

Challenge Manager – helping you manage your employment challenges

Absence makes your colleagues work harder!

Well Christmas is over and done with, the New Year parties are finished and everyone is back to work.....we hope!

Perhaps not surprisingly, there are seasonal variations in employee sickness absence and it is generally recognised that January and February are the months where the highest levels of sickness absence are recorded.

Colds and similar ailments may account for much of this absence, but are you aware that these months are generally recognised as the time when depression, anxiety and stress related conditions are also at their highest?

But what about long term sickness absence...

...and of course, how do we know people are genuinely ill and not just fancying a 'duvet day', or going to a job interview somewhere else?

How do you manage sickness absence in your workplace and are you aware of the costs to your business of not doing so?

The Health and Safety Executive report that sickness absence costs UK Plc £12billion per year and the CIPD's latest survey shows that sickness absence is increasing and place the current cost at £659 per employee.

These costs include the obvious such as sick pay and additional wages for staff cover, but they also include risks of lower efficiency amongst staff covering unfamiliar jobs, decreased morale and energy, and both management and administration time in recording and managing absence.

Our best practice recommendations for managing sickness absence are:

1. A robust absence management policy
2. Clearly defined staff procedures for calling in sick, self-certification and the submission of GP Certificates
3. Awareness training for managers for understanding costs to the business, issues of long term sickness, and disability implications
4. A vigorous recording, monitoring and evaluating system
5. Health assessments as part of the recruitment process and for night workers
6. Back to work interviews following EVERY period of absence
7. A return to work plan to reintroduce employees after long term absence
8. Clear procedures for dealing with non-genuine absence with defined links to disciplinary procedures
9. Clear procedures for dealing with long-term or repeated absences with defined links to capability procedures and with regard to disability discrimination issues

Back to work interviews and the effective use of disciplinary procedures are cited by the CIPD as having the most significant impact in reducing short-term sickness absence, particularly where it is suspected that the sickness may not be genuine.

One of our clients reports a 5% cost saving within just eight weeks of introducing new absence policy and procedures, including more effective monitoring and the use of back to work interviews.

If you think that Challenge Manager can help you please call Sam on 07816 316598 or Emma on 07729 263769 or look at our website www.challengemanager.co.uk