

NINE OBJECTIVES TO ENSURE AN EFFECTIVE ABSENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



Introduction

The purpose of this eBook is to outline the **Nine** key objectives that an organisation should incorporate into their absence management system.

Each of these objectives will have a positive impact in reducing absence and its associated costs. Working together in a comprehensive system though, the effect has been to reduce absence by almost 50%.

The management of absence is often **complex, sensitive and a thorny subject** that is dependent on a number of circumstances, and a variety of approaches to support those who are sick and to signpost them to the most appropriate centre for care as soon as possible.

The Cost of Absence

Absence has a significant negative effect in every sector of Irish business.

According to IBEC's 2011 Guide to Managing Absence over 11 million working days are lost in Ireland every year due to sickness, costing businesses **€1.5 billion or €818 per employee**. The report also found that on average employees missed 5.98 days per year.

In 2009 the Comptroller and Auditor General reported on Sickness Absence in the Civil Service. The total remuneration of Civil Service staff during periods of sickness absence was of the order of €64 million. However, the full cost could be considerably higher if indirect costs were factored in.

They estimated that every 5% reduction in days lost due to absence would reduce non-effective expenditure by €3.2 million taking account of salary costs alone.

The 2013, Local Authorities Sickness Review reported that total days sickness absence in local authorities cost approximately €64.64m in 2011.

In small organisations absenteeism is also a major problem.

The Small Firms Association calculate that small businesses in Ireland lose up to €563 million per annum through absence.

Our Health Sector is also affected with HealthStat reporting an absence rate of over 6% in a number of hospitals.

These figures do not take into account the additional cost in replacing absent staff through overtime or agency expenditure.

There is also the implication for a business's delivery of goods and services. Customers are not interested in sick employees if they are in hospital themselves needing treatment or waiting for a bus that doesn't show.

Staff do get sick, but this does not mean that it is out of your control. This eBook will help you identify the steps that every organisation needs to take to ensure the cost of absence is at the lowest level possible.

1. Consistency

Ensure fairer and consistent treatment of employees

To achieve this Fusion HR recommend the use of:

A dedicated absence line into a specialist, 24/7/365 Absence Contact Centre. Here the details of every absence is recorded in a fair, consistent, complete and accurate manner before issuing timely notifications to all key stakeholders.

These provide line managers with detailed absence information and guidance on the most appropriate steps to assist an employee back to work.

All employees are treated in the same manner and there can be no allegation of unfair treatment or being singled out by management.

This is critical if absence records become part of a disciplinary procedure.



Every day. Every hour.
Every minute.

2. Policy implementation

Increase line manager compliance with policies.



Ensure your absence monitoring service allows you to map your organisation's attendance management procedures (or equivalent) in to the system.

Then monitor the actions taken by line managers when managing employees through these procedures.

Compliance reports should be maintained so the organisation can measure how well managers are carrying out these activities so, that support and guidance can be given, as required.

3. Integrity

Ensure Data Accuracy and Integrity

A dedicated call centre ensures that all data is collected in a consistent and accurate manner. It is then necessary to ensure that your management system uses this data to effectively manage your absence.

If it's not accurate, it might as well not exist.

Details of every absence must appear in real-time reports.

Your system needs to provide dashboards, trend reports, focus lists and task monitoring reports enabling users to proactively manage absence and make informed decisions.

Look to map the triggers in your absence policy on to the system as part of the implementation process.

Each time an absence is reported your system should refer to this policy and when appropriate generate alerts to relevant stakeholders, such as line managers, HR, health and safety officers and occupational health.



These alerts should be fully customised with bespoke content and attachments to ensure that the recipient is fully aware of what actions to take and when to take them.

4. Time

Increase efficiency of management time.



Absence management should not become a paper chase between HR and Line Managers. Your absence system needs to work for management rather than the other way around.

Ensure your data flows seamlessly through the system and monitors that the right procedures are completed in a timely manner.

Track the completion of all Return to Work Interviews and produce reports on manager compliance throughout the organisation.

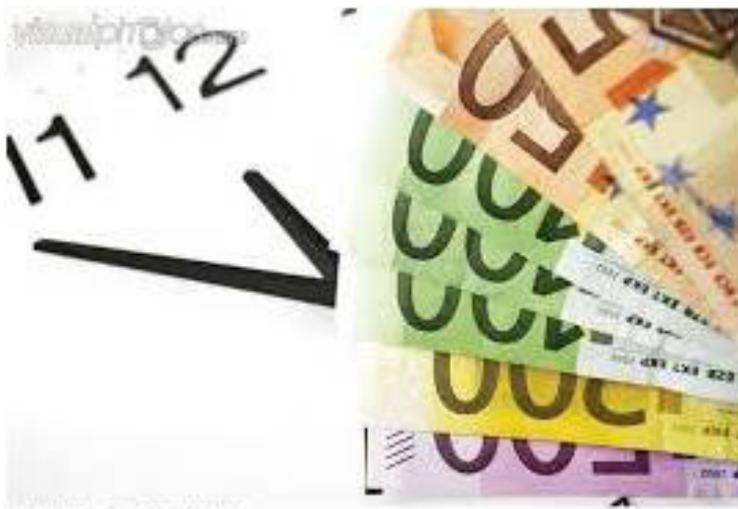


Monitor Line Manager performance in making referrals to support services and track the service provider's performance in actioning received referrals.

5. Support

Better utilise Support Services, such as Occupational Health, Physio and EAP.

A medical call centre not only provides medical guidance and advice for your employees it can identify and initiate support interventions at the earliest possible time.



A lot of systems will only begin to look at Occupational Health support after say 3 weeks absence. This can be a very expensive wait.

We would suggest that your system not only triggers recommended referrals to relevant support services, such as Occupational Health, but will also complete initial assessments and referral forms for line managers.



You should then track Line Manager performance in making referrals to support services and track the service provider's performance in actioning received referrals.

6. Resource Planning

Facilitate improved and reliable resource planning.

An effective absence management system needs to integrate with other systems within the organisation.



On-line reports or specific customised “push” reports should be available to managers to allow them to assess the impact of absence on their operations.

Integration between systems should enable relevant managers make decisions and act upon them easily and seamlessly.

7. Employee Support

Provide easier access to medical advice and support for employees.

Try and ensure employees get support for every medical absence.



Our nursing team, for example, provide the employee with primary care advice on how to return themselves back to good health and will agree a target return to work date, based upon an employees symptoms.



In addition, employees will be able to call our nursing team for a free medical advice at any time of day. This can be very beneficial if an employee is sick during the night, they can ring in at any time and log their absence.

Our system will then ensure that the appropriate managers are notified before the start of the shift.

Key Features:

- Advice, guidance and support for every employee
- 24/7 Clinical assessments of every absence
- Nurse recommended Return To Work dates
- Initial reviews of potential occupational health referrals
- Emergency services access for severe issues

8. Tools

Access tools that can help reduce absence and its associated costs.

Line managers typically have day to day responsibility for managing absence in their section. It is important that they are given the appropriate tools to carry out these responsibilities.



Fusion HR would recommend that dynamic Return to Work Interviews are a key tool for Line Managers.

A dynamic Return to Work interview feature in a system moves away from the concept that one size fits all.

In these forms, the questions and advice presented to the line manager are based upon the details of the absence the interview is being completed for.

This helps to ensure that managers will always ask the most appropriate questions in each Return to Work interview.

Furthermore, by asking questions specific to the health issue the employee has just recovered from, the line manager will be able to demonstrate a greater duty of care.



In addition to dynamic Return to Work Interviews, line managers need access to:

- on-line reports,
- accurate and timely information,
- reminders,
- customised reports and
- easy interactions with complimentary systems

9. Payroll Integration

Sick pay accuracy

Make sure you don't overpay staff when they have been absent.

A good absence system should produce payroll reports to help the administration of sick pay payments for staff.



This includes the provision of data files on any frequency required (such as hourly, daily, weekly, monthly) for loading into an organisation's payroll system.

This reduces the need for any manual data entry and ensures all payments are as accurate as possible.

Key Features should include:

- Improved accuracy of sick pay
- Data exports available on hourly, daily, weekly, monthly schedules
- Reduced administration time and manual data entry

To discuss how these six steps can be incorporated
into your organisation's absence programme,
contact me today for a **complimentary consultation**
on your attendance management needs.



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