

Managing Sickness Absence

Managing sickness absence can be both time consuming and sensitive. Each case will present its own challenges and any mistake in managing the process may be expensive and result in an employment tribunal claim.



Although there can never be a one-size-fits-all process to managing sickness absence, you can make the process easier and less risky by following these

Five Practical Tips:

1. Have clear terms and conditions and implement a full sickness policy

Given that sickness absence is so common, it is important to set out what will happen in the event of an employee being off work sick. You should ensure that your terms and conditions cover whether or not your employee will be paid during any sickness absence, and if so, how much and for how long.



You will want your policy to set out everything relating to sickness absence from how and when an employee should report their absence to how you will manage that absence. Setting out a clear pathway through the process will allow all those involved to know exactly what is required of them and what will happen next.

2. Train your managers

A proactive and sensitive approach to sickness absence will usually give better results so proper training will manage sickness absence. You should ensure that your managers are aware of your sickness absence policy and what is expected of them. It is also a good idea to train your managers on some of the wider issues regarding sickness absence management such as its interplay with disability discrimination and an employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments. And remember, legislation and best practice can change over time so regular refresher courses are a must.



3. Record sickness absence accurately

If you are going to manage sickness absence effectively then you need to know how long an employee has been off for and why they are off. This information will allow you to make informed decisions about an employee and what you are going to do next. It may also highlight patterns in someone's absence,

for example do they often have sickness absence on Mondays? It may also allow you to see the bigger picture and identify an underlying problem or a disability. Remember, you will probably need to take a different approach to an employee who has a disability and consider making reasonable adjustments to help them out.



4. Don't try to do it alone – call in expert help

Most cases of sickness absence will be straightforward. However, there will be those that are more difficult and have wider issues. Employers aren't expected to know everything about medical conditions, what's best for an employee and how they can help them. But, they are expected to do all they reasonably can when managing an employee's sickness absence.



In most cases this will mean getting an opinion from the employee's GP, who will know the employee best. Sometimes, however, that will not be enough and you will need to consider getting an occupational health report

and or even a report from a consultant. In addition, you should think about getting proper HR and legal advice and support to help steer you through the minefield.

5. Prevention is better than cure!

Introducing and investing in measures to create a healthy workplace may help reduce your sickness absence. These can include allowing 'duvet days', having access to wellbeing advisers and counsellors and arranging discounted membership to a local gym.

For more information please visit www.kerseys.co.uk

Managing Sickness Absence

