

# Do's and don'ts for managing sickness absence

It's important for line managers to have an appropriate and cost-effective approach to managing sickness absence.

On the right are some helpful tips on how to do this:

## Things you should do



Keep in contact



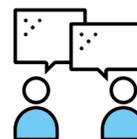
Find out the real reason for absence



Use our Employee Assistance Programme

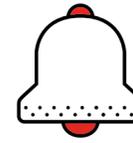


Put together a return to work plan



Use return to work interviews for short term absences

## Things you shouldn't do



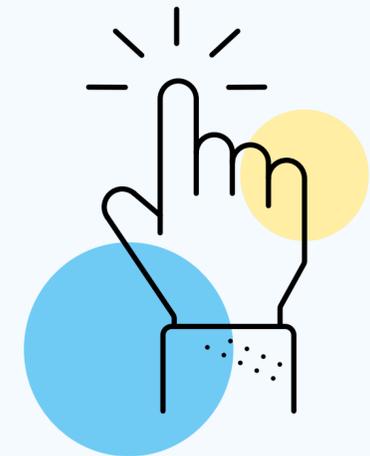
Ignore absent employees



Make rash decisions



Put too much pressure on the absent employee



Click each step to see more information

### Want to know more?

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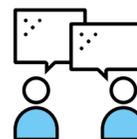
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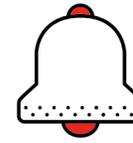


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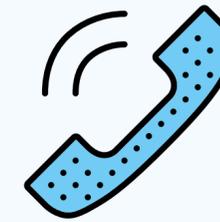
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## Keep in contact

Staying in-touch with an employee who is on sick leave is key to improving sickness absence levels. The way to communicate might vary depending on your organisation, and also the nature of illness, but will probably include emails, telephone calls and meetings.

It's important for the employer to balance their support and concern for the employee and their desire to secure a return to work. Plus, it's crucial to allow the employee time to recuperate. This is why a contact plan and realistic timescales should be mutually agreed with your employee.

There are some watch-outs to be aware of too, including overbearing or intrusive contact which may be counter-productive.

However, contact which is too infrequent may leave the employee feeling out of touch and undervalued.

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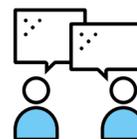
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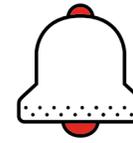


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## Find out the real reason for absence

Getting to the bottom of why the employee is absent is a priority, and will show the best way to manage the absence. Talk to your employee as soon as possible to establish whether there is any underlying or work related cause (medical or otherwise) for short and repeated absences. Is the absence mental health related for example.

Encouraging employees to discuss problems at an early stage can also help identify where reasonable adjustments can be made to avoid further absences. Our [Be Well hub](#) is a useful resource to find tools and techniques on how to approach conversations around mental health in the workplace.

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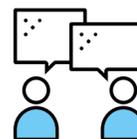
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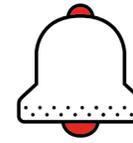


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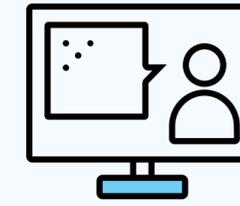
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## Use our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

A period of absence can be a stressful time for the absent employee. It can be a stressful and uncertain time for the line manager, managing the absence.

Our EAP can help support with:

- Stress management
- Return to work support
- Conflict resolution
- Communicating change
- Post-trauma support
- Management information

[Visit our dedicated EAP page to find out more](#)

Absence support is provided through our **Group Income Protection cover**.

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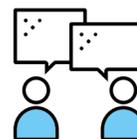
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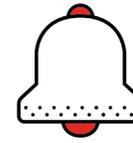


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## Put together a return to work plan

For longer-term absences, it is important to build a comprehensive return to work plan with the employee. This will need to be individually tailored to suit the employee's particular circumstances. We can provide support from the fourth week of long-term continuous absence. This includes supporting you and your employee, making assessments, and putting plans in place to support a tailored and effective return to work. Bear In mind that you always have access to our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for support on managing absence from day one.

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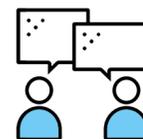
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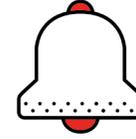


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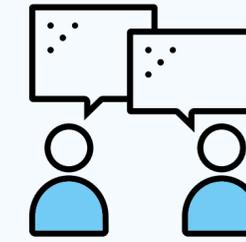
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## Use return to work interviews for short term absences

Return to work interviews can be one of the most effective tools for managing short-term sickness absence. They should take place regardless of whether the length of absence, is 4 or 40 days.

They provide line managers with an opportunity to discuss any underlying issues which might be causing the absence, so these can be addressed before they escalate. Not having discussions about an absence, can leave the employee feeling alone and can only create more anxiety.

Return to work interviews also provide an opportunity to discuss the support and assistance needed to reduce recurring absences, or any support the employee needs following a return to work after illness.

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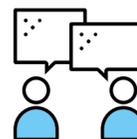
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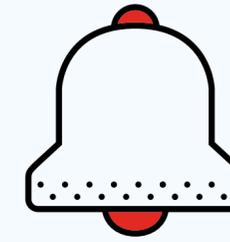
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## Ignore absent employees

Excluding employees due to absence may alienate the employee and make them feel left out. At worst, potentially lead to them not returning to work at all.

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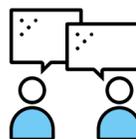
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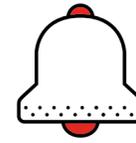


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## Make rash decisions

It's a common misconception that employment can't be terminated whilst an employee is off sick.

However, your company procedure must be followed when taking a dismissal into consideration. Not following your companies procedure could lead to an unfair dismissal claim and potentially legal action.

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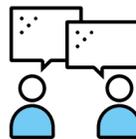
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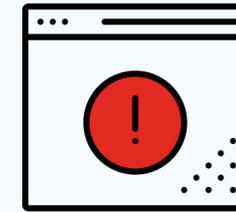
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## Put too much pressure on the absent employee

Pressurising the employee to return to work before they're able could lead to unnecessary added stress, which could have a negative effect and keep the employee off work for longer. There needs to be the right balance between keeping contact with the employee, but also giving them the space to recuperate.

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