-like symptoms may, in fact, indicate infection with Covid-19. All staff who are required to self-test whenever they experience cold-like symptoms or other recognised symptoms of Covid-19. This is an essential precaution to reduce possible transmission.

If a member of staff has a medical condition making routine testing impossible, a letter from a GP or other medical person is required. Should this medical condition cease to apply, the member of staff must inform the manager and follow the same procedures as other colleagues?

If a member of staff refuses to take a test, the manager will discuss this with them to ascertain their reason and, if appropriate, reach a compromise, provided this does not constitute a potential threat to the health of others. If their refusal to take a test is deemed unreasonable, the manager will take appropriate disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.

### **Notification**

All staff are encouraged to subscribe to the NHS Covid-19 app which enables the Track and Trace system to function efficiently. Where this app is not active, it may be that staff are notified of the need to self-isolate and take a Covid test by other channels, including notification by the pre-school's manager.

In order to protect others, including the children in our care and their families, all members of staff are obliged to tell the manager, without delay, if they have been notified by the NHS to self-isolate or if a member of their family or any other close contact has tested positive or has symptoms and is awaiting a test result.

The manager, deputy and assistant managers are responsible for promptly notifying, on a 'need to know' basis, the appropriate Local Authority officers, parents and carers, and other linked institutions when significant events relating to Covid-19 occur.

## **Self-isolation**

The rules governing when one should self-isolate may vary over time in response to the national picture, the prevalence of variants and government and local authority guidance.

Sherwood will insist that staff self-isolate for the appropriate length of time, depending on their vaccination status. Self-isolation is usually mandatory when one has been in close contact for more than 15 minutes with an infected person during the two days prior to the onset of symptoms or confirmation by test of infection, whichever is the earlier. Staff who are double-vaccinated need not self-isolate once they have received a negative result from a PCR test. Staff who are not double-vaccinated (including those who are officially medically exempt) are expected to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of their exposure to the infected person.

Staff will be expected to provide proof of their test results when asked to do so. This information will remain confidential to the individual member of staff and the manager, deputy and assistant managers.

In some circumstances, for example if a new variant emerges and there is insufficient information about its transmission or potency, alternative self-isolation rules may have to be imposed at short notice.

The manager has the right to ask a member of staff to leave the pre-school or not to come in, as a temporary precautionary measure should circumstances require it. Reimbursement for any hours lost, as a result of this action by the manager, will be payable if this instruction proves not to have been necessary.

## **Compensation for lost hours**

Staff who are infected with Covid-19 will be entitled to the same benefits as anyone with any other sickness, requiring them to be off work (see Staff Sickness and Quarantining Policy).

Staff who are double-vaccinated or who are medically exempt who have been obliged to self-isolate as a result of being in close contact with a member of staff or child at

Sherwood will be entitled to statutory sick pay (SSR) from day one of the quarantine period. They will be expected, however, to obtain a test result at the earliest opportunity and, if the result is negative, return to work to work immediately.

Staff who are not double-vaccinated and are not medically exempt will not, from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, be entitled to any financial compensation as a result of having to self-isolate.

Staff who are prevented from working, despite being healthy and unaffected by the requirement to self-isolate (for example, when too many colleagues are unable to work and the hours Sherwood is open to parents are reduced) will be eligible for compensation, at the manager's discretion after consultation with trustees.

Opportunities to make up lost hours, on returning to work, will be at the manager's discretion.

Under certain circumstances, and if meeting certain criteria, employees who lose income as a result of having to self-isolate whilst being unable to work from home, may be eligible for a single payment of £500 from the Local Authority, accessed via the Local Authority's website.

## **Compliance**

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a huge amount of irresponsible misinformation, conspiracy theories and malicious lies. Much of this is spread on social media, posing as coming from reputable sources. It can be difficult to untangle truth from falsehood. Members of staff who come across information which appears to be at odds with this policy are encouraged to discuss their concerns with a senior member of staff or, where appropriate, a trustee in order to help them distinguish between what is fact or coming from a responsible source, and what is not.

Members of staff who feel unable to comply with measures described in this policy are expected to discuss their position with the manager at the earliest opportunity. Where an inability to comply is deemed reasonable, that member of staff will be supported as far as this is compatible with others' health and well-being. They may be given the opportunity to make up for any lost hours, where this is possible, at the manager's discretion.

Where non-compliance is not deemed reasonable, disciplinary action will be taken which may result in dismissal.

Provision for one member of staff should not be seen as setting any precedent for possible future provision for others.

*Drafted 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021*

