**AWOL Policy**

**Introduction**

This policy on unauthorised absence applies to all employees. It applies if an employee fails to comply with the organisation's sickness absence reporting procedure (or provides the necessary evidence within the required period), fails to attend work or return from holiday, or is absent for any other reason without permission.

If an employee is absent from work without good cause and fails properly and effectively to notify the organisation of their absence, this may be treated as a serious disciplinary offence, potentially constituting gross misconduct.

**Action on the first day of absence**

On the first day of the employee's absence, their line manager will attempt to contact them by telephone; if the employee does not answer, the manager will attempt to leave a voicemail asking them to return the call. The manager can also try other methods to contact the employee, including text messages.

If the manager cannot contact the employee, they may attempt to contact the employee's next of kin or listed emergency contact.

**Action on the second day of absence**

On the second day of absence, if nothing has been heard from the employee and the manager has again been unable to contact them and has not received a satisfactory explanation from the employee's next of kin or emergency contact, the manager will write to the employee detailing their absence and the attempts to make contact.

The letter will say that no satisfactory explanation for the absence has been received and will require that the employee make contact with the manager as soon as possible, but by three days after the date of the letter. The letter will warn the employee that the organisation may take serious disciplinary action if they fail to make contact by the deadline.

**Further action after the second day of absence**

If, following the deadline, the employee still needs to contact their manager; the manager will send the employee a letter inviting them to attend a disciplinary hearing to explain their absence. The letter should warn the employee that an adequate explanation could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

**Disciplinary action**

If the manager makes contact with the employee and/or the employee returns to work, the manager should conduct an immediate investigation into the reasons for their absence and their lack of contact with the organisation.

The manager can conduct a return-to-work interview if the employee can explain their absence and lack of contact. If the employee cannot provide an adequate reason for their absence and lack of communication, the organisation may treat the absence and the failure to follow the reporting procedure as disciplinary matters.

If the employee claims to have been sick (to the extent that this also precluded contacting the organisation), the manager can ask for reasonable evidence. If the employee cannot provide sufficient evidence, the organisation may consider whether or not the claimed sickness absence was genuine.

If the manager considers the employee's failure to attend work potential gross misconduct, the organisation will conduct any disciplinary hearing following its disciplinary procedure.

**Unauthorised annual leave**

If an employee has been refused a request for annual leave but declares that they intend to take time off anyway, the employee's manager should write to the employee instructing them to attend work.

The letter should confirm that the leave request (for the specific dates) was legitimately declined;

the employee is expected to attend work as usual; failure to do so will be an unauthorised absence, be unpaid and may result in disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

The letter should invite the employee to reconsider their expressed intention to be absent. If, having sent this letter, the employee fails to attend work; the manager should treat the absence as unauthorised. If an employee has been refused a request for annual leave but fails to attend work (either by saying that they are sick or by making no contact), the organisation will investigate this as a potential unauthorised absence.