

# Managing Sickness

Sickness absences are a costly expense for employers both in lost employee hours and in statutory sick payments. As an employer it's understandable that you want to keep all your staff working, however sickness absences are unfortunately unavoidable as people get sick, especially at certain times of the year when things like colds and flu are rife.

As an employer you should have a clear and efficient process for managing sickness and absence amongst your workforce, this can help reduce the pressure on your business when staff require time off to get over illness.

Contact Croner's team of experts today, on 0844 561 8133 and quote xxxxx.

## Create an absence policy

The creation of a clear absence policy can help your business manage absenteeism, outlining what type of absences are authorised and those absences that are considered unauthorised.

### Some examples of an authorised absence could include:

- Holidays
- Maternity, paternity, and shared parental leave
- Long-term medical leave
- Jury duty

Occasionally there will be times when staff need time off that is unplanned. This could include a number of reasons such as:

- Sickness
- Childcare arrangement issues
- Bereavement
- Legal or court issues

Occasional absences should be occasional any more than that and there is a chase for chronic absenteeism. Which is problematic and can cause disruption to your business.

## Communicate your policy

It's all well and good creating an absence policy, however if it is inaccessible to staff then it negates the point of having a policy in the first place. In order to ensure that policy is known and followed this should be communicated to staff upon onboarding and referred to in contracts and documentation like employee handbooks.

## **Keep track of employee time-off**

In line with your policy, keeping an accurate log of employee time off, can not only help with ensuring employee schedules and workloads are manageable, but it can help identify patterns if absences are becoming an issue. There are several ways you can do this including software to help ensure that records are kept accurate and easily accessible for management.

## **Request fit notes for long term ill health**

If an employee is going to be off work due to ill health for an extended period of time (longer than 7 days) they must provide a fit note (sometimes referred to as a sick note). If the note states they may be fit for work then you should discuss adjustments to allow the employee to return, if these cannot be agreed on then they must be treated as 'not fit for work'.

## **Occupational health wellbeing promotion**

Under your employers' duty of care you have an obligation to the health and wellbeing of your employees. That means you should assess their working environment for potential risks and eradicate or at the very least control the hazards.

## **Keep in touch**

If an employee is off due to illness then you should try to stay in touch. A simple check in to make sure the employee is ok will suffice, but be careful, messaging or calling repeatedly is likely to cause stress, which is not conducive to a speedy recovery. Furthermore this can be considered harassment.

## **Discourage presenteeism**

Presenteeism is the opposite of absenteeism. When an employee shows up sick when they should probably be at home resting this is considered presenteeism. This should be discouraged as not only will they be unable to perform tasks to their usual standard, but run the risk of others getting sick as well. Instead encourage them to take the time to recover and offer flexibility if possible.

## **Return to work interviews**

Conducting a return to work interview is a good way to assess whether an employee might need reasonable adjustments upon their return to work. This can be the case if they've been off with a chronic condition or have been newly diagnosed.

## **Need advice on managing sickness?**

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