

Managing short-term sickness

As an employer you are in the best position to manage your employee absence.



- ACAS • Association of Chief Police Officers • British Chamber of Commerce
- British Medical Association • Cabinet Office • Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development • Confederation of British Industry • Department of Health
 - Department of Work and Pensions • Disability Rights Commission
- Doctor Patient Partnership • Employers Forum on Disability • Federation of Small Business • Inland Revenue • Institute of Healthcare Management • NHS Confederation • NHS Plus • Patients Association • Small Business Service

www.managingabsence.org.uk

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The most common causes of sickness absence are minor complaints such as colds or headaches, which can be treated most effectively with self medication. **GPs are not obliged to provide their patients with sick certification for illnesses of seven days or less.** The use of GP services to manage short-term sickness absence is a waste of NHS resources, problematic for employees and may have cost and efficiency implications for employers.

The Government, employers' representatives, employees' representatives, health & other professionals and patient groups discourage company policies based on the use of GP services:

- Using GP services to manage short-term sickness costs business valuable time and resources and wastes NHS resources.
- Ineffectively managed recurring absence can lead to major long-term problems.
- Employee health and well-being may be adversely affected through an obligatory visit to the GP to get a certificate, when self-medication or telephone advice is often a quicker and more effective remedy. Not only is employee time wasted but they may also be charged for a sick note for periods of absence of seven days or less.

The benefits of employers taking responsibility for managing short-term sickness absence are:

- Active involvement of management in monitoring sickness absence encourages communication with employees and identifies work related health problems. It is widely regarded as the most effective way of managing sickness absence.
- In-house management systems can save time spent by employees acquiring a certificate, and employers can avoid certified periods of absence which may well extend beyond the duration of the illness.
- Reasonable adjustments in employee working practices may prevent sickness absence in the first place, as well as enabling employees to carry out their jobs more comfortably and effectively.
- GPs have more time to treat patients who need appointments.

The 'Managing Absence' website www.managingabsence.org.uk has been established to support employers in finding suitable and effective ways to manage their sickness absence, which fit with the nature and size of the organisation. It offers advice and information, examples of good practice and benchmarking information.

The Employers' Helpline on 0845 7 143 143 offers expert advice on Statutory Sick Pay Regulations and Statutory Maternity Pay. The service is available Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5pm. People with hearing and/or speech difficulties can call textphone on 0845 602 1380.

Confidential healthcare advice is available 24 hours a day through NHS Direct 0845 4647 or go to www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Occupational health services are available for small to medium sized businesses through NHS Plus on 0800 092 0062 or minicom 020 7210 5025 and their associated website www.nhsplus.nhs.uk