

UNISON
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UNISON national health and safety seminar / Belfast 2019

Welcome to sickness absence workshop

AIMS

- To understand more about sickness absence.
- To look at presenteeism.
- To listen to other people's experiences.

OBJECTIVES

- To take something away from this workshop, that we might use in the future.
- To learn from more experienced reps.

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SICKNESS ABSENCE. WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

- Sickness absence can be caused by a mixture of: **an employee's general physical condition.** Working conditions, including Health and Safety standards, levels of stress, harassment and bullying. Family or emotional problems, or mental health issues other than stress.

Managing Sickness Absence.

LEGAL REASONS

- ❖ Fulfills Health and Safety duties.
- ❖ Fulfills the equality act.
- ❖ Duty under social security (admin) ACT 1992 to maintain records of sick lasting more than 4 days.
- ❖ also helps prevent personal illness claims and can help prevent tribunals through unfair treatment.

Its an employers duty to have a policy in place and employees should know what it contains. For instance;

- ✓ Standards of practice
- ✓ Standards of reporting
- ✓ Sick pay
- ✓ Evidence of incapacity
- ✓ Sickness absence process
- ✓ Staff need to understand it

Presenteeism!

- Presenteeism is when staff attend work when they are not fit to do so
- Presenteeism can lead to longer recovery periods from illness, damage staff morale and lead to decreased productivity

- **Shout out some reasons for presenteeism.**

- Organisational culture
- Pressure of work
- Deadlines
- Unsympathetic manager
- New starter
- Financial reasons
- Team bonus
- Domestic reasons
- Just plain stupidity



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How to deal with Presenteeism?

- If management believes a worker may be too ill or unfit to work, they should have a discussion with the employee and risk assess the situation.
- If the manager considers the worker too ill to be at work they should send them home. Management should be encouraged to think of this as a positive thing (in most circumstances) to support worker well-being.
- In reaching this decision they will have to take into account not only the health of the sick worker, but also that of their colleagues and service users (especially vulnerable service users in hospitals, care homes and schools) including the risk of cross-infection.

Calling in sick, but how?

- If a manager is to take these calls they should be trained.
- ✓ How is the reporting to be made? Phone? Text? Email?
- ✓ You need to give the reason why you are calling in sick.
- ✓ What is the likely date of return?
- ✓ Take contact details.
- ✓ Managers should confirm this information will be confidential and not gossip.

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Sickness Management

- *It should not always be about:*

- Cost of extra staff
- Overtime
- Sick pay
- Reduction of profit
- Reputation
- Productivity

- *It should be about:*

- Supporting the member back to work in an appropriate way
- Doing it in a timely manner
- Ensuring they return to a healthy workplace
- Not losing valuable staff
- On-going support from management

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Preventing sickness.



A WORKPLACE STATAGY



Health and Wellbeing



Health and Safety



Employee management



Monitoring data

A Workplace Strategy

- **Health and Safety**

- *Management Standards*
- *Preventing Strategy*
- *Visible Advice/Posters/Emails*
- *Targeted Training*
- *Mental Health First Aider*

- **Employee Management**

- *Start at Induction*
- *Manage Training*
- *Good Communication*
- *Surveys*
- *Social Wellbeing Events*

- **Monitoring Data**

- *Recording Absences/ Business Area/ Job Title/ Type of Sick*
- *Compare Statistics*
- *Review Outcomes*

Returning to work support

• Short term.

- Inform manager of return to work date.
- Was O/H required?
- Is a ISRA or RA required?
- Return to work
- Return to work interview

• Long term.

- Attend O/H
- Have sickness meeting with manager, rep and HR.
- Discuss possible RTW
- Has counselling been offered?
- Phased return offered?
- Are reasonable adjustments required? What kind? Shout out.
- Do they need access to work support?
- <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview>

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You're off with what?

- In your groups write on the sticky note, one illness on each, that your member might be off work with?
- Then stick them under the heading on the wall which is most appropriate.
- They are;
 - **Short term absence**
 - **Long term absence**
 - **Disability related**
 - **Other issues**



What evidence might you need to show?

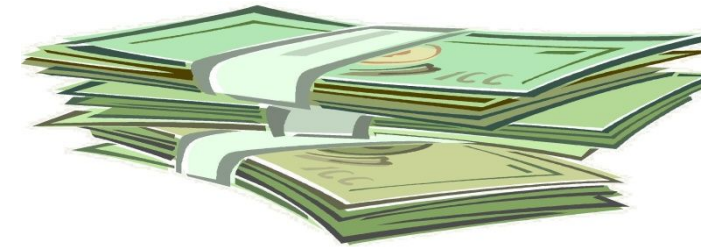
- Self cert note.
- How long does this last?
- Drs Fit note.



SICK PAY, WHAT DO I GET?

- Members will call us when there is an issue with pay.

- *How can we help?*
- *& What info can we find out?*



- ✓ Check entitlement, how long on full/half pay?
- ✓ Will they only get SSP?
- ✓ Today's rate is £92.05pw /if you are too ill to work.
- ✓ Do you have any local arrangements for paying full sick pay? E.g. if they have an accident at work.
- ✓ <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview>

What else to think about!

- ☐ Generally its up to the employer to make contact.
- ☐ As arranged keep employer updated.
- ☐ You may be told you have to see Occupational health. They Are allegedly neutral.
- ☐ There can be a penalty for not attending without good reason.
- ☐ You may be informed your sickness will start to hit triggers for sickness meetings.(How is this determined?)
- ☐ If you are to attend a sickness meeting, it should be done formally by letter, or if permission is given, sent by personal e mail. Don't accept a phone call as there is no proof of what was said.
 - ☐ **What records would you expect to see?**
 - ☐ *Accurate and legible records from meetings*
 - ☐ *Contact sheet*
 - ☐ *Occupational Health report*
 - ☐ *Copies of letters sent to member*
 - ☐ *Staff member file*
 - ☐ *Copies of any risk assessments*

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What if you can't return to work?

- **Dismissals due to illness**
- Sometimes an employee may have to stop working because of long-term ill health. They may resign, or the employer may have to consider dismissing them.
- **Considering dismissing an employee**
- Dismissal is a last resort and they should consider as many ways as possible to help the employee back to work, including:
- getting a medical report from their GP with the employee's permission.
- arranging an occupational health assessment
- work out whether or not they're [disabled](#) and make any [reasonable adjustments](#) to help them do their job
- If the employee cannot do their job because there are no reasonable adjustments that can be made, it may be fair for the employer to dismiss them, even if they're disabled.

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Thank you everyone, hope some of this was useful. Now its quiz time, what can you remember?

