

## MANAGING YOUR EMPLOYEES

# Guide 3.1: Attendance and Absence Monitoring

Of course, the best place for your employee is in your workplace. But they can't always be there. Even your best workers will sometimes get sick or need time off.

## Sick Leave

If one of your staff is too ill to work, they must tell you on the first day that they cannot work. It's a good idea to let all staff know how and when to tell you if they can't work. This will help get you as much notice as possible that you're going to be a person down. When they contact you, make a brief note of the date, time and what they said.

While you may want medical confirmation that someone is unwell, you can only ask them to provide a medical certificate from their doctor from their eighth day of absence. Most medical notes are issued by doctors, but they are equally valid if they come from a:

- Nurse
- Occupational therapist
- Pharmacist
- Physiotherapist

The medical note could be in digital or paper form.

When the employee returns to work, make time to speak to them in private about the reasons for their sickness absence. This helps to let them know that you are concerned about them. It will also act as a deterrent if staff are deciding too easily that they are not well enough to work. Make notes of this conversation and give them a copy. Emailing this over is fine, and gives both you and them a documented record of this communication.

It's really important that you record every time an employee is off sick. This will be very useful if the absences become frequent or long term.

Keep all documents relating to an employee's sickness absence in a safe and secure place. These are highly confidential.

## High Levels of Sickness Absence

Everyone gets sick occasionally. But what do you do if one of your staff is often off sick, or stays off sick for weeks?

### Frequent Short Term Sickness Absence

Arrange to speak to your employee in private. Be open with them that the meeting is to discuss their high levels of absence, because you are concerned about them. Bring your notes and any other sickness documents (e.g., sick notes) to the meeting and go through them with your employee. You might want to ask them:

- Is there any underlying reason for these absences?
- Do you have a long term health condition that is leading to these absences? (If they do, it might be classed as a disability, one of the 'Protected Characteristics'. In this case, seek HR advice)
- Is there anything you can do to avoid these absences?

Make sure you give them plenty of time to give their point of view. Offer any support you can in response to the answers they give. Seek their commitment to attend work more consistently. Make notes of the meeting and give them a copy.

If you find that you are frequently having to have this sort of meeting with a particular employee, you may need to tell them that if the situation does not improve you might have to consider letting them go. For more details see guide 3.7 'Managing your Employee – Letting Employees Go'.

### Long Term Sickness Absence

It may be that your employee needs an operation, or that they become seriously ill, for example with cancer. In these cases, they could be off work for weeks or even months. Whatever the reason, try to maintain contact with your employee. Agree a time each week when you will phone them to see how they are doing. Some long absences may have a specific time limit. For example, if someone needs an operation, their doctor will advise them roughly how long they should expect to be off work. For some absences it will be less clear how long they will last. For example, if your employee's mental health appears to be deteriorating. Ask yourself:

Does the absence have a time limit?

#### If Yes

- Maintain contact
- Check if they will need any support when they first return to work. For example, help with lifting heavy objects for a while.

## If No

- Maintain contact
- Seek further information about their condition. You could get their permission to write to their Doctor or arrange an Occupational Health report
- Seek further HR advice – you may need to consider letting them go.

Employees must continue to provide you with sick notes for the duration of their illness.

## Sick Pay

As an employer, you are obliged to pay your staff Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) when they have reported being off sick.

SSP is paid for up to 28 weeks in any 12 month period.

There is a free online tool which will allow you to calculate how much you must pay for any period of absence:

<https://www.gov.uk/calculate-statutory-sick-pay>

You **do not** have to pay staff SSP if:

- They have been off for less than 4 days
- They earn less than an amount specified by the Government.

If you prefer, you can choose to pay staff their normal salary when they are off sick so long as this is more than SSP. If you want to do this, it's wise to limit this 'Occupational Sick Pay' to 28 weeks, the same as for SSP.

For HR support, please contact Colden HR on [0121 284 0852](tel:01212840852) or email [enquiries@coldenhr.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@coldenhr.co.uk) and quote your NCASS membership number.