

SSP Compliance Checklist 2026

For UK Employers | Based on Employment Rights Act 2025 changes effective 6 April 2026

Key Facts at a Glance

SSP Rate	£123.25 per week OR 80% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower
Starts from	Day one of sickness absence (no waiting period)
Maximum duration	28 weeks
Earnings threshold	None

1. Payroll System Checks

Tick each item once confirmed with your payroll provider or software.

- SSP is configured to trigger from day one of absence (waiting days removed)
- The SSP rate is set to £123.25 per week for 2026/27
- Payroll calculates 80% of average weekly earnings for lower-paid staff and applies the lower of the two figures
- Average weekly earnings are calculated using the correct relevant period (last 8 weeks for weekly paid; last 2 months for monthly paid)
- Automated notifications or eligibility messages have been updated to reflect the new rules
- SSP payments are processed through payroll with correct tax and National Insurance deductions

2. Employee Eligibility

Use this section when a new absence is reported.

- Employee has started work (even if it is their first day)
- Employee is paid through PAYE
- Employee has notified you of their sickness within your stated deadline or within 7 days
- For lower-paid employees: checked whether 80% of average weekly earnings is lower than £123.25 and applied the correct figure
- If an employee is not eligible, tell them why in writing (this can be letter/email or using the SSP1 form available on gov.uk)

3. Policy and Documentation

Check your written policies and employee-facing documents are up to date.

- Sickness absence policy updated to remove any reference to three waiting days
 - Policy updated to reflect removal of Lower Earnings Limit
 - Employment contracts reviewed for any sick pay clauses that reference the old rules
 - Staff handbook updated
 - SSP notification procedure is clearly communicated to all employees (how and when to report sickness)
 - Return-to-work process documented and consistent
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4. Line Manager Briefing

Line managers are often the first to receive a sickness notification. Make sure they know the basics.

- Managers informed that SSP now applies from day one
 - Managers aware that more employees qualify, including part-time and lower-paid staff
 - Managers know the correct process for recording and reporting absence
 - Managers understand they should not make assumptions about SSP eligibility without checking
 - Managers have a clear point of contact for HR queries
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5. Record Keeping

Good records protect you in the event of a dispute or HMRC query.

- Absence dates and qualifying days recorded for each employee
 - SSP amounts paid recorded against each absence period
 - Linked periods of sickness identified and tracked (absences 8 weeks or less apart)
 - Employee fit notes (sick notes) received and stored where required
 - Records retained in line with your data retention policy
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6. New Starters

The day-one entitlement means new starters need particular attention.

- Process in place for handling SSP if a new employee is absent on or shortly after their start date
- New starter paperwork includes your sickness notification procedure
- Payroll has sufficient earnings data or a calculation method for employees without a full earnings history

Need support with SSP or wider HR compliance?

The team at Saltwater HR works with small and medium-sized businesses across the UK to make HR straightforward. Whether you need a policy review, ongoing support, or just someone to call when a tricky situation comes up, we are here to help.

Get in touch: saltwaterhr.co.uk