

Managing Attendance

Dealing with Short Term Absence

DO:

1. Ensure absences are recorded and monitored.
2. Conduct return to work interviews after absences in private and, where possible, on the day of return to work.
3. Deal with employees sensitively to ensure absence is genuine and to probe to see if there are any underlying causes. Remember that a large part of managing absence is about ensuring staff can raise issues that may be troubling them at an early stage with their managers so that they can be addressed before they escalate.
4. Make sure employees understand their own contractual duties to you, including what procedures you require for absences from work.
5. Deal with absences in a fair and consistent manner.

DON'T:

1. Assume that an absence isn't genuine – everyone is sick at some point in their life.
2. Assume high levels of absence means instigating the disciplinary process – always investigate fully.
3. Divulge information relating to sickness absence to a third party not involved in the process without the permission of the employee.
4. Forget that pregnancy-related absences should not be dealt with in the same way as other absences.
5. Forget – it's not just about managing the employee who is off sick, it's about managing workload and ensuring it continues to get done in their absence.

Managing Long Term Absence

DO:

1. Keep in touch with the employee unless they have requested otherwise.
2. Seek professional medical advice regarding the absence, causes, treatment and likely return to work but remember to gain permission from the employee before medical advice is sought.
3. Remember the employee may be covered under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) – be careful not to breach any rights or protections an employee may have.
4. Consider reasonable adjustments to work duties, arrangements, work environment or equipment to enable a disabled worker to successfully continue at work.
5. Remember to follow the correct (3 step) procedure if it is not possible to continue to employ an individual due to their health.

DON'T:

1. Make decisions based on insufficient information or medical advice.
2. Assume that a person who is absent will not return to work.
3. Assume that someone should return to work when YOU think they are ready – medical advice and the employee themselves are usually the best judges of a person's fitness to work.

4. Impose a return to work plan on an employee – it will be more successful if they are consulted and the plan is agreed.
5. Jump to conclusions about what an illness or disability means in terms of ability to carry out tasks.

Reporting Absences and Paying Sick Pay

DO:

1. Ensure absences are recorded and monitored.
2. Make sure employees understand their own contractual duties, including what procedures they are required to follow.
3. Deal with absences in a fair and consistent manner.
4. Store all absence records confidentially.
5. Remember that Sick Pay is payable for absences due to accident or injury as well as ill-health

DON'T

1. Forget that recovery times for the same condition can vary significantly from person to person.
2. Make assumptions about an employee's situation or their medical circumstances.
3. Keep records of absences together with details of sickness reasons.
4. Assume an employee has resigned if they do not follow the absence reporting procedure – they may live alone and have had an accident.
5. Forget, as an SME you can claim back Statutory Sick Pay from the Government. See the HM Revenue and Customs website for details.