



Annual Leave & Absence Policy

Including Volunteering, Compassionate and Sickness Leave

Policy Statement

The annual leave year runs from April to March and full-time staff may take **30 days** holiday per annum in addition to statutory leave and Bank holidays. You may carry over **no more than 5 days** unused leave into the next annual leave year. Staff are also entitled **up to 5 days** for compassionate leave (carry over and compassionate leave are pro rata for part-time staff).

In line with Spirit's commitment to volunteering all staff may take to **3 days paid leave per annum** for volunteering.

There are legal requirements on sickness leave reporting that Spirit staff must fulfil. We operate a sickness leave allowance of up to 30 days per year on full pay, and up to 60 further days on half pay. You must report and evidence all sickness leave as set out in this policy.

Policy Guidelines

1. Annual Leave

All Spirit staff have an annual leave allowance of 30 days (pro rata for part-time staff). Our leave year runs from April 1 to March 31. If you do not use all your annual leave you can carry forward 5 days into the next leave year (again, pro rata for part-time staff).

You must get your line manager's approval for all annual leave by email. All staff should ensure that they do this:

- ✂ **At least 2 weeks before** you plan to take time off
- ✂ Before you book a holiday.

If you want to take more than 2 weeks leave in one block this needs to be signed off by SMT to ensure that we have cover for the period. Please speak to your line manager in the first instance.

As we are a small team it's important that you check who else has already booked time off over the same period, especially in the summer and around busy holidays like Christmas. We do try and ensure that people can take the leave they want, but we must balance this with ensuring we can cover business needs.

Spirit reserves the right to close the office for up to 3 non-Bank Holiday days over the Christmas period. You must ensure that you have enough annual leave to cover this time and mark those days as annual leave. Spirit will confirm which dates these are as soon as possible each year.

Annual leave is for you to have a rest and enjoy yourself, and we don't expect anyone to be working while they are away.

We do expect that you will:

- ✚ Clearly mark annual leave in your calendar as soon as it is signed off by your manager it;
- ✚ Set an external Outlook Out of Office message with a named contact before you leave the office.
- ✚ Talk to your team and line manager about any work that needs to be picked up while you are away.
- ✚ Come back on the date you said you would – returning late from leave is a disciplinary matter unless you have advised your line manager of illness or other unavoidable circumstance.

Spirit will pay staff for accrued annual leave not taken when your employment with us ends. We calculate leave owing proportionate to the end of contract date.

If you work part-time, we calculate your leave entitlement pro rata based upon your contracted hours.

2. Public Holidays

We recognise 9 UK public holidays as paid leave days (there are 8 in England but as a UK organisation Spirit observes the extra Scottish New Year Bank Holiday). For staff based outside Scotland, Spirit reserves the right to designate the day to be taken, within 1 week of the official date. Staff in Scotland may elect either to take leave on that day or on the official Scottish date. If, in exceptional circumstances, Spirit requires you to work on public holidays, we will pay you, or offer you time off in lieu, as agreed with your manager.

Bank Holiday entitlement is calculated on a pro rata basis for part-time staff.

3. Time off for Voluntary Activities

Spirit exists to support and promote volunteering and social action, and so we encourage our staff to get involved too. You may take up to 3 days paid leave per year to volunteer. This may involve serving as a School Governor or charity board member, training as a 'Dementia Friend', or hands on work for a charity or event. Please agree time you plan to take off for volunteering with your manager in advance. **Remember to mark the time out of the office in your calendar.** Unused volunteer days do not accrue into the next leave year. Volunteer days are pro-rata for part-time staff.

This time should be taken in half and whole days as far as possible.

When you take time off to volunteer, be prepared to report back to Spirit in team meetings, by email and / or by tweeting or writing a blog for our website.

4. Emergency and Compassionate Leave

You may ask for up to 5 days paid leave (pro rata for part-time staff) to cover family emergencies, such as an ill child or dependent, or family bereavement. This is discretionary and must be agreed with your line manager. For a parental bereavement please refer to that specific policy.

You need to tell your line manager, or a member of the Senior Management Team, before 10am on the first day and make reasonable efforts to ensure that:

- ✚ high priority tasks are taken care of by another team member
- ✚ meetings that colleagues can't cover are cancelled.

We want to support staff at difficult times and so, if you may need a longer period of compassionate leave, for example because of a very close family bereavement, please talk to the Chief Executive.

5. Sickness Absence and Leave on Health Grounds

You must report sickness absence to your manager by telephone if possible before 10am on the first day you are off. If you can't contact them, alert the Chief Executive or another team member. Try to say how long you think you will be away, whether there is any work that needs to be picked up by someone else, where relevant documents can be found and if there are meetings that need to be cancelled or re-arranged. Your line manager or another senior member of the team may call you to see how you are.

After each absence you will have a meeting with your line manager to discuss your return and whether we need to offer any further support. For absences over 7 days we will have a more formal back to work meeting with you to ensure that you are fit to return to work. In some circumstances we will ask you to provide a "Statement of Fitness for Work" note from your doctor.

5.1 Legal Requirements for reporting

There are legal requirements around sickness absence reporting as follows:

- ✚ Sickness absence of under 7 days must be self-certified on the appropriate form.

- ✈ Any absence over 7 days (including weekends) **must be supported by a signed “Statement of Fitness for Work” from your doctor.**

6. Spirit Sickness Leave Allowance

Once you have completed your probation, over the course of any 365-day period you are entitled to up to 30 days sickness leave on full pay. In addition, you are entitled to up to 60 days sickness leave on half pay. Any additional sickness absence will be paid at the statutory rate. During the 4-month probationary period you are entitled to up to 10 days sickness paid leave on full pay pro rata.

We keep a record of sick absence in the Confidential HR folder and we do not disclose this to anyone else.

If you have an on-going illness, disability or impairment that means you may need to take more sick leave please speak to your line manager or the Chief Executive.

Spirit takes its duty of care to employees very seriously and your line manager will complete a return to work interview after any sickness absence irrespective of length. This will ensure that you are fit for work and will explore whether you anticipate any further absence relating to your illness. This will also give you an opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have regarding your illness with your Line Manager and any request for adjustments, if applicable.

You may take a reasonable amount of time off for medical-related appointments. Please try to fix appointments for the start or end of the working day to fit in with our flexible working policy and cause minimum disruption to Spirit business. You should mark this in your calendar (privately if preferred). When you know about appointments in advance, you should clear them with your line manager.

If the time you take off for the appointment amounts to more than 3.5 hours you should take it as a half day of sickness leave. **Time working from home before or after an appointment counts as working time.**

7. Time off in Lieu (TOIL)

We occasionally require staff to work at weekends or outside normal working hours. As Spirit does not pay overtime, you are entitled to take a reasonable amount of time off in lieu (TOIL) to compensate for weekend working requirements or, for part-time staff, additional days worked outside their normal working pattern.

You should calculate TOIL on a real time basis, not time and a half or double time. You may claim for the hours you worked plus any travel time (including travel from home to the office and back if that applies), to the nearest day or half day.

You should take TOIL within 1 month of the time worked and you must clear it with your line manager in the same way as you book annual leave, recording it in Outlook and, ensuring that you state clearly which weekend commitment the TOIL relates to.

You must not anticipate TOIL and take time off before an event, or deliberately attend weekend events in order to accrue TOIL.

We may sometimes ask you to work extra hours during the normal working week (i.e. at times which fall beyond the Spirit flexible working window of 8am to 6.30 pm), for example to attend evening events or in very busy periods. Extra weekday hours are not eligible for TOIL. You should use Spirit's flexible working policy to adjust your working days to take account of this, for example, by starting work later or leaving earlier on other days.

8. Recording Leave

In addition to maintaining your diary, self-certification etc. you should record all your leave in the spreadsheet in the HR file in Egnyte.

9. Monitoring and Review of this policy

We will review this policy once every three years, or if an issue arises that requires us to amend it for example change to relevant legislation. We will train staff in the process and hold refresher training annually so all staff know what to do if an issue arises.