

4.1.5 Absence reporting procedure

1. If an employee is unwell or not able to attend work, then the employee has a responsibility to contact the company to inform of their absence.
2. In all cases, with the sole exception of exceptional reasons such as incapacitation or unconsciousness, the employee **must** contact the company on the phone numbers below.
 - Text/WhatsApp/email messages are **not** accepted.
 - The employee should make the phone call, not family or friends (again unless exceptional reasons)
 - The reason for this is that the Company needs to record certain information about the absence, which must be received directly from the employee to eliminate the risk that the third party gives inaccurate information.
3. **Contact must be made before the shift is due to start.** This can be a phone call on the numbers below. (Please leave a message if no reply, together with a number to be called back to take additional information required).
4. Employee must be able to explain what is wrong, when they expect to return to work and to confirm if any health service support has been sought – GP, Hospital, etc. Please ensure all these details are included in any message that is left if there is no reply when calling.
5. All this information will be recorded and logged.

Production staff. Packers, Drivers, Orderboard, Warehouse staff, Packaging staff, Line Leaders and Assistants.	Orderboard Office	01622 845153
Quality Control and QC Drivers	QC Out	01622 805145
Office staff HR, Commercial, Technical, Maintenance, Accounts	Direct Line Manager or other manager in their absence.	
Farm staff and pickers	Office	01622 805142 01622 845184

6. If the employee has vomiting and/or diarrhoea or discharge from their mouth, nose or ears, their managers must legally exclude staff with these symptoms from working with or around open food for at least 48 hours from when symptoms stop naturally. Taking anti-diarrhoeal medication may alleviate symptoms but not the causes – therefore you will still be high risk in a food production area. If you have taken anti- diarrhoeal medicine and symptoms stop then you must wait 48 hours since last taking the medicine before returning to work. Employees have a legal responsibility to report these illnesses correctly.
7. If the employee has a reportable food poisoning that has been confirmed by a Medical Professional, the employee must not return to work until they have been cleared by a Health professional. This may require testing for the illness or infection and a negative result.
8. Contact with the company must be daily when absent from work unless you have given an expected date of return. If absence is extended past this contact, then each day where the Absence Reporting Procedure is not followed will be treated as being Absent Without Leave i.e. AWOL and can lead to the start of a disciplinary process.
9. If an employee feels unwell whilst they are working, they should report this to a supervisor immediate
10. Failure to notify absence in accordance with this **Absence Reporting Procedure**, will likely result in a disciplinary procedure being started. Continued or multiple failures to contact the company in the specified timescales could result in further disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

11. In all cases of absence, line managers have the right to ensure that food safety or personal safety of staff is not compromised and that the person returning to work will themselves be safe and not a risk to others or the product being handled. The company may request/require doctor's certificates. It may also request additional medical reports or seek advice from other medical, mental health, health and safety or occupational health consultants where required. The Company, at its own cost, may also ask the employee to attend an examination by a medical professional, such as a doctor, contracted by the Company to perform such a service,
12. If an employee refuses to see such a medical professional, when so reasonably requested by the Company, then the Company will make decisions regarding the employee's future, their sick pay, or their potential dismissal **based solely on the information the company currently has.**

Any employee jeopardising food safety or other personnel or company reputation, by failing to disclose their condition or reason for absence may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

13. When returning to work

Production and QC staff.	When returning, the Orderboard system will notify the Orderboard supervisor prior to the start of works orders. A return to work should be completed to ensure that the person is suitable to return to work before they are assigned duties.
Office staff	A return to work should be conducted to ensure that the person is suitable to return.

14. Persistent absence will be investigated under the Company's Attendance Management process, and this can result in warnings which can escalate to dismissal.
15. Staff are reminded that the company are here to help and support when we can. Employees should speak up early if experiencing problems or issues that might need help and support. Before problems result in absences, there may be other ways that the company can help.
16. Staff that are unfortunately on long term absence will need to ensure that they keep the company and their line manager updated. The company requires regular updates including condition or health of the employee, when they have medical appointments and assessments, and if the employee has been advised of changes to work practices that might help them return to work. The Company may also take the opportunity to contact the employee directly to check on their well-being.

Statutory Sick pay

Statutory sick pay is a legal requirement for staff that are ill or have sickness from the first day of employment but ONLY if the employee has made best attempts to follow notification procedures.

Failure to notify the Company on the day of ANY absence will result in non-payment of SSP, **and separate to this**, failure to advise within the timeline specified in this procedure can result in the start of a disciplinary process.

An SC2 form available (for self-certification of sickness) can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ask-your-employer-for-statutory-sick-pay#when-to-use-the-sc2-form> and must be sent to the HR team no later than the 4th consecutive workday of absence if sickness lasts this long.

If an employee fails to contact the company on the first day of absence, then this is considered AWOL and SSP will not be paid for the days where the employee is considered AWOL.

Examples of SSP payments		
Scenario	Eligible for SSP	Follows procedure?
Phones on the day, before shift starts	✓	✓
Any contact (except as above) on the day of sickness/absence, notifying employer of absence	✓	✗
No contact at all on the day of sickness (AWOL)*	✗	✗
No previous contact on days absent but later provides a fit note from doctor	✗	✗
Does not keep in contact at pre-agreed times during long term absence	✓	✗
Does not complete SC2 form by the end of the 4 th day of absence	✓	✗

* With the exception of exceptional circumstances that will be assessed on a case-by-case basis

Where an employee does not follow procedure as per the table above, disciplinary action for misconduct will be considered based on misconduct (note again this is totally separate from the eligibility for SSP).