

## National Sickness Day 2017: managing sickness absence

The UK National Sickness Day; the first Monday in February and the day when staff are most likely to call in sick.

National Sickness Day is an annual event, which marks the worst day of the year for absenteeism with an expected 350,000 staff expected to call in sick. This will cost the UK economy around £45 million in wages, lost hours and overtime.

Especially for small businesses, sickness can cause many problems – unable to arrange short term cover, having to let a client down. This can sometimes force a small business to close for the day.

Here are some tips on managing sickness in your business to reduce the cost and inconvenience.

1. Ensure you record and monitor staff absence. This will enable you to spot trends and patterns in individual absence and in reasons for absence, resulting in you being able to respond promptly and accordingly.
2. Have a clear Sickness Policy to ensure staff know how sickness will be managed, what the company's expectations are and what the notification arrangements are on day one of sickness and during the absence.
3. Stay in regular contact whilst the person is off sick. Contact can be made via phone, text or email. However, face to face meetings should also be held on a regular basis. This will ensure you support the individual if needed and you can plan for their absence and know when they are expected back at work.
4. Hold a return to work interview on their first day back to work. The purpose is to find out how they are feeling, confirm the reason for the absence and if there was anything that contributed to the absence. Discuss any adjustments that may be required to support the individual back to work and a return to work plan if required.
5. Don't be afraid to challenge the absence if you have belief it is not genuine. For example, there may be social media posts during the day that suggests the person has enjoyed an outing somewhere.

Just to end on a lighter note, some of the worst excuses for staff ringing in sick last year were 'nothing to wear', 'arranging a party for a dog' and 'too drunk to drive'.

This is a brief guide only to managing sickness absence. If you require any advice or help on managing your sickness absence or any other HR service, please contact us.