

Sickness Absence and How to Manage it



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Bespoke HR Support that suits you and your business

Whether you need a sounding board for a one-off issue or if you're finding your people management too time consuming – Danton HR offer solutions in all aspects of HR, employment, recruitment and development.

We pride ourselves on our straightforward, comprehensive advice that skips out unnecessary jargon and gives practical next steps that you can start as soon as you put down the phone.

We take the pressure off you, freeing you up to focus on your core business.

The Danton Team



Sickness Absence and How to Manage it

Have you noticed how one or two days off here and there, with a few employees, can add up? Whether short or long-term, staff sickness absence has a knock-on effect with your business. We've put together a short guide on sickness absence and how to manage it.

Most business owners are aware of the costs associated with sickness absence in terms of statutory and occupational sick pay, on top of the additional wages required to cover the cost of temporary staff.

But it can also affect the business in more indirect ways such as:

Lowering morale
Mistakes being made
Reduction of productivity

When it comes to understanding why staff are calling in sick, there has been a huge amount of research conducted over the years, and the consensus is that it falls into the following groups:

- Minor illness
- Back pain (and other musculoskeletal injuries)
- Stress
- Ongoing/ recurring medical conditions
- Family responsibilities
- Mental health

Whether you are trying to tackle short- or long-term absence, we understand that managing sickness absence can sometimes be off putting to employers. But it is important to be pro-active and to deal with the absences when they arise.



Step 1: Policy and Training

Start by having a written policy in place. Use it to set out what you expect from your staff and how you would like them to notify you e.g. A personal phone call to a manager, rather than an email or text message, helps to deter fake sickness absence.

Include information on sick pay, evidence requirements and the sickness absence management process. Ensure employees understand the policy and provide training to managers.

Step 2: Request Evidence

Request and obtain evidence from the employee of their incapacity to work. This can take the form of:

Self-certification - for absences up to seven days
Fit Note - for absences over seven days

Ask the employee the reason for their absence, when they expect to return and if appropriate, confirm their contact details and say that you will keep in touch with them.

Did you know?

Did you know, from July 2022, a GP is no longer the only health professional who can provide fit notes, they can now be certified and issued by nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists in addition to doctors. Contact us for more information and guidance. **Call 01527 306760**

Step 3: Keep Contact

Maintain contact with the employee. The amount will depend on their role and the size/ culture of your organisation, but you could aim to keep in contact via a regular telephone update every few days. Aim to schedule this in advance, if possible, so that the employee knows to expect your call.

Be careful to avoid overbearing or intrusive contact that may cause distress to the employee, as this could be perceived as harassment.

Step 4: Check Entitlements

Subject to qualification, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is the minimum amount of sick pay that all employees are entitled to.

Employees may also be entitled to receive their full or part- remuneration if their contract of employment or employer's sickness policy specifically entitles them to this.

If you are unsure about an employee's entitlements, we will be happy to go through them with you. Call us on 01527 306760.

Step 5: Keep updated on Medical Condition

Encourage the employee to keep you updated on their medical condition (following medical appointments, etc) and consider obtaining a medical report. You can include provision for this in their contract or the sickness policy where you can specify that medical reports may be obtained.

Remember, you should ensure that you maintain contact with your employee and get regular updates.

Step 6: Conduct a Back to Work Interview

Discuss every absence with the employee when they come back to work and keep a written record of the conversation. Reinforce the impact of their absence on the business and colleagues.

This also helps you to investigate the reasons behind their absence to determine any underlying issues that require support.



Step 7: Monitor Absence

Keep comprehensive notes of every period of sickness absence, the reasons for them and the notes from your contact with the employee. Compiling this in an 'at a glance' calendar format will help you spot patterns that require further investigation. For example, an employee who is absent on the last Friday of every month.

Step 8: Keep Records

Keep accurate records of all meetings and correspondence including notes from telephone conversations and messages left. All telephone conversations and messages should be followed up with a letter summarising key points and any actions agreed.

Be mindful to write letters in a non-judgmental, factual style as they could be disclosed in any tribunal proceedings. Records should always be stored confidentially.

Step 9: Consider Reasonable Adjustments

If someone has a physical or long-term impairment that has substantial or long-term effect on their ability to carry out their usual daily activities, they could be classed as "disabled" according to the law.

You are subject to "Positive Duty" to consider and make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees to return to work.

Step 10: Begin Formal Procedures

When absence levels become too frequent or the duration of the absence becomes excessive, you may wish to consider carrying out formal procedures. Consider at which point you would like the formal procedure to apply i.e. a certain number of absences over a 12-month period.

You can then implement your "Capability" or "Disciplinary" procedures as appropriate. It is important that you follow the process consistently each time, so that employees know what to expect. Ultimately, formal procedures may result in a dismissal.

Managing employees through formal processes can be challenging and complex. Always seek advice from a qualified HR professional.

Call Danton HR today

We provide outsourced HR solutions to businesses who don't have in house HR support, acting as their virtual HR partner and taking the lead on the full range of HR management and administration issues, including:

- People strategy and implementation
- Resourcing, recruitment and onboarding
- HR systems implementation and management
- Performance management and development
- Sickness and absence management
- Appraisal management
- Individuals / team development and coaching
- Settlement agreements
- Pandemic and contingency support
- Pay benchmarking
- HR Compliance through to best practice
- Restructure and redundancies

Get in touch today ...

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