

AUGUST 2015

CHECKLIST

Short-term absence



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This checklist applies where an employee's level of attendance falls below the reasonable standard required of an employee in their position, for example where an employee is absent for short periods on a regular basis, and this is having an adverse impact on the business.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A thorough investigation is required.
- An overall picture should be gained by considering the employee's personal file and training record.
- Establish the number of occasions and the reasons given for each individual period of absence. Check whether the employee has complied with the absence reporting procedure.
- Quantify the damaging impact which the absence is having on the business.
- Establish whether either informal or formal disciplinary action has already been taken.
- Ensure all notes taken and records made throughout the process are thorough and objective.
- The individual's manager should meet with the employee to explain the concerns relating to their attendance. It should be stressed that the intention is to assist the employee to improve their level of attendance and to investigate whether there are any external or mitigating factors which should be taken into consideration.
- Try to establish whether short periods of absence indicate an underlying health problem and whether the employee should be referred to occupational health.
- Having investigated the matter, the manager should consider whether the matter can be resolved informally (for example if the employee confides that they are having personal problems and the manager is willing to work with them to try to achieve an improvement in attendance levels) or whether the level of non-attendance has reached a point where "enough is enough" and formal disciplinary action is required.

TAKING FORMAL DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- The disciplinary procedure should be followed in full.
- All notes taken and records made during the process must be thorough and objective.
- In advance of any disciplinary hearing, the employee should be told, in writing, why the hearing is taking place and provided with full details of the concerns about their attendance; the arrangements for the hearing; their right to be accompanied and the potential consequences of the hearing.
- At the hearing the concerns about the employee's attendance levels should be restated and the adverse effect which this is having on the business quantified.
- The employee should be invited to respond to and comment on the concerns.
- Any mitigating circumstances and/or underlying health problems which might be present should be explored. Any medical reports, where appropriate, should be taken into consideration. The employee should be asked to suggest how their attendance might be improved.
- The employee's companion should be permitted to address the hearing and to ask questions to clarify issues. The companion is entitled to support the employee but they may not answer questions on the employee's behalf. They may, however, put the employee's case and respond to any view expressed at the hearing.

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- The key points of the employee's response should be summarised and their confirmation sought that the disciplining officer has understood it correctly.
- The meeting should be adjourned so that the outcome and any possible solutions can be considered. The outcome should take into consideration the level of poor attendance, any support already provided, the employee's record and any mitigating circumstances. It is important to consider whether an improvement in attendance is likely.
- On reaching a decision it is important to consider whether the proposed penalty is reasonable in all the circumstances.
- The employee should be recalled and the decision explained. Where a caution is given, the period during which the employee is expected to demonstrate a marked improvement in attendance must be specified.
- The decision must be confirmed in writing and the employee advised of their right to appeal.
- Where appropriate, implement follow up measures, for example adjustments in times/hours of work and diarise the end of the period during which an improvement in performance is required, in order to arrange a review meeting with the employee.
- All notes of the proceedings should be collected and placed on the individual's personal file.

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