



Craven Safety Services - March 2020 Newsletter

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Dealing with sickness in the workplace - Guest article by ClockworkHR

Let's face it - no one is immune to every bug and virus known to man. It is inevitable that at some point members of staff will need to stay off work due to sickness or ill health.

The majority of times a couple of days rest and recuperation is all that is needed. Your valued staff member is soon back with you, bright eyed and bushy tailed.

However, what do you do if a member of staff is continually taking time off or perhaps has been off ill for a prolonged period?

What does the law say?

In the UK if an employee is off work due to illness for more than 7 days, they must obtain a "fit note" (also known as a "sick note") from a GP or a hospital doctor. The 7 days includes non-working days such as weekends and bank holidays.

The employee should provide the fit note to their employer in order to receive the appropriate sick pay. The fit note could say “not fit for work” or “may be fit for work” with suggestions of adjustments. The latter puts the responsibility onto the employer to offer adjustments or changes that would make it easier for the employee to return to work. However, these are not compulsory.

Long term sick - this term applies to an employee who is off work for more than 4 consecutive weeks.

How should you approach the matter?

Approaching any employee about their sickness absence should be done with sensitivity. Especially if the reason for their absence is because of a mental health issue.

Being pushy or unsympathetic can often make them feel worse, which in turn could lead to more time off. Try to find ways to help them feel reassured about coming back to work. Perhaps by offering reduced hours or amended duties. At the same time if you suspect an employee’s reasons for absence are not genuine or feel that an excessive amount of time off is being taken it is advisable to keep accurate absence records and monitor an employee’s sick leave. An employer may invoke the disciplinary or capability procedure to deal with the sickness absence. They will need to obtain medical information along the way.

What can be done to help the employee?

Where an employee has been off long term, keep in touch with them. Have regular chats and discuss ways they could be accommodated.

Consider a phased return to work or, if reasonable, offer flexible or part time working.

If an employee is classed as disabled, the employer is legally obliged to make reasonable, necessary adjustments to enable the employee to return to work.

Can you dismiss an employee?

An employer can choose to dismiss an employee for long term ill health and/or excessive absence.

However, caution should be taken, advice should be obtained and other options explored before taking this step. An employee may decide to take their case to an employment tribunal if they think they've been unfairly dismissed or discriminated against.

If you need help with your HR get in touch with ClockworkHR

Sarah Seastron

01756 790124

info@clockworkhr.co.uk

<http://www.clockworkhr.co.uk>

The HSE website has information on managing sick leave [here](#).

Pretty Muddy - Leeds



Liz Preston is going to be taking part in [Pretty Muddy](#) on 31st May in Leeds in support of one of our clients, Paul Waite Associates.

All the wet weather we are having at the moment is assisting Liz with training for the event and we are all looking forward to the photos!

The team at PWA will be taking part in several challenges in 2020 to raise much needed funds for The National Tremor Foundation (NTF). Do please support them generously. Donations can be made [here](#).

Have you seen our recent website posts?

Have you seen all of our recent posts on our website? We have covered the difference between MSDS & COSHH, Workplace Exposure Limits and Workplace facilities recently. All of our posts can be seen here. <https://cravensafetyservices.co.uk/health-and-safety-news/>