



CLOVER HR EMPLOYER GUIDE

Absence Management

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Absence Management

EMPLOYEE ABSENCE CAN BE A HUGE COST FOR COMPANIES, WHILE MOST ABSENCES ARE GENUINE, SOME MAY NOT BE.

For employers to manage absence effectively they should have a good absence management policy in place. Employers must recognise that employees sometimes need support to help them to recover from illness.

01. WHY EMPLOYEES TAKE TIME OFF

Employees can need time off work for a number of reasons, these include:

- Short-term or long-term illness
- Dealing with an emergency
- Annual leave
- Maternity/Paternity/Parental Leave
- Unauthorised absence or lateness
- Time off for public service



02. THE IMPACT OF HAVING AN ABSENCE ISSUE IN THE WORKPLACE

As well as the high costs that occur with high absence levels, there are other issues that can occur when dealing with absences. These include:

- **Lower Productivity** - as projects and targets can be delayed by employees not being at work.
- **Poor Quality** – with employees covering absent employees' jobs, more mistakes can happen, leaving the quality of the work questionable.
- **Lowering of employee morale** – due to increased workloads for the employees who are at work.



03. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

A good absence management policy needs to support the needs of the business, while supporting employee's health and welfare too. An effective absence management policy supports employees with health issues, to either remain in work or to return to work as soon as they can. An absence Management policy needs to:

- Have clear guidelines set out, on what absence is
- Detail how any absence should be reported and to whom
- State how it will be dealt with and any action that may be taken against an employee.
- Should also state what is classed as unauthorised absence and how that will be dealt with too.
- Provide details of any company sick pay and how this will be paid to an employee.
- Inform employees of when they will need to self-cert and when they will need a fit note from their GP.
- Detail trigger points for disciplinary action under the policy.
- Include information about return to work interviews.
- Include information on when an employee may be required to see an occupational health professional.
- Differentiate between short-term and long-term absence.



04. REASONS FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

Studies show that the main reasons for sickness absence are:

- Colds, flu, stomach upsets, headaches/dizziness or feeling unwell.
- Injuries such as back pain or neck pain.
- Stress, including work related stress.
- Caring for dependants.
- Mental Health issues.

05. THE RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW

The RTW interview can be a useful aid in engaging with an employee after a period of absence – either a long-term absence or short term. Return-to-work interviews help to reduce unacceptable short-term absence. They send a clear message that absence is actively managed at the workplace and by asking employees to explain their absence face-to-face, they can also deter dishonesty.

A good return to work interview should:

- Welcome employees back and check they are well enough to work.
- Update employees about any changes that have taken place during their absence.
- Identify any workplace adjustments that may be needed.
- Develop, or discuss, the details of an agreed Return to Work Plan.
- Confirm that their absence record is correct.



06. LEGAL GUIDELINES ON ABSENCE

Employers must ensure they do not breach the Data Protection Act 2018 when obtaining, storing or using information about their employee's absence records. Any details regarding an employee's health, is categorised as sensitive personal information under the Data Protection Act.

Employers have a legal responsibility to make 'reasonable' adjustments to support any employees who have a disability or condition outlined in the Equality Act 2010, under the disability discrimination section.

Mental health can also be covered under this legislation. Accessing employees' medical records from their GP requires employers to follow the Access to Medical Records Act 1998.



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