Sick leave

When an employee is off sick

Most employees will need to take sick leave at some point in their working lives.

Both physical and mental health problems can count as sickness. Employers must treat mental and physical health as equally important.

Reporting sickness absence

When someone is off sick, they can 'self-certify' for 7 calendar days, including weekends. This means they can tell their employer they're not well enough to work. They do not need to provide medical evidence.

If they're off sick for more than 7 days, an employee will need to get a fit note from a registered healthcare professional.

Find out more about fit notes and proof of sickness

Sick pay

If someone is off sick they might have a right to sick pay.

Find out more about sick pay

Sickness and holiday

Sickness and holiday can happen at the same time.

For example, an employee might:

- take holiday while on sick leave
- become sick while taking holiday

Find out more about sick pay and holiday pay

Keeping in touch during sick leave

An employer can contact an employee who is off sick. How much contact is appropriate will depend on the employee's individual circumstances.

The employer and employee should agree what is an appropriate level of contact.

Returning to work after sick leave

When an employee returns to work after being off sick they should have a return to work meeting with their employer.

This is an opportunity to make sure the employee:

- is well enough to work
- has any support they need

In some cases, a phased return to work might be appropriate. This is when someone who's been absent gradually builds up to returning to work.

If someone's off sick due to poor mental health

If an employee takes sick leave due to a mental health problem, their employer should look into whether this was because of something at work. If it is, they should take steps to resolve the cause.

Find out more about:

- supporting mental health at work
- managing work-related stress