

Quick wins for absence management

Save money and boost morale

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Purpose of this session

Strategies and tips on how to:

- manage sickness absence in your school, minimising risk
- get the most out of your occupational health referrals

So why is managing absence so important?

Here are a few key reasons:

- impact on teaching and learning
- financial costs
- impact on school - colleagues and students
- duty of care to employees



Remember the employment contract is two way - employees are contractually obliged to attend work regularly and perform.

How to manage absence?

Make sure you:

- follow your policy and regularly review it - is it *Fit for Purpose*?
- monitor absence rates
- carry out return to work interviews
- use your triggers points to take action - automatic reminders
- make effective use of occupational health
- keep in contact with employees during absences
- keep a paper trail
- impact of authorised absences

Absence Management Policy

Does it clearly detail how and when staff will be managed? - clearly defined trigger points and reporting process

Clear stages for management:

- Stage 1 - first review meeting (possible warning)
- Stage 2 - second review meeting (final written warning)
- Stage 3 - final review (possible dismissal)

How to measure absence?

Individual:

- what are the triggers?
- how will you know that they've been met?
- who will take action if they are?
- be consistent and fair

School wide:

- areas for concern
- areas of good practice
- what information goes to governors?

TIP:

Use working days lost per employee as your measure - it shows greater impact

= no. days sick ÷ average number of employees

Short term sickness absence

- identify if there is a pattern which needs to be dealt with - have they hit triggers?
- identify whether there is an underlying health condition (is it a disability?)
- hold series of meetings (with warnings) and timescale for review
- remind the employee of their contractual obligations and consequences of continuing poor attendance
- don't leave it too long before starting the process - as soon as trigger level hit



Long term sickness absence

- do not allow the situation to drift
- hold review meetings - keep in contact
- determine action based on reason for absence
- consultation in light of medical evidence is important

- think about:
 - is the employee capable of performing their full duties safely (that is your decision based on information)?
 - reasonable adjustments / alternative employment

Occupational Health

- What is the purpose of occupational health and how can they help?
- A good OH report begins with a good referral
- What can you expect?
- Provide independent, impartial advice



Occupational Health

- What if the employee:
 - refuses to attend occupational health?
 - Does not consent for the release of the OH report
- Management decision to dismiss, not OH



Referrer good practice

The principle requirement is one of ‘no surprises’

- Discuss the intention of requesting an OH report with the employee
- Provide the employee with information as what to expect from an OH consultation
- Obtain informed consent (may be verbal or written)
- Consent can be withdrawn anytime

What to include in the referral

- Job requirements - health, safety or welfare risks
- Main concerns & reason for referral

‘paint a picture of the individual at work’

- Workplace support - helps demonstrate you have acted reasonably & follow-up on recommendations (can you action them?)
- Willingness to provide reasonable adjustments or failed adjustments

Questions to be answered by OH

- Fit for work at present and why
- Estimate a likely return to work
- Impact on performance / attendance
- Employer actions to facilitate early RTW & prevent further absence
- Opinion regarding the relevance of Equality Act 2010
- Attend meetings
- Receiving appropriate care & treatment

Dismissal

- Some other substantial reason (SOSR) or capability?

A tribunal will consider whether:

- the employee knew what was required of them?
- the employer took steps to improve the attendance?
- the employee warned of the consequences of the failure to improve?
- the employee was given an opportunity to improve with a reasonable timescale?

was it reasonable to dismiss - band of reasonable responses?

Strategic Tips

Wellbeing Policy - all staff get one wellbeing day per term

Additional PPA time for Teachers on M range

Additional cover supervisors

EAP Scheme

Absence golden rules

- There is no entitlement to be paid to the end of sick pay
- Keep the process moving - you can hold sickness review meetings before they have returned to work and to manage the absence if the employee raises a grievance
- Make balanced judgements - following the phased return recommended by OH or GP is not a legal requirement
- You don't have to wait until an employee has exhausted sick pay before dismissing
- Can use triggers and even dismiss if the employee is off with a disability - with caution

Coming up

How to deliver a return to work meeting well

Tuesday 5 May

Gill Martindale/Jess Collinson-Shield

Investigations - why, when and how?

Tuesday 12 May

Daniella Glynn / Alex Berkshire

The role of the investigator in practice - how to get the best out of an interview, make your investigation report compelling and present to a hearing

Tuesday 19 May

Paul Miner /Katherine Utton

What to expect if you are asked to be on a decision making panel in a hearing (include appeals)

Tuesday 2 June

Eleanor Drabble / Emily Addai

How not to get caught out at an employment tribunal - how would your current day to day approach to line management stand up under scrutiny?

Tuesday 9 June

Heather Mitchell/Emma Hughes/ Joe Babos

Contact us



Please note

The information contained in these notes is based on the position at April 2020. It does, of course, only represent a summary of the subject matter covered and is not intended to be a substitute for detailed advice. If you would like to discuss any of the matters covered in further detail, our team would be happy to do so.

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