

## **CIPD How do you develop an absence strategy – Example of an absence policy**

Employees in XYZ Company are paid on the basis of satisfactory attendance and performance. While it's recognised that most employees will occasionally have genuine and acceptable reasons to be absent from work, any absence will cause operational difficulties, undermine quality and efficiency, and increase costs. Overall, absenteeism can have a substantial impact on company profitability and productivity. The aim of this absence policy is therefore to minimise absence levels across the company, while also providing reasonable support to those absent for legitimate reasons, with the aim of assisting their return to work at the earliest opportunity. The policy also aims to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently.

To this end, we aim to ensure that:

- All policies, rules and procedures concerning absence are communicated clearly to all employees.
- Managers and team leaders apply the procedures fairly and consistently.
- The HR function maintains computer records, based on information received from line managers, indicating the duration and stated reasons for all periods of absence. This information is used to monitor absence levels, and to indicate where further action may be needed.
- Managers and team leaders interview all employees on their return from absence, regardless of its duration. The purpose of the interview is to explore the causes of the absence, to facilitate the individual's return to work, and to identify any reasonable and practical steps to reduce the likelihood of future absence.
- The HR function provides support to managers and team leaders in ensuring consistency in dealing with absence and any related issues, and, where appropriate, in advising on how individual absence issues should be handled.
- In cases where absence levels exceed specified 'trigger' levels, managers or team leaders are required to take formal action. This includes conducting formal absence interviews and issuing formal warnings, as set out in the company's absence management procedures. In extreme cases, excessive absence may result in termination of employment on grounds of capability. However, the company's first priority is always to achieve satisfactory levels of attendance.
- In cases where an employee is absent on extended sick leave, managers or HR contact the individual on a regular basis, including conducting periodic home visits, with the aim of facilitating the individual's return to work at the earliest reasonable point.
- Where appropriate, the company may seek advice or guidance from its occupational health advisers in medical issues relating to individual absence.
- The company is committed to supporting the health of its workforce, and provides a range of positive healthcare and fitness initiatives available to all employees.
- In dealing with individual absence issues, the company aims to act reasonably at all times, taking account of all the circumstances.

## **What standards and procedures should be included in an absence policy?**

- The standards of attendance expected by the organisation:
  - The organisation pays employees to attend work – attendance is therefore accepted as the norm.
  - Any absence is costly, in terms of reduced efficiency, coverage for non-attenders, impact on quality and customer service, and so on.
  - The organisation recognises that some limited absence is inevitable – you will provide appropriate support and assistance to those who are legitimately absent, with the aim of facilitating their return to work at the earliest opportunity.
- A clear statement of absence procedures includes the following:
  - How should employees notify their manager on the first day of absence?
  - How should employees keep managers informed on the expected length of absence and likely return date?
  - What types and levels of certification are required?
  - What will happen following the individual's return to work?
  - Responsibility for these actions should sit clearly with the employee, with an indication that failure to follow these procedures without good reason is likely to result in disciplinary action.
  - What actions should be taken before and after the individual's return to work?