



Making Your People Resources Work For You

Managing Employee Absence

People get sick: that's a fact of life. However, not all absent staff are sick or absences genuine.

With the current sunshine and glorious days, some staff may be tempted to 'pull a sickie' and head for the beach. A recent survey on absence management reported that more than 27,000 people nationwide took Monday off sick for cold, cough and flu symptoms - a figure 8.2% higher than would be expected for this time of year (FirstCare).

Short-term unauthorised or 'iffy' employee absence can be a serious issue for small businesses. Employee absences can be costly and disruptive.

- The national average of sick absence is 8.1 days per employee
- The typical cost to an employer is £666 per employee every year
- Sick absence represents 3.5% of working time
- How many days absence do your staff take and how much is absence costing you?

This figure does not take into account the disruption and lost work caused by other employees having to cover for absent colleagues. Absenteeism has a major impact on a business's bottom line, productivity and profitability.

How can you reduce unauthorised absence and its impact?

There are some straightforward steps employers can take which will dramatically reduce 'sickies' and unauthorised absence. These are:

- Monitor it to identify patterns and also levels of individual absence against the average for the workforce
- Ensure contracts of employment include references to sick absence management
- Have a sick absence management policy and procedure, including a procedure to identify frequent short-term sick absence with trigger points and escalating seriousness of action: communicate clearly to staff
- Always conduct short return-to-work interviews with absentees
- Recognise genuine sickness and handle sensitively, particularly long-term illness
- Recognise when the problem is really one of lack of capability and/or disability.

If you are unsure or would like advice on how to manage damaging or costly sick absence or problems with staff, then seek advice.

Jim Gilhooley of Morlan Gil Human Resources Ltd has supported a number of clients to manage tricky short and long term absence issues. Companies as varied as



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