

## Absence Policy

All employees of Repair & Share Foyle are required to follow this policy and report any concerns to management. The organisation strictly prohibits retaliation against employees who report such matters in good faith.

You will be made aware of this policy as part of your induction process and ongoing training.

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with Northern Ireland employment law and the evolving needs of employees.

### **Purpose:**

At Repair & Share Foyle, we understand that well-being, family responsibilities, and personal circumstances can sometimes impact your ability to work. This policy reflects our commitment to providing guidance, support, and flexibility during periods of absence, ensuring a balanced and supportive work environment for all employees.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to employees of all Repair & Share Foyle.

Reference	Version	Date released	Approved by
RSF-001	1		Caroline McGuinness-Brooks
This policy is communicated and published on the company website for all interested parties.			
This policy is subject to periodic review and change to ensure it remains valid. The policy may be reviewed when prompted by context, such as developments in legislation, industry practice, or the organisation.			
The live version of this policy can be found in the employee handbook and is the only version that is controlled.			

## Reporting Sickness Absence

If you are unable to come into work due to sickness, you should inform your line manager as soon as possible but no later than your standard agreed start time. This is unless another time is specified by your line manager and should be by either email or message. Alternatively, a phone call if requested by your line manager. Your manager may contact you during the day to discuss your absence with you and discuss any support that you feel you need. Notification should be made personally or if you are unable to do so, then by a relative, neighbour or friend.

It is important that you contact your manager on every day of your absence. This is unless you have previously informed your manager that you will be off sick for a particular period and only if explicitly agreed by them. This will enable your manager to plan cover for your absence and to discuss likely time frames around your absence.

We also encourage you to discuss with your manager any concerns that you have that may have led to your absence. This will enable Repair & Share Foyle to offer any appropriate guidance and best support you.

Whilst you are not legally obliged to disclose the reason for absence, Repair & Share Foyle does encourage you to notify your manager, where possible, when reporting the absence. This will enable the organisation to offer support on recurring concerns to help prevent, where possible, you from becoming unwell in the future.

## Sickness Absence as a conduct issue

Where there is a concern around your sickness absence levels, this will be addressed in any return-to-work meetings where supportive options can be discussed. Where your sickness absence is deemed malingering and/or unsubstantiated, it may be treated as a disciplinary matter and dealt with under the Disciplinary Guidelines. However, the organisation at all costs would rather enter into dialogue on the support that will help you back to full health.

## Sickness Absence & Capability Issues Related to Ill Health

We are committed to ensuring a fair and supportive approach when dealing with sickness absence and capability concerns related to ill health.

If your long-term absence or persistent short-term absences raise concerns about your ability to perform their role, the Programme Lead will arrange a meeting at an agreed time to discuss potential solutions. This meeting will take into consideration:

- **Reasonable Adjustments:** As required under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland), reasonable adjustments may be considered if your health condition qualifies as a disability. This could include modifications to duties, flexible working arrangements, or phased returns to work.
- **Medical Evidence:** The organisation may request medical reports (with your consent) from a GP or occupational health specialist to better understand their condition and its impact on their work.
- **Support & Rehabilitation:** As a C.I.C., we have a social responsibility to support you in maintaining employment where possible. This may involve additional workplace support or

redeployment to a more suitable role if necessary. This is depending on funding to facilitate this option.

- **Capability Procedure:** If ill health prevents you from performing your role effectively despite reasonable adjustments, the organisation may enter into a formal capability process, which could ultimately lead to a change in role, a period of unpaid leave, or, as a last resort, termination on capability grounds.
- **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) & Additional Benefits:** You will be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in line with legal requirements.
- **To qualify for statutory sickness pay** you would have been ill for at least four consecutive days (including non-working days).
- Followed the sickness absence reporting procedure.
- **Any absence to be certified** by a 'self-certification form' provided to the Programme Lead. You can find a self cert form in the employee handbook. Any absence of more than 7 consecutive calendar days, must also be certified by a 'Fit Note/ Sick Cert' from a GP and sent to the Programme Lead. It is important that documentation is submitted in a timely manner for payroll processes.
- **Phased return to work:** During recovery, you may be able to perform limited duties to ease your return to work. Repair & Share Foyle will consider medical advice and, where appropriate, support a phased return with reduced hours, flexible working, or adjusted duties. These arrangements are temporary and will typically not exceed three months.

### People Manager Responsibilities

- **Initial Notification:** Ensure timely receipt of absence notifications and follow up with employees as necessary.
- **Maintain Contact:** Maintain daily contact with the absent employee unless otherwise agreed.
- **Support Discussions:** Discuss any concerns and support needed with the employee.
- **Documentation Management:** Ensure that all required documentation is submitted timely and accurately.
- **Return-to-Work Meetings:** Conduct return-to-work meetings where required to discuss additional support and work adjustments working with the People Team.
- **Phased Return Plans:** Facilitate phased return-to-work plans as appropriate.
- **Disability Adjustments:** Implement reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities.
- **Address Conduct Issues:** Address any concerns around sickness absence levels and manage disciplinary matters if necessary.

We aim to handle all sickness absence issues with compassion, fairness, and transparency, ensuring compliance with employment legislation while balancing the needs of the organisation and its social mission as a C.I.C.

### Other General Considerations

The processes set out within this procedure require transparency by all parties concerned.

If you are off sick you should not undertake any activities likely to be detrimental to your recovery and should cooperate with the appropriate medical professionals to treat your health and wellbeing as a priority.

The organisation will maintain regular contact with you during extended sickness absence.

You may be required to participate in a return-to-work meeting after any period of sickness absence.



The purpose of the meeting is to establish if there are any additional supports that the organisation can offer in the transition back to work or how you work, to catch up with regards to anything at work that you may have missed, and to discuss any concerns.

## **Disability and reasonable adjustments**

Repair & Share Foyle are committed to making reasonable adjustments to duties or working arrangements where you would otherwise suffer a disadvantage arising from any disability, whether these manifests as absence from work.

It is important that any disability or health condition that may impact your ability to do your role be disclosed to your line manager, so that we can make sure that we provide you with the correct support to help you undertake your role.

Any such discussions will be in the strictest confidence although when an adjustment is agreed, it may be necessary to inform other employees of the reason for this. The extent to which details of any disability will be discussed with other employees will be agreed as part of the process of making the adjustment itself.

The purpose of any adjustment will be to ensure that you can work effectively in an appropriate role and on appropriate terms and conditions. Repair & Share Foyle is not obliged to maintain your level of pay if your working hours are reduced or you are transferred to a less senior role because of any adjustment. Nor will they agree to an adjustment which will not result in a commercially practicable working arrangement. However, we will discuss and communicate this to you.

## **Transitioning**

Transitioning is a term used to describe the process and steps an individual takes to live and present as their true gender identity and is a very personal experience. This can involve just social changes but may also involve medical procedure or intervention and legal changes.

If you decide to undergo medical procedures or interventions related to your gender identity, then we'll support you through this. We'll give you a reasonable amount of paid time off work for appointments to do with the transition process, please talk to the Programme Lead to agree the time you need. We'll treat this separately to time off for sickness absence.

We'll also support you when you return to work after surgery, which could include a phased return to work.

## **Family-Related Leave**

### **Parental Leave**

If you have at least one year's service you may take up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave per child for parental leave (up to their 18th birthday) for childcare responsibilities, in accordance with statutory entitlements.

A week's leave is equal to the length of time the employee is normally required to work, eg a weeks leave is:



- five days for an employee working Monday to Friday
- two days for an employee working Tuesday and Wednesday only

The parent doesn't have to be living with the child to qualify. The right applies to each child. Therefore, if an employee has twins they are entitled to 36 weeks of parental leave. Parental leave cannot be transferred between parents. This would be classed as shared parental leave.

You are required to give at least 21 days' notice to Repair & Share Foyle before a period of parental leave begins, of both the start and end dates of the leave period they intend to take.

You do not have to give notice in writing unless Repair Share requests it. This notice is valid if orally given. However, there must be evidence of a formal application for leave. It would be sensible to consider confirming this in writing i.e. receipt of the employee's notice.

If you would like to take parental leave immediately after the birth of your child, you must give 21 days' notice to Repair Share before the beginning of the expected week of childbirth.

If you want to take parental leave immediately after the placement for the adoption of your child, you must give you 21 days' notice of the expected week of placement. In rare cases where this is not possible, an adoptive parent should give you notice as soon as is reasonably practicable.

As long as you give the right notice, your parental leave will start on the day on which the child is:

- born - regardless of whether the child is born early or late
- placed for adoption

You should note that taking parental leave following childbirth applies only to fathers/partners as the mother will be on maternity leave.

### **Terms and conditions during parental leave**

Some terms and conditions of employment continue to apply during parental leave. You must continue to abide by the terms and conditions of employment relating to:

- Notice periods
- Any compensation if the employee is made redundant
- The business' disciplinary or grievance procedures
- Disclosure of confidential information
- Acceptance of gifts, or other benefits
- Working for another employer

### **Maternity, Paternity & Adoption Leave**

You are entitled to maternity, paternity, and adoption leave in line with statutory provisions. Maternity leave is up to 52 weeks, with Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) provided if eligibility criteria are met. Paternity leave is up to two weeks. Adoption leave follows similar entitlements to maternity leave.

You are required to notify Repair Share 21 days before your maternity, adoption, paternity, or shared parental leave ends if they want to take parental leave immediately after the end of their maternity or adoption leave.



## **Bereavement Leave**

We understand that this is a difficult time. You are entitled to up to two weeks' leave following the loss of a child under 18 or a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, in line with Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay regulations. Additional bereavement leave may be granted at the Programme Leads discretion.

## **Compassionate Leave**

You may be granted paid or unpaid leave for urgent family matters, such as a seriously ill relative. We want to ensure you have the support you need, we will consider your situation on a case by case basis.

## **Fertility Treatment Leave**

If you are undergoing fertility treatment you may request reasonable unpaid leave for medical appointments and recovery. Paid leave may be granted at the Repair & Share Foyles discretion.

## **Emergency Dependants' Leave**

Repair Share will support you in taking a reasonable amount of unpaid leave to deal with sudden family emergencies.

## **Well-being & Mental Health Leave**

### **Mental Health Days**

Repair Share wants to ensure that you have our full support in times of difficulty. If you are experiencing mental health challenges may request one or more days off as part of our commitment to well-being. These absences will be handled with sensitivity and may be recorded as sickness absence where applicable.

### **Personal Leave**

If you are facing significant personal challenges may request short-term unpaid leave, subject to approval of the Programme Lead.

## **Civic Leave**

## **Jury Duty & Court Attendance**



If you are required for jury service or court attendance you are required to inform the Programme Lead. Leave will be granted, and statutory payments will apply.

### **Public Duties Leave**

If you are undertaking civic responsibilities (e.g., serving as a local councillor or school governor) may request reasonable unpaid leave for related duties.

### **Emergency & Special Circumstances Leave**

#### **Bad Weather & Travel Disruption Leave**

If you are unable to attend work due to extreme weather or transport disruptions should notify The Programme Lead. Flexible working or remote work can be facilitated during this time.

#### **Domestic Violence Leave**

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you may request confidential unpaid leave to access support services. Paid leave may be granted at the Repair Shares discretion.

#### **Religious & Cultural Leave**

Repair & Share Foyle embraces diversity and encourages you to bring your authentic self to work. You are able to request time off for religious or cultural observances. Leave may be unpaid or taken from your annual leave entitlement.