



Human Resources



Do you employ staff?

HR Update - March 2026

Changes to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

From April 2026, in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025, employees will be entitled to be paid statutory sick pay (SSP) from day one of a sick absence, instead of having to wait until day four. This will mean that from April 2026, for many small businesses, employee absence will become more costly.

Between March and April each year, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) conduct an online 'employee health and well-being' survey on YouGov. The responses from participant organisations are then analysed and published, with support from Simply Health, a UK health cash plan provider.

According to the results published in 2025, employees were absent, on average for 9.5 days, per year. The figure was higher in the public sector (13.5 days per employee, per year) and lower in the private and not for profit sectors (9.1 and 6.5 days respectively). On average, how many days are employees absent, per year, in your business?

Tips on Managing Employee Absence Effectively

- Have a clearly communicated and legally compliant absence management policy in place which clearly communicates your expectations about employee attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate clear guidance on how you expect employees to report an absence; be specific about who they should report an absence to, by what time, and by what method. Bear in mind that permitting emails, texts or WhatsApp messages to report an absence, makes it easier to report an absence!
- Communicate clear guidance on what absence documentation is required, in the event of absence, i.e., a self-certification form for absences less than 7 calendar days in duration, or a GP Fit Note covering the entire absence, for any absence more than 7 calendar days.
- Record all employee absences, detailing the number of days and dates of each absence, the reason for the absence, whether the absence was communicated in the correct way, whether the appropriate absence documentation was provided and whether a health professional was consulted, if appropriate.
- Monitor employee absence to identify if any patterns exist, i.e., Mondays or Friday, same days of the week, days either side of personal holidays, days either side of public holidays, days where personal holidays were not authorised, days where important meetings were scheduled, common themes related to reasons for absences, etc.
- Hold return-to-work meetings following every absence to discuss the employee's absence verbally and to record and discuss any relevant and important factors.

- Use an internal 'trigger' for informal and formal management steps.
- Confirm in writing (informal management) any concerns regarding an employee's specific absence pattern.
- Manage problematic absence patterns either via a capability procedure or your disciplinary procedure (formal management), ensuring that either procedure is followed correctly, at all times.
- Hold long-term absence meetings, with any employee who is absent long-term, i.e., 4 to 6 weeks, or longer, and repeat the cycle if the absence continues.
- Consider independent occupational health intervention, if relevant, with long-term, capability related absences.
- Make reasonable adjustments to your overall absence management process where necessary, and for any employees who may have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. This may include adjustments to how you record and measure absence, adjustments to facilitate a return to work, adjustments to how you manage meetings associated with absence management, etc.
- Seek HR advice and guidance with any queries you may have, relating to an employee's absence pattern.

How can we Help?

If you have any queries relating to the content of this newsletter, or any other HR related topic, please do not hesitate to contact us via hradvice@hasslefreehr.co.uk.

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