

Managing absence and health issues effectively

Overview

Sickness absenteeism is still a problem for the UK. According to recent CIPD surveys, average sickness absence continues to increase year on year in many organisations and such absence is particularly significant in the public sector, where it is now 50% higher than in the private sector. The need to manage sickness absence effectively and consistently remains a challenge for many organisations, as does balancing a robust approach alongside a desire and need to treat individuals sensitively and with compassion and respect.

This workshop equips managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to manage sickness absence proactively and appropriately in accordance with your organisation's policies, best practice and legal considerations.

Learning objectives

This programme will help participants to:

- Understand the impact of sickness absence and the need to manage absence fairly, consistently and appropriately
- Understand the role and responsibility of line managers and how to work effectively with HR and other sources of support such as Occupational Health
- Adopt a positive and proactive approach to managing sickness, including conducting effective return to work interviews
- Manage different types of absence, including short-term persistent absence and long-term absence, as well as continuing health issues that have an impact on work
- Build confidence in addressing sensitive issues, including supporting and managing employees who have a disability, and issues such as mental health, work related stress, etc.

Audience

All managers, in any type of organisation – large or small; public, voluntary or private sector.

Format

This one-day course is highly participative and uses group exercises, case studies and practical exercises to illustrate problems and develop a best practice approach in dealing with them. Group discussions and feedback are used to develop learning points and to enable participants to relate examples to their own situations.

Participants will be sent a welcome pack in advance of the session which will include some pre-course work as well as asking them to reflect upon their own experiences and challenges in this area. Participants will also be asked to familiarise themselves with the key internal policies and procedures relating to this area and to bring copies to the course for reference throughout.

Special feature

This programme is, of necessity, tailored to each different organisation in which it is delivered, to reflect their policies and procedures, etc. The content, duration, objectives and material used can all be tailored to suit your specific needs.

Expert trainer

This programme is delivered by **Rachel Hicks**, our lead trainer in this area. See her profile [here](#).

Workshop outline

Note: this is a purely indicative outline, subject to change in the light of (a) developments in employment law and (b) your organisation's policies and procedures.

1 Introduction

- Course objectives and benefits from attending this course
- Participants' experience and confidence in this area
- Personal objectives

2 The context

- Understanding the impact of absence and health issues at work
- Different types of absence – short-term and long-term absence
- Understanding disability
- Balancing the need to manage absence fairly while treating individuals with compassion and respect
- What is expected from an employer and from employees in relation to managing absence

3 Managing sickness absence

- Sickness absence policy and procedures
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities – manager, employee, HR, Occupational Health, EAP, etc
- Notification and certification of absence – what happens in practice?
- What happens when someone returns? Conducting effective return to work interviews
- Monitoring absence and understanding trigger points
- An overview of key stages in managing absence informally and formally, including formal reviews and dismissal

4 The law

- Legal requirements and risks associated with unfair dismissal claims
- Understanding discrimination, what is a disability in law, and reasonable adjustments
- Case law

5 Having the conversation

Practical group exercises that highlight how to manage absence effectively. These will pick up particularly challenging issues and can cover a wide breadth of issues including disability, pregnancy, addiction, mental health and stress, presenteeism, malingerers, etc. These will reinforce appropriate actions, policies and procedures, legal risk, etc. Case studies will be tailored to organisational requirements but typically focus on:

- On-going short-term persistent absence with a pattern, potentially a disability; knowing when to escalate
- Long-term absence, working with Occupational Health, and consideration of dismissal
- Work-related stress and mental health issues affecting conduct at work
- Working proactively to support attendance, eg, flexible working, phased returns to work, reasonable adjustments

6 And finally...

- Open forum – remaining challenges and ‘what if’ scenarios
- Action planning – identifying how participants will transfer this learning into the workplace and what else they may need which will help them to do this effectively
- Review and close

For a no-obligation discussion about running this programme for your organisation on an in-house basis, just give us a call on **01582 463462.**