



Annual survey report 2009

# Absence management



# Contents

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Summary of key findings            | 2  |
| Rates of employee absence          | 4  |
| The cost of absence                | 13 |
| Targets and benchmarking           | 16 |
| Causes of absence                  | 18 |
| Work-related stress                | 23 |
| Managing absence                   | 26 |
| Employee well-being                | 32 |
| Employee absence and the recession | 35 |
| Conclusions                        | 37 |
| Background to survey               | 38 |

# Summary of key findings

This report sets out the findings of the CIPD's tenth national survey of absence management policy and practice. The analysis is based on replies from 642 employers in organisations employing a total of more than 1.9 million employees.

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## Absence levels

The average level of employee absence has fallen to 7.4 days per employee per year from 8.0 days per employee per year in the previous year.

The average level of absence remains highest in the public sector at 9.7 days per employee per year, a very slight drop from the previous year's figure of 9.8 days per employee per year.

Non-profit organisations recorded the next highest level of absence at 9.4 days per employee per year and the sector is the only one to record an increase in absence levels from last year's 8.5 days.

Employee absence levels in the manufacturing and production sector fell to 6.5 days per employee per year compared with 7.2 days for the previous 12 months.

Private sector services organisations also recorded a drop in the average level of absence from 7.2 days per employee per year to 6.4 days.

## Costs

The average cost of absence per employee per year is £692, which is a slight increase from the previous year's figure of £666.

The annual cost of absence, as last year, is highest in the public sector, averaging £784 per employee per year; however, this represents a reduction from the previous year's figure of £906 per employee per year.

Manufacturing and production employers recorded the next highest cost at £754 per employee per year, a slight fall from the figure for the year before of £759.

Absence costs among non-profit organisations also fell slightly to £698 from £741 per employee per year.

Private services organisations recorded the lowest annual absence costs, averaging £666 compared with the previous year's figure of £663.

## Causes of absence

Minor illnesses such as colds, flu and stomach upsets are by some way the main cause of short-term absence for both manual and non-manual workers.

Among manual workers the next most significant cause of short-term absence is musculoskeletal conditions, such as neck strains and repetitive strain injury, followed by back pain and stress.

Stress is the second biggest cause of short-term absence for non-manual workers, followed by musculoskeletal conditions, home and family responsibilities and back pain.

Employers rate acute medical conditions, back pain, musculoskeletal conditions and stress as the top four causes of long-term absence among manual employees.

Stress is the number one cause of long-term absence among non-manual employees, followed by acute medical conditions, mental ill health, such as clinical depression and anxiety, and musculoskeletal conditions.

## Managing short-term absence

The most commonly used approach to managing short-term absence is the use of return-to-work interviews, with 83% of organisations using them.

The next most popular approaches for short-term absence management are trigger systems to review attendance (74%), the provision of sickness absence information to line managers (73%) and the use of disciplinary procedures to manage unacceptable levels of employee absence (73%).

Return-to-work interviews are by some way the most highly rated approach to managing short-term absence, with almost two-thirds of respondents citing them as one of the three most effective measures.

The next most effective approaches to managing short-term absence are trigger mechanisms, the use of disciplinary procedures and restricting sick pay.

### **Managing long-term absence**

Return-to-work interviews are also the most commonly used approach to managing long-term absence, with 74% of organisations using them for this purpose. The next most widely used approaches to managing long-term absence are the use of risk assessments following return to work after long-term absence, the provision of employee absence information for line managers and the use of occupational health services.

The involvement of occupational health professionals is identified as the most effective approach for managing long-term absence by respondents from all the four main sectors.

### **Employee well-being**

A third of employers have an employee well-being strategy in place, a slight increase from last year's figure of 30%.

The most commonly provided employee well-being benefit is access to counselling services, with nearly half of employers offering this benefit.

Employee assistance programmes, stop-smoking support and subsidised gym membership are the next most commonly provided benefits.

The recession appears to have had an impact on employers' plans to invest in employee well-being. In all, only 22% of respondents predict their organisation's employee well-being spend will increase next year,

compared with last year's survey when 39% of employers predicted an increase.

### **Employee absence and the recession**

Almost four in ten employers say the recession has increased their organisation's focus on reducing absence levels and costs.

A positive net balance of 5% of employers think employee concern over job security has had the effect of decreasing the overall level of absence (16%) compared to those that believe it has had the opposite effect (11%).

Just over 40% of respondent organisations use employee absence records as part of the criterion when selecting for redundancy.

The survey asked whether respondents had noticed an increase in people coming to work ill in the last 12 months. Just over a fifth of employers (21%) said yes; however, 67% said there had been no change in this respect.

One in five respondents said there had been an increase in reported mental health problems such as anxiety and depression in the last 12 months.

# Rates of employee absence

The average level of absence has fallen to 7.4 days per employee per year, which is the lowest level ever recorded by the CIPD *Absence Management* survey.

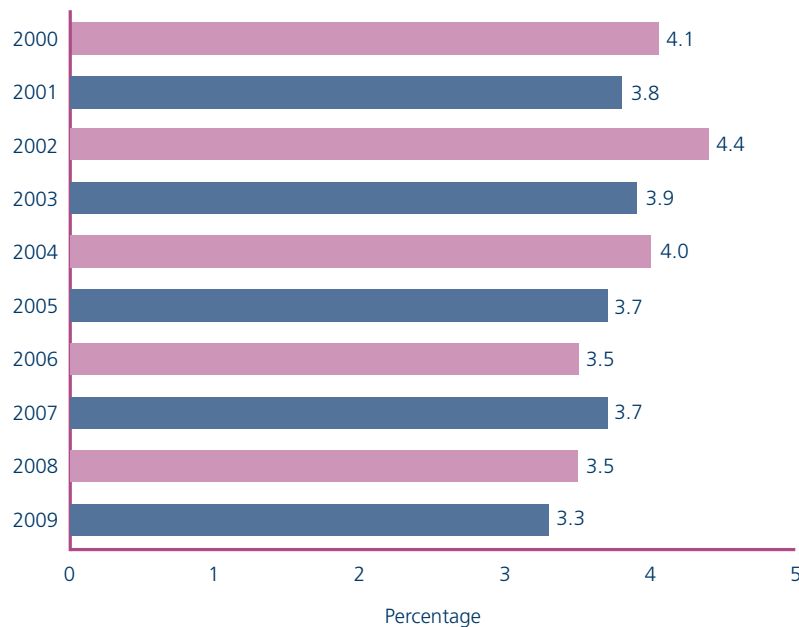
The average level of employee absence has fallen to 7.4 days per employee per year from 8.0 days per employee per year in the previous year. This is the lowest level of employee absence ever recorded by the CIPD's *Absence Management* survey. See Figure 1.

Respondents were asked to provide either the percentage of working time lost or the number of

working days lost per employee per year, based on a 228-day working year. The absence data is from the year 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008.

Just fewer than 70% of organisations (69%) record the annual employee absence rate, with public sector employers most likely to do so (76%) and non-profit organisations least likely to (67%).

Figure 1: Average working time lost (%), 2000–09



### Sector variations

The average level of absence remains highest in the public sector at 9.7 days per employee per year, a very slight drop from the previous year's figure of 9.8 days per employee per year. See Table 1.

Non-profit organisations recorded the next highest level of absence at 9.4 days per employee per year and the sector is the only one to record an increase in absence levels from last year's 8.5 days.

Employee absence levels in the manufacturing and production sector fell to 6.5 days per employee per year compared with 7.2 days for the previous 12 months.

Private sector services organisations also recorded a drop in the average level of absence from 7.2 days per employee per year to 6.4 days.

Among public services organisations, the highest level of employee absence was recorded by health service employers at 11 days per employee per year, a fall from the previous year's figure of 11.7 days. As last year, education employers reported the lowest public sector absence levels of 7.5 days, which was again slightly down from the figure for the previous year of 7.8 days.

Care services employers had the highest level of employee absence among non-profit organisations at 10.2 days per employee per year, which is an increase compared with the figure for the year before of 8.9 days. The lowest average employee absence level among non-profit organisations, of 5.1 days per employee per year, was recorded by 'other voluntary' sector organisations, a slight fall compared with the previous year's figure of 6.0 days per employee per year.

In the manufacturing and production sector, employers involved in the supply and production of electricity, gas and water have the highest average level of employee absence at 9.1 days, which is a significant increase from the previous year's figure of 5.1 days. The lowest employee absence figure among manufacturing and production employers was 3.7 days, recorded by textiles manufacturers.

In the private services sector, call centre employers had the highest average absence levels of 12.4 days, a slight reduction from the previous year's figure of 12.8 days per employee per year. IT services' employers had the lowest average employee absence figure of 4.8 days, which was up compared with the figure for the year before of 4.4 days per employee per year.

### Manual and non-manual absence levels

The average level of absence for manual workers was 8.6 days per employee per year, compared with 5.9 days for non-manual employees. See Tables 2 and 3.

Table 1: Average level of employee absence, all employees, by sector

|   |                     | <b>All employees</b>                   |   |
|---|---------------------|--|---|
|   | Number of responses | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
| <b>Manufacturing and production</b>                                       | <b>114</b>          | <b>2.9</b>                             | <b>6.5</b>                              |
| Agriculture and forestry  | 1                   | 3.0                                    | 6.8                                     |
| Chemicals, pharmaceuticals and oil  | 14                  | 2.7                                    | 6.0                                     |
| Construction  | 9                   | 1.9                                    | 4.3                                     |
| Electricity, gas and water  | 7                   | 3.8                                    | 9.1                                     |
| Engineering, electronics and metals                                       | 22                  | 2.5                                    | 5.7                                     |
| Food, drink and tobacco   | 9                   | 3.8                                    | 8.6                                     |
| General manufacturing   | 23                  | 3.1                                    | 7.0                                     |
| Paper and printing  | 2                   | 3.6                                    | 8.2                                     |
| Textiles  | 3                   | 1.6                                    | 3.7                                     |
| Other manufacturing/production  | 24                  | 3.0                                    | 6.7                                     |
| <b>Private sector services</b>  | <b>188</b>          | <b>2.8</b>                             | <b>6.4</b>                              |
| Professional services (accountancy, advertising, consultancy, legal, etc) | 37                  | 2.2                                    | 5.1                                     |
| Financial services, insurance and real estate                             | 24                  | 2.6                                    | 5.9                                     |
| Hotels, restaurants and leisure   | 5                   | 2.6                                    | 6.0                                     |
| IT services   | 16                  | 2.1                                    | 4.8                                     |
| Legal and property services   | 10                  | 2.7                                    | 6.2                                     |
| Media and publishing  | 11                  | 2.7                                    | 5.5                                     |
| Retail and wholesale  | 21                  | 3.8                                    | 8.6                                     |
| Transport and storage   | 12                  | 4.2                                    | 9.7                                     |
| Telecommunications  | 8                   | 2.8                                    | 6.4                                     |
| Other private services  | 42                  | 2.9                                    | 6.7                                     |
| Call centres  | 2                   | 5.1                                    | 12.4                                    |
| <b>Public services</b>  | <b>86</b>           | <b>4.3</b>                             | <b>9.7</b>                              |
| Education   | 12                  | 3.3                                    | 7.5                                     |
| Central government (including defence)                                    | 10                  | 4.3                                    | 9.8                                     |
| Local government  | 26                  | 4.7                                    | 10.7                                    |
| Police  | 7                   | 4.5                                    | 10.2                                    |
| Fire  | 1                   | 3.3                                    | 7.5                                     |
| Health  | 18                  | 4.8                                    | 11.0                                    |
| Other public services   | 12                  | 3.2                                    | 7.4                                     |
| <b>Voluntary, community and not-for-profit</b>                            | <b>40</b>           | <b>4.1</b>                             | <b>9.4</b>                              |
| Housing association   | 11                  | 4.2                                    | 9.8                                     |
| Charity services  | 17                  | 4.1                                    | 9.4                                     |
| Care services   | 9                   | 4.5                                    | 10.2                                    |
| Other voluntary services  | 3                   | 2.2                                    | 5.1                                     |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>399</b>          | <b>3.3</b>                             | <b>7.4</b>                              |

Table 2: Average level of employee absence, manual employees, by sector

|  | <b>Manual employees</b> |  |   |
|--|-------------------------|--|---|
|  | Number of responses     | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
| <b>Manufacturing and production</b>            | <b>34</b>               | <b>3.3</b>                             | <b>7.6</b>                              |
| Chemicals, pharmaceuticals and oil             | 1                       | 3.1                                    | 7.1                                     |
| Electricity, gas and water                     | 2                       | 2.4                                    | 5.4                                     |
| Engineering, electronics and metals            | 11                      | 2.5                                    | 5.7                                     |
| Food, drink and tobacco                        | 2                       | 3.2                                    | 7.3                                     |
| General manufacturing                          | 7                       | 4.4                                    | 10.2                                    |
| Paper and printing                             | 1                       | 7.2                                    | 16.5                                    |
| Other manufacturing/production                 | 10                      | 3.1                                    | 7.2                                     |
| <b>Private sector services</b>                 | <b>16</b>               | <b>3.1</b>                             | <b>7.1</b>                              |
| Financial services (including insurance)       | 1                       | 3.4                                    | 7.8                                     |
| Hotels, restaurants and leisure                | 1                       | 2.2                                    | 5.0                                     |
| Media and publishing                           | 1                       | 1.8                                    | 4.2                                     |
| Retail and wholesale                           | 1                       | 2.1                                    | 4.8                                     |
| Transport and storage                          | 2                       | 4.0                                    | 9.1                                     |
| Telecommunications                             | 4                       | 2.3                                    | 5.3                                     |
| Other private services                         | 6                       | 3.9                                    | 8.8                                     |
| <b>Public services</b>                         | <b>11</b>               | <b>5.3</b>                             | <b>12.1</b>                             |
| Education                                      | 1                       | 5.8                                    | 13.1                                    |
| Central government (including defence)         | 2                       | 3.0                                    | 6.8                                     |
| Local government                               | 6                       | 5.4                                    | 12.3                                    |
| Health   | 1                       | 6.5                                    | 14.8                                    |
| Other public services                          | 3                       | 4.3                                    | 9.9                                     |
| <b>Voluntary, community and not-for-profit</b> | <b>4</b>                | <b>5.2</b>                             | <b>11.8</b>                             |
| Housing association                            | 1                       | 7.7                                    | 17.5                                    |
| Charity services                               | 1                       | 6.5                                    | 14.8                                    |
| Care services                                  | 1                       | 4.4                                    | 10.0                                    |
| Other voluntary services                       | 1                       | 2.2                                    | 5.0                                     |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>56</b>               | <b>3.8</b>                             | <b>8.6</b>                              |

Table 3: Average level of employee absence, non-manual employees, by sector

|   | Non-manual employees |  |   |
|---|----------------------|--|---|
|   | Number of responses  | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
| <b>Manufacturing and production</b>                                       | <b>29</b>            | <b>2.0</b>                             | <b>4.5</b>                              |
| Chemicals, pharmaceuticals and oil  | 1                    | 1.2                                    | 2.7                                     |
| Construction  | 1                    | 0.9                                    | 2.0                                     |
| Electricity, gas and water  | 2                    | 1.3                                    | 3.0                                     |
| Engineering, electronics and metals                                       | 8                    | 1.3                                    | 3.1                                     |
| Food, drink and tobacco   | 2                    | 1.4                                    | 3.1                                     |
| General manufacturing   | 7                    | 2.4                                    | 5.6                                     |
| Paper and printing  | 1                    | 1.1                                    | 2.6                                     |
| Other manufacturing/production  | 7                    | 2.6                                    | 5.9                                     |
| <b>Private sector services</b>  | <b>41</b>            | <b>2.4</b>                             | <b>5.5</b>                              |
| Professional services (accountancy, advertising, consultancy, legal, etc) | 5                    | 2.1                                    | 5.4                                     |
| Financial services, insurance and real estate                             | 8                    | 2.7                                    | 6.2                                     |
| Hotels, catering and leisure  | 3                    | 2.0                                    | 4.5                                     |
| IT services   | 3                    | 2.0                                    | 4.6                                     |
| Legal and property services   | 3                    | 2.2                                    | 4.9                                     |
| Media (broadcasting and publishing, etc)                                  | 3                    | 1.4                                    | 3.2                                     |
| Retail and wholesale  | 1                    | 1.0                                    | 2.4                                     |
| Transport, distribution and storage                                       | 4                    | 3.2                                    | 7.2                                     |
| Telecommunications  | 1                    | 0.5                                    | 1.2                                     |
| Other private services  | 9                    | 2.8                                    | 6.4                                     |
| <b>Public services</b>  | <b>17</b>            | <b>3.7</b>                             | <b>8.5</b>                              |
| Education   | 2                    | 3.6                                    | 8.3                                     |
| Central government (including defence)                                    | 2                    | 4.2                                    | 9.5                                     |
| Local government  | 7                    | 4.1                                    | 9.3                                     |
| Health  | 1                    | 3.8                                    | 8.7                                     |
| Other public services   | 5                    | 2.7                                    | 6.8                                     |
| <b>Voluntary, community and not-for-profit</b>                            | <b>8</b>             | <b>3.8</b>                             | <b>8.8</b>                              |
| Housing association   | 2                    | 3.3                                    | 8.5                                     |
| Charity services  | 4                    | 4.2                                    | 9.7                                     |
| Care services   | 1                    | 4.4                                    | 10.0                                    |
| Other voluntary services  | 1                    | 2.2                                    | 5.0                                     |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>87</b>            | <b>2.6</b>                             | <b>5.9</b>                              |

**Proportion of respondents reporting increases or decreases in absence levels**

In all 21% of respondents said absence levels increased in their organisations with 37% reporting a decrease, 27% reporting no change and 15% not stating. Public services employers are most likely to report either an increase in absence levels (26%) or a decrease (41%).

**The effect of workforce size**

The survey finds there is a clear relationship between workforce size and absence level, with smaller organisations likely to record lower levels of absence than larger organisations. See Table 4.

Organisations employing fewer than 100 staff report average absence levels of 5.5 days per employee per year compared with 10.2 days recorded by organisations employing 2,000 or more employees. This is likely to be because people working in small organisations work in smaller teams and their absence from work is likely to be more disruptive and harder to compensate for.

**Public sector vs private sector**

The average level of public sector employee absence continues to be much higher than that of the private sector. The gap in the level of employee absence between the private sector (manufacturing and production employers and private services employers combined) and the public sector has increased compared with the previous year and is now 3.3 days per employee per year compared with 2.6 days.

The increasing gap between public and private sector absence is likely to concern policy-makers under pressure to make savings on public spending and improve public sector productivity and service levels.

There is no simple explanation for the ongoing public/private sector absence gap with a number of factors likely to account for the contrast.

It is sometimes argued that one of the reasons for the gap is that public sector organisations are typically larger than their private sector counterparts and large organisations tend to have higher levels of absence than smaller ones.

However, the CIPD survey shows that, almost without exception, public sector employers have higher levels of absence regardless of size. See Tables 5 and 6.

Table 4: The effect of workforce size

|                       | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1–99                  | 2.4                                    | 5.5                                     |
| 100–249               | 3.0                                    | 6.8                                     |
| 250–499               | 3.3                                    | 7.6                                     |
| 500–749               | 4.2                                    | 9.6                                     |
| 750–999               | 3.1                                    | 6.7                                     |
| 1,000–1,499           | 3.7                                    | 8.5                                     |
| 1,500–1,999           | 4.2                                    | 9.5                                     |
| 2,000 or more         | 4.5                                    | 10.2                                    |
| <b>Survey average</b> | <b>3.2</b>                             | <b>7.3</b>                              |

Table 5: The effect of workforce size in the private sector (manufacturing and production, and private services sector combined)

|                       | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1–99                  | 2.2                                    | 5.0                                     |
| 100–249               | 2.8                                    | 6.3                                     |
| 250–499               | 3.2                                    | 7.2                                     |
| 500–749               | 3.9                                    | 8.8                                     |
| 750–999               | 2.8                                    | 5.9                                     |
| 1,000–1,499           | 2.9                                    | 6.5                                     |
| 1,500–1,999           | 3.7                                    | 8.4                                     |
| 2,000 or more         | 3.9                                    | 9.0                                     |
| <b>Survey average</b> | <b>2.8</b>                             | <b>6.4</b>                              |

Table 6: The effect of workforce size on absence levels in the public sector

|                       | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1–99                  | 3.1                                    | 7.0                                     |
| 100–249               | 3.3                                    | 7.6                                     |
| 250–499               | 3.6                                    | 8.3                                     |
| 500–749               | 4.8                                    | 10.9                                    |
| 750–999               | 4.2                                    | 9.5                                     |
| 1,000–1,499           | 4.2                                    | 9.6                                     |
| 1,500–1,999           | 4.0                                    | 9.1                                     |
| 2,000 or more         | 4.9                                    | 11.0                                    |
| <b>Survey average</b> | <b>4.3</b>                             | <b>9.7</b>                              |

Research by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) indicates that differences in workforce demographics are likely to account for some of the public/private sector absence gap. The HSE survey, *Workplace Absence, Sickness and Ill Health 2005*, finds that, compared with the private sector, public sector organisations typically employ a higher proportion of female and older workers, who record higher than average levels of absence.

The types of job in the public sector may also be a contributory factor to higher levels of absence, with a high proportion of challenging public-facing roles, such as those involved in policing, nursing, teaching and social care.

There is also a significant contrast in absence management policy and practice between the public and private sectors. Public sector employers are more likely than private sector organisations to have adopted a range of best practice approaches to managing absence, such as ensuring the absence rate is a key performance indicator, having a trigger system in place to identify unacceptable levels of absence, and training line managers in absence-handling, as well providing access to occupational health services and providing leave for family emergencies.

However, public sector organisations are less likely than their private sector counterparts to use disciplinary procedures to manage unacceptable absence, discipline or dismiss employees for absence-related reasons, or restrict sick pay. Public sector employers also continue paying occupational sick pay for longer than private sector organisations. Employers need to find the right balance between providing support for employees and taking firm action against the minority of people that seek to take advantage of their occupational sick pay schemes. It may be that some public sector organisations have not got this balance right.

**Regional breakdown**

Across the UK, the highest level of employee absence of 10.1 days per employee per year was recorded by employers in Scotland, which represents an increase from the previous year’s figure of 9.2 days. The lowest level of employee absence at 4.9 days was recorded by organisations in East Anglia, a significant decrease from the figure for the year before of 9.3 days. See Table 7.

Table 7: Average level of absence by region

|  | Number of responses | Average working time lost per year (%) | Average days lost per employee per year |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| <b>Base</b>                              | <b>401</b>          | <b>3.2</b>                             | <b>7.4</b>                              |
| East Anglia                              | 8                   | 2.1                                    | 4.9                                     |
| East Midlands                            | 17                  | 3.8                                    | 8.6                                     |
| West Midlands                            | 25                  | 3.3                                    | 7.5                                     |
| North-east of England                    | 10                  | 3.4                                    | 7.6                                     |
| North-west of England                    | 24                  | 3.4                                    | 7.7                                     |
| South-west of England                    | 27                  | 3.5                                    | 7.8                                     |
| Yorkshire and Humberside                 | 22                  | 3.4                                    | 8.0                                     |
| South-east of England (excluding London) | 45                  | 2.6                                    | 6.0                                     |
| London                                   | 51                  | 2.8                                    | 6.5                                     |
| Scotland                                 | 41                  | 4.4                                    | 10.1                                    |
| Wales                                    | 17                  | 4.0                                    | 9.1                                     |
| Northern Ireland                         | 6                   | 3.6                                    | 8.2                                     |
| Ireland                                  | 7                   | 5.1                                    | 11.6                                    |
| Whole of UK                              | 86                  | 2.8                                    | 6.3                                     |
| Channel Islands                          | 15                  | 2.8                                    | 6.4                                     |

Base: All respondents

### Length of absence

Approximately two-thirds of working time lost to absence is accounted for by short-term absences of up to seven days, 17% is caused by absences of between eight days and four weeks, and a similar proportion is caused by absences of four weeks or longer.

Respondents were asked to estimate as a percentage the proportion of absence accounted for by: absences

of up to seven days; absences of between eight days and four weeks; and four weeks or longer. Private services sector respondents report that a larger proportion of absence is short term compared with employers in the other three main sectors and particularly those in the public sector. See Table 8.

Table 8: The length of short- and long-term absence, by workforce size and major sector

| Number of employees                                   | Number of responses | % of absence accounted for by: |                             |                      |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
|   |                     | Up to seven days               | Eight days up to four weeks | Four weeks or longer |
| 1–99  | 171                 | 80                             | 11                          | 10                   |
| 100–249   | 153                 | 68                             | 16                          | 14                   |
| 250–499   | 98                  | 64                             | 20                          | 17                   |
| 500–749   | 39                  | 62                             | 22                          | 23                   |
| 750–999   | 25                  | 66                             | 23                          | 21                   |
| 1,000–1,499   | 24                  | 60                             | 19                          | 21                   |
| 1,500–1,999   | 14                  | 65                             | 17                          | 18                   |
| 2,000 or more   | 93                  | 54                             | 21                          | 28                   |
| <b>Survey average</b>                                 | <b>617</b>          | <b>69</b>                      | <b>17</b>                   | <b>17</b>            |
| <b>Industry sector</b>                                |                     |                                |                             |                      |
| Manufacturing and production                          | 181                 | 64                             | 18                          | 18                   |
| Private sector services                               | 296                 | 76                             | 16                          | 12                   |
| Public services                                       | 135                 | 57                             | 18                          | 27                   |
| Voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations | 73                  | 67                             | 18                          | 16                   |
| <b>Survey average</b>                                 | <b>628</b>          | <b>68</b>                      | <b>17</b>                   | <b>17</b>            |

NB: The percentages in the table do not always add up to 100% as a result of some respondents' answers not adding up to 100%.

# The cost of absence

The annual cost of absence has increased to £694 from £666, however only just over four in ten employers monitor the cost of absence.

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The average cost of absence per employee per year is £692, which is a slight increase from the previous year's figure of £666.

The annual cost of absence, as last year, is highest in the public sector, averaging £784 per employee per year; however, this represents a reduction from the previous year's figure of £906 per employee per year.

Manufacturing and production employers recorded the next highest cost at £754 per employee per year, a slight fall from the figure for the year before of £759. Absence costs among non-profit organisations also fell slightly to £698 from £741 per employee per year. Private services organisations recorded the lowest annual absence costs, averaging £666 compared with the previous year's figure of £663. See Table 9.

Table 9: The average annual cost of absence per employee per year

|   | Cost (£) per employee per year |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Manufacturing and production</b>                                       | <b>754</b>                     |
| Agriculture and forestry  | 344                            |
| Chemicals, pharmaceuticals and oil  | 1169                           |
| Construction  | 582                            |
| Electricity, gas and water  | 719                            |
| Engineering, electronics and metals                                       | 684                            |
| Food, drink and tobacco   | 1057                           |
| General manufacturing   | 394                            |
| Mining and quarrying  | 0                              |
| Paper and printing  | 621                            |
| Textiles  | 553                            |
| Other manufacturing/production  | 642                            |
| <b>Private services</b>   | <b>666</b>                     |
| Professional services (accountancy, advertising, consultancy, legal, etc) | 904                            |
| Financial, insurance and real estate                                      | 478                            |
| Hotels, restaurants and leisure   | 1199                           |
| IT services   | 572                            |
| Legal and property services   | 592                            |
| Media (broadcasting and publishing, etc)                                  | 348                            |
| Retail and wholesale  | 519                            |
| Transport and storage   | 755                            |
| Telecommunications  | 547                            |
| Other private services  | 586                            |
| Call centres  | 940                            |
| <b>Public services</b>  | <b>784</b>                     |
| Education   | 684                            |
| Central government (including defence)                                    | 780                            |
| Local government  | 794                            |
| Police  | 850                            |
| Fire  | 0                              |
| Health  | 952                            |
| Other public services   | 596                            |
| <b>Voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations</b>              | <b>698</b>                     |
| Housing association   | 709                            |
| Charity services  | 836                            |
| Care services   | 542                            |
| Other voluntary services  | 256                            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>692</b>                     |

The highest cost of absence recorded by manufacturing and production employers at £1,169 per employee per year was among organisations involved in the production of chemicals, pharmaceuticals and oils. The lowest annual absence cost among employers in this sector was £344, reported by organisations involved in agriculture and forestry.

Among the public services, health care employers recorded the highest annual cost of absence at £952 per employee per year, while employers involved in other public services had the lowest annual cost of absence, averaging £596 per employee per year.

Hotel, restaurant and leisure employers had the highest cost of absence among private services organisations with an average cost of £1,199 per employee per year, compared with media and publishing employers, which recorded the lowest annual absence cost in this sector, averaging £348 per employee per year.

The highest average cost of absence in the non-profit sector was £836 per employee per year among charity services organisations, with other voluntary services reporting the lowest average absence cost of £256 per employee per year.

Only 41% of employers monitor the cost of employee absence, a figure which has remained stubbornly low over the last few years. Putting a cost on absence and the potential savings that can be made will make it more likely that an organisation's senior management team will invest in making improvements to people and absence management practices. Public services organisations are more likely than employers in the other three main sectors to cost absence but still less than half do. Manufacturing and production employers are least likely to monitor the cost of absence, with only just over a third doing so. See Table 10.

Of those employers that monitor the cost of absence, the three most commonly included costs are occupational sick pay, Statutory Sick Pay and cost of replacement labour. See Table 11.

Table 10: Organisations that monitor the cost of employee absence (%)

|            | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|------------|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes        | 41  | 37                           | 42               | 40                       | 47              |
| No         | 50  | 54                           | 53               | 52                       | 43              |
| Don't know | 6   | 8                            | 3                | 6                        | 8               |
| Not stated | 3   | 1                            | 2                | 3                        | 2               |

Table 11: Elements included in the cost of employee absence

|                             | % Organisations |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|                             | All             | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Occupational sick pay       | 72              | 75                           | 65               | 79                       | 71              |
| Statutory Sick Pay          | 57              | 67                           | 56               | 52                       | 54              |
| Cost of replacement labour  | 46              | 49                           | 40               | 48                       | 56              |
| Overtime costs              | 36              | 55                           | 28               | 28                       | 43              |
| Administration              | 16              | 18                           | 16               | 7                        | 19              |
| Cost of reduced performance | 25              | 31                           | 30               | 14                       | 18              |
| Other                       | 4               | 2                            | 6                | 3                        | 3               |

# Targets and benchmarking

Under half of employers have a target in place for reducing absence, while fewer than four in ten benchmark their absence rates against other employers.

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Just under half of employers have a target in place for reducing absence, with public sector organisations most likely to have a target (63%) and private services sector organisations least likely to (35%). See Table 12.

Fewer than four in ten employers (38%) benchmark their absence management performance against other organisations. Public services employers are most likely to benchmark their absence levels against other organisations (64%), with manufacturing and production employers least likely to benchmark (28%).

Among organisations that benchmark, 83% do so against employers in the same sector and 26% do so against organisations in the same region. Public service employers are most likely to benchmark by sector, while manufacturing and production organisations are most likely to benchmark by region. See Table 13.

Table 12: Organisations that have a target for reducing absence by sector

|  | Number of responses | % saying yes |
|--|---------------------|--------------|
| <b>Manufacturing and production</b>    | <b>181</b>          | <b>45</b>    |
| Chemicals, pharmaceuticals and oils    | 17                  | 59           |
| Construction                           | 19                  | 16           |
| Electricity, gas and water             | 10                  | 80           |
| Engineering, electronics and metals    | 39                  | 56           |
| Food, drink and tobacco                | 16                  | 75           |
| General manufacturing                  | 32                  | 72           |
| Paper and printing                     | 5                   | 60           |
| Textiles                               | 4                   | 75           |
| Other manufacturing                    | 36                  | 61           |
| <b>Private sector services</b>         | <b>296</b>          | <b>35</b>    |
| Professional services                  | 55                  | 26           |
| Financial services                     | 34                  | 32           |
| Hotels, restaurants and leisure        | 16                  | 19           |
| IT services                            | 24                  | 21           |
| Legal and property services            | 19                  | 21           |
| Media and publishing                   | 13                  | 15           |
| Retail and wholesale                   | 35                  | 54           |
| Transport and storage                  | 20                  | 65           |
| Other private services                 | 64                  | 36           |
| Call centres                           | 6                   | 33           |
| <b>Public services</b>                 | <b>135</b>          | <b>63</b>    |
| Education                              | 31                  | 29           |
| Central government (including defence) | 18                  | 67           |
| Local government                       | 39                  | 85           |
| Police                                 | 7                   | 45           |
| Fire                                   | 3                   | 67           |
| Health                                 | 24                  | 75           |
| Other public services                  | 13                  | 39           |
| <b>Non-profit organisations</b>        | <b>73</b>           | <b>38</b>    |
| Housing associations                   | 15                  | 67           |
| Charity services                       | 34                  | 24           |
| Care services                          | 16                  | 50           |
| Other voluntary services               | 8                   | 25           |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>628</b>          | <b>46</b>    |

Table 13: Organisations that benchmark their absence management performance (%)

|           | Average | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|-----------|---------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| By sector | 83      | 78                           | 79               | 93                       | 85              |
| By region | 26      | 34                           | 24               | 7                        | 30              |

# Causes of absence

Minor illnesses are the major cause of short-term absence, while acute medical conditions, stress and back pain are the major causes of long-term absence.

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Respondents were asked to rank the top five causes of short-term and long-term absence, for both manual and non-manual workers.

## Short-term absence

Minor illnesses such as colds, flu and stomach upsets are by some way the main cause of short-term absence for both manual and non-manual workers.

Among manual workers the next most significant cause of short-term absence is musculoskeletal conditions, such as neck strains and repetitive strain injury, followed by back pain and stress.

Absences as a result of home and family responsibilities and recurring medical conditions such as asthma and angina are the fifth and sixth most significant causes of absence for manual workers.

Stress is the second biggest cause of short-term absence for non-manual workers, followed by musculoskeletal conditions, home and family responsibilities and back pain. The next most significant causes of short-term absence among non-manual staff are recurring medical conditions and non-work-related injuries. See Table 14 and 15.

## Sector differences

Employers in the public sector are more likely to report musculoskeletal injuries and stress as major causes of short-term absence among manual and non-manual workers than those from the other three main sectors.

Non-profit employers most commonly cite recurring medical conditions and pregnancy-related absence as significant causes of short-term absence for both manual and non-manual employees.

Among private services organisations, home/family responsibilities and non-genuine absence are rated more highly as causes of short-term absence for manual and non-manual workers than among employers in the other sectors.

Work-related and non-work-related injuries, as well as drink- or drug-related absences, are most likely to be cited as major causes of short-term absence among manual employees by manufacturing and production employers.

Table 14: Causes of short-term absence, manual workers, by major sector (%)

|  | Respondents (%) citing this as a major cause |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|  | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Minor illness (such as colds, flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)                          | 96   | 97                           | 96               | 94                       | 94              |
| Musculoskeletal injuries (such as neck strains and repetitive strain injury but excluding back pain) | 55   | 57                           | 42               | 52                       | 73              |
| Back pain  | 55   | 60                           | 51               | 42                       | 65              |
| Stress   | 43   | 38                           | 43               | 36                       | 67              |
| Home/family responsibilities   | 39   | 44                           | 47               | 32                       | 20              |
| Recurring medical conditions (such as asthma, angina and allergies)                                  | 36   | 32                           | 35               | 48                       | 30              |
| Injuries/accidents not related to work   | 28   | 33                           | 29               | 29                       | 16              |
| Other absences not due to genuine ill health   | 27   | 28                           | 31               | 26                       | 16              |
| Work-related injuries/accidents  | 21   | 26                           | 18               | 13                       | 25              |
| Mental ill health (such as clinical depression and anxiety)  | 17   | 18                           | 16               | 23                       | 20              |
| Acute medical conditions (such as stroke, heart attack and cancer)                                   | 15   | 10                           | 18               | 16                       | 17              |
| Pregnancy-related (not maternity leave)  | 9  | 7                            | 13               | 16                       | 1               |
| Drink- or drug-related conditions  | 4  | 6                            | 6                | –                        | 3               |

Table 15: Causes of short-term absence, non-manual workers, by major sector (%)

|  | Respondents (%) citing this as a major cause |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|  | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Minor illness (such as colds, flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)                          | 97   | 96                           | 98               | 98                       | 97              |
| Stress   | 52   | 48                           | 46               | 56                       | 70              |
| Musculoskeletal injuries (such as neck strains and repetitive strain injury but excluding back pain) | 45   | 36                           | 39               | 56                       | 58              |
| Home/family responsibilities   | 43   | 43                           | 50               | 40                       | 24              |
| Back pain  | 40   | 35                           | 44               | 40                       | 41              |
| Recurring medical conditions (such as asthma, angina and allergies)                                  | 40   | 39                           | 40               | 46                       | 41              |
| Injuries/accidents not related to work   | 27   | 27                           | 32               | 27                       | 19              |
| Mental ill health (such as clinical depression and anxiety)  | 25   | 23                           | 24               | 29                       | 34              |
| Other absences not due to genuine ill health   | 24   | 25                           | 25               | 17                       | 18              |
| Acute medical conditions (such as stroke, heart attack and cancer)                                   | 17   | 19                           | 15               | 21                       | 24              |
| Pregnancy-related (not maternity leave)  | 16   | 9                            | 20               | 21                       | 12              |
| Work-related injuries/accidents  | 5  | 5                            | 3                | 6                        | 10              |
| Drink- or drug-related conditions  | 3  | 2                            | 3                | 4                        | 3               |

### Long-term absence

Employers rate acute medical conditions, back pain, musculoskeletal conditions and stress as the top four causes of long-term absence among manual employees. Mental ill health and non-work-related injuries and accidents are also cited as significant causes of long-term absence for manual staff.

Stress is the number one cause of long-term absence among non-manual employees, followed by acute medical conditions, mental ill health, such as clinical depression and anxiety, and musculoskeletal conditions.

Back pain and recurring medical conditions are also commonly cited as major causes of long-term absence among non-manual employees. See Tables 16 and 17.

### Sector differences

Public sector employers more commonly rate acute medical conditions, back pain, musculoskeletal conditions and stress as significant causes of long-term absence among manual workers.

Manufacturing and production employers are most likely to identify work-related injuries and home and family responsibilities as major causes of long-term absence among manual workers.

Non-work-related injuries and pregnancy-related absence are reported most commonly as significant causes of long-term absence for manual employees by private services sector organisations.

Non-profit employers are most likely to cite recurring medical conditions as a main cause of long-term absence for manual workers.

Non-profit employers most commonly report stress and acute medical conditions as significant causes of long-term absence for non-manual employees.

Mental ill health, musculoskeletal conditions and back pain are most likely to be cited by public sector organisations as major causes of long-term absence among non-manual employees.

Private services employers are most likely to report non-work-related accidents as a major cause of non-manual employee absence, while manufacturing and production organisations most commonly identify minor illnesses as a cause of long-term absence for non-manual employees.

Table 16: Causes of long-term absence, manual workers, by major sector (%)

|   | Respondents (%) citing this as a major cause |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|---|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|   | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Acute medical conditions (such as stroke, heart attack and cancer)                                    | 60   | 60                           | 59               | 48                       | 65              |
| Back pain   | 53   | 58                           | 49               | 41                       | 62              |
| Musculoskeletal injuries (such as neck strains and repetitive strain injury/ but excluding back pain) | 49   | 47                           | 35               | 48                       | 76              |
| Stress  | 49   | 38                           | 48               | 59                       | 73              |
| Mental ill health (such as clinical depression and anxiety)   | 38   | 34                           | 36               | 48                       | 49              |
| Injuries/accidents not related to work  | 31   | 36                           | 36               | 28                       | 17              |
| Recurring medical conditions (such as asthma, angina and allergies)                                   | 31   | 32                           | 28               | 41                       | 30              |
| Work-related injuries/accidents   | 22   | 26                           | 19               | 17                       | 23              |
| Minor illness (such as colds, flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)                           | 18   | 18                           | 22               | 10                       | 18              |
| Home/family responsibilities  | 14   | 20                           | 15               | 17                       | 8               |
| Other absences not due to genuine ill health  | 10   | 16                           | 10               | 3                        | 8               |
| Pregnancy-related (not maternity leave)   | 8  | 5                            | 12               | 10                       | 9               |
| Drink- or drug-related conditions   | 5  | 7                            | 4                | 3                        | 3               |

Table 17: Causes of long-term absence, non-manual workers, by major sector (%)

|   | Respondents (%) citing this as a major cause |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|---|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|   | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Stress  | 56   | 53                           | 46               | 73                       | 72              |
| Acute medical conditions (such as stroke, heart attack and cancer)                                    | 54   | 54                           | 53               | 58                       | 54              |
| Mental ill health (such as clinical depression and anxiety)   | 45   | 36                           | 43               | 47                       | 60              |
| Musculoskeletal injuries (such as neck strains and repetitive strain injury, but excluding back pain) | 42   | 39                           | 31               | 51                       | 65              |
| Back pain   | 36   | 39                           | 32               | 31                       | 46              |
| Recurring medical conditions (such as asthma, angina and allergies)                                   | 32   | 35                           | 26               | 49                       | 35              |
| Injuries/accidents not related to work  | 32   | 29                           | 34               | 33                       | 22              |
| Minor illness (such as colds, flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)                           | 21   | 25                           | 24               | 13                       | 18              |
| Home/family responsibilities  | 18   | 17                           | 17               | 27                       | 17              |
| Pregnancy-related (not maternity leave)   | 14   | 14                           | 18               | 20                       | 9               |
| Other absences not due to genuine ill health  | 12   | 11                           | 11               | 13                       | 17              |
| Work-related injuries/accidents   | 6  | 3                            | 4                | 4                        | 14              |
| Drink- or drug-related conditions   | 3  | 3                            | 2                | 7                        | 4               |

# Work-related stress

The top three causes of work-related stress are workload, management style and relationships at work. There has been a reduction in the proportion of employers reporting an increase in stress-related absence.

More than a quarter of employers (27%) report an increase in stress-related absence, with 15% reporting a decrease and 40% of respondent organisations citing no change. In all, 16% of respondents did not know one way or the other. See Table 18.

The proportion of employers reporting an increase in stress-related absence has decreased compared with the previous year's figure of 30%. The proportion of employers reporting a decrease in stress-related absence has also increased since the previous year, when just 11% of employers reported a reduction. See Table 18.

This apparent reduction in stress-related absence could be because employees are shying away from taking time off for stress in case it impacts on their job security during a time when many employers are making redundancies.

The top three causes of work-related stress are workload, management style and relationships at work. Organisational change/restructuring, pressure to meet targets and lack of employee support from line managers are the next most significant causes of work-related stress. There is no change in the order of the top six causes of work-related stress since last year. However, job insecurity has jumped two places and is now the seventh ranked cause of work-related stress, which is perhaps not surprising given the impact of the recession on the labour market. See Table 19.

Table 18: Proportion of employers reporting increases or decreases in stress-related absence (%)

|                 | % Organisations |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|                 | All             | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Increased       | 27              | 28                           | 23               | 30                       | 36              |
| Decreased       | 15              | 16                           | 13               | 14                       | 19              |
| Stayed the same | 40              | 44                           | 48               | 37                       | 25              |
| Don't know      | 15              | 12                           | 15               | 14                       | 18              |
| Not stated      | 3               | 0                            | 1                | 6                        | 2               |

Table 19: The causes of work-related stress (%)

|  | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|--|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Workloads/volume of work                     | 55  | 56                           | 57               | 47                       | 58              |
| Management style                             | 47  | 45                           | 47               | 40                       | 50              |
| Relationships at work                        | 42  | 49                           | 39               | 40                       | 48              |
| Organisational change/restructuring          | 34  | 31                           | 26               | 47                       | 50              |
| Pressure to meet targets                     | 22  | 25                           | 23               | 15                       | 21              |
| Lack of employee support from line managers  | 19  | 18                           | 14               | 20                       | 16              |
| Job insecurity                               | 13  | 26                           | 17               | 11                       | 9               |
| Long hours                                   | 13  | 10                           | 17               | 20                       | 8               |
| Lack of control over how work is carried out | 9   | 7                            | 10               | 14                       | 10              |
| Poorly designed jobs                         | 7   | 8                            | 8                | 12                       | 7               |
| Lack of consultation                         | 7   | 6                            | 5                | 10                       | 12              |
| Lack of training                             | 4   | 4                            | 6                | 5                        | 1               |

In all, two-thirds (66%) of employers are taking steps to identify and reduce stress in the workplace, according to the survey. Public sector employers are most likely to be doing so (85%) and private service sector employers least likely (57%).

Smaller employers are less likely than larger organisations to be taking action to manage stress. In all, 59% of organisations employing up to 50 people are taking steps to identify and reduce stress at work, rising to 81% of employers with more than 10,000 employees.

Of those employers taking action to manage stress, the most popular approaches are using staff surveys, stress risk assessments and training in stress management for managers or staff. See Table 20. The provision of flexible working and the use of a written stress management policy or guidance are also commonly used by employers that are taking action to manage stress. Public sector organisations are most likely to have put a range of measures in place to help manage stress.

### The Health and Safety Executive's stress management standards

The survey asked respondents whether their organisation is using or planning to use the Health and Safety Executive's stress management standards, which provide step-by-step guidance to conducting a stress risk assessment. Under health and safety law, employers have a duty to identify and manage stress at work.

Just over four in ten employers are already using the HSE stress management standards (26%) or are planning to introduce them (17%). In all, 15% said they are not using the HSE stress management standards and have no plans to use them, while 22% did not know if the standards were in use or if their organisation had plans to introduce them. Just under a fifth of respondents had not heard of the HSE's stress management standards. Public sector employers are most likely to be using the standards or planning to implement them, with manufacturing and production and private services employers least likely to be using or planning to use the standards.

Table 20: How organisations are taking action to identify and reduce stress at work.

|  | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|--|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Staff surveys  | 61  | 51                           | 55               | 71                       | 77              |
| Stress risk assessments/stress audits                    | 59  | 55                           | 49               | 58                       | 72              |
| Training for managers/staff                              | 58  | 51                           | 54               | 56                       | 70              |
| Flexible working options / improved work-life balance    | 55  | 36                           | 52               | 58                       | 72              |
| Written stress policy/guidance                           | 46  | 41                           | 42               | 44                       | 55              |
| Greater involvement of occupational health professionals | 44  | 48                           | 29               | 47                       | 60              |
| Provision of employee assistance programme               | 38  | 37                           | 37               | 29                       | 44              |
| Focus groups   | 20  | 17                           | 20               | 16                       | 29              |
| Changes in work organisation                             | 17  | 12                           | 21               | 9                        | 18              |

# Managing absence

Return-to-work interviews and providing access to occupational health services are the most effective approaches to managing absence.

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The most commonly used approach to managing short-term absence is the use of return-to-work interviews, with 83% of organisations using them, followed by trigger systems to review attendance (74%), the provision of sickness absence information to line managers (73%) and the use of disciplinary procedures to manage unacceptable levels of employee absence (73%). About six in ten employers provide leave for family circumstances and ensure that line managers take primary responsibility for managing absence, while just under half train managers in absence management and restrict sick pay. See Table 21.

Just over 40% of employers provide access to flexible working and occupational health services as part of their approach to managing short-term absence. In all, 38% of respondent organisations use the employee absence level as a key performance indicator and a quarter of employers use absence records as a criterion in making decisions about recruitment and promotion.

Just 1% of employers use any form of outsourced solution to help them manage short-term absence.

Public sector employers are again more likely than employers in the private services and manufacturing and production sectors to employ a range of the most commonly used approaches for managing short-term absence. However, public sector employers are significantly less likely than the private sector to use disciplinary procedures or restrict sick pay for unacceptable levels of absence.

Table 21: Absence management approaches for short-term absence

|  | % of organisations using the following approaches to manage short-term absence |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|  | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Return-to-work interviews  | 83   | 89                           | 80               | 78                       | 86              |
| Trigger mechanisms to review attendance  | 74   | 74                           | 71               | 77                       | 82              |
| Sickness absence information provided to line managers                                 | 73   | 78                           | 71               | 70                       | 76              |
| Disciplinary procedures used for unacceptable absence                                  | 73   | 86                           | 72               | 66                       | 66              |
| Leave for family circumstances   | 60   | 56                           | 57               | 73                       | 66              |
| Line managers take primary responsibility for managing absence                         | 59   | 55                           | 57               | 67                       | 72              |
| Managers are trained in absence-handling   | 49   | 55                           | 43               | 44                       | 60              |
| Restricting sick pay   | 46   | 53                           | 60               | 34                       | 18              |
| Flexible working   | 44   | 34                           | 39               | 55                       | 64              |
| Occupational health involvement  | 42   | 52                           | 26               | 43                       | 62              |
| Change to working patterns or environment  | 39   | 34                           | 33               | 41                       | 56              |
| Absence is a key performance indicator   | 38   | 46                           | 28               | 33                       | 51              |
| Capability procedure   | 36   | 36                           | 26               | 40                       | 53              |
| Employee assistance programme  | 34   | 30                           | 32               | 38                       | 42              |
| Health promotion   | 33   | 33                           | 25               | 23                       | 56              |
| Stress counselling   | 29   | 27                           | 17               | 32                       | 59              |
| Attendance record is a recruitment criterion   | 25   | 19                           | 21               | 27                       | 38              |
| Employees' absence taken into account when considering promotion                       | 24   | 31                           | 24               | 18                       | 24              |
| Tailored support for line managers (such as online support or care conference with HR) | 23   | 20                           | 20               | 19                       | 36              |
| Risk assessment to aid return to work after long-term absence                          | 17   | 21                           | 13               | 21                       | 24              |
| Physiotherapy services   | 14   | 16                           | 6                | 4                        | 36              |
| Nominated absence case manager/management team   | 13   | 10                           | 11               | 11                       | 24              |
| Attendance bonuses or incentives   | 12   | 20                           | 14               | 8                        | 3               |
| Rehabilitation programme   | 12   | 16                           | 6                | 11                       | 22              |
| Attendance driven by the board   | 10   | 12                           | 8                | 7                        | 17              |
| Outsourced absence management process  | 1  | 2                            | 2                | 0                        | 1               |

### Most effective approaches for managing short-term absence

Return-to-work interviews are by some way the most highly rated approach to managing short-term absence, with almost two-thirds of respondents citing them as one of the three most effective measures.

The next most effective approaches to managing short-term absence are trigger mechanisms, the use of disciplinary procedures and restricting sick pay.

Occupational health support and training managers in absence management are also ranked highly as effective measures.

Manufacturing and production employers are most likely to cite return-to-work interviews as the most effective approach to managing short-term absence. Public sector respondents more commonly cite trigger mechanisms as a top three most effective approach than employers in the three other main sectors. Private services sector employers are more likely than other employers to identify restricting sick pay as being

effective for managing short-term absence, while non-profit employees rank the use of occupational health services most highly compared with those in the three other main sectors. See Table 22.

### Managing long-term absence

Return-to-work interviews are also the most commonly used approach to managing long-term absence, with 74% of organisations using them for this purpose. The next most widely used approaches to managing long-term absence are the use of risk assessments following return to work after long-term absence, the provision of employee absence information for line managers and the use of occupational health services, with about six in ten employers using these measures.

More than half of employers also use trigger mechanisms to identify high levels of absence, flexible working and changes in working patterns or environment as part of their approach to managing long-term absence. See Table 23.

Table 22: The most effective absence management approaches for short-term absence

|  | % of organisations citing as a top three most effective approach for managing short-term absence |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|  | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Return-to-work interviews                                      | 64   | 67                           | 63               | 66                       | 59              |
| Trigger mechanisms to review attendance                        | 29   | 32                           | 23               | 26                       | 38              |
| Disciplinary procedures for unacceptable absence               | 23   | 34                           | 24               | 15                       | 12              |
| Restricting sick pay   | 16   | 18                           | 24               | 11                       | 2               |
| Occupational health involvement                                | 9  | 9                            | 5                | 15                       | 14              |
| Managers are trained in absence-handling                       | 9  | 11                           | 7                | 7                        | 10              |
| Line managers take primary responsibility for managing absence | 9  | 6                            | 10               | 7                        | 13              |
| Sickness absence information given to line managers            | 8  | 4                            | 8                | 6                        | 12              |
| Flexible working   | 6  | 4                            | 7                | 10                       | 5               |
| Leave for family circumstances                                 | 5  | 1                            | 5                | 6                        | 8               |

Table 23: Absence management approaches for long-term absence

|  | % of organisations using the following approaches to manage short-term absence |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|  | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Return-to-work interviews  | 74   | 80                           | 69               | 77                       | 82              |
| Risk assessment to aid return to work after long-term absence                          | 61   | 66                           | 54               | 60                       | 70              |
| Sickness absence information given to line managers                                    | 60   | 66                           | 51               | 63                       | 70              |
| Occupational health involvement  | 60   | 70                           | 46               | 64                       | 76              |
| Trigger mechanisms to review attendance  | 58   | 65                           | 47               | 60                       | 72              |
| Flexible working   | 56   | 48                           | 52               | 66                       | 72              |
| Changes to working patterns or environment   | 51   | 45                           | 46               | 55                       | 67              |
| Capability procedure   | 45   | 45                           | 34               | 56                       | 67              |
| Disciplinary procedures used for unacceptable absence                                  | 44   | 53                           | 38               | 44                       | 50              |
| Managers are trained in absence-handling   | 42   | 41                           | 35               | 40                       | 58              |
| Restricting sick pay   | 41   | 48                           | 44               | 37                       | 30              |
| Line managers take primary responsibility for managing absence                         | 39   | 40                           | 29               | 41                       | 62              |
| Rehabilitation programme used  | 36   | 49                           | 27               | 27                       | 48              |
| Stress counselling   | 36   | 33                           | 25               | 43                       | 62              |
| Leave for family circumstances   | 35   | 37                           | 30               | 41                       | 42              |
| Employee assistance programme  | 35   | 34                           | 31               | 36                       | 46              |
| Absence rate is a key performance indicator  | 33   | 40                           | 21               | 32                       | 48              |
| Health promotion   | 31   | 30                           | 23               | 23                       | 53              |
| Tailored support for line managers (such as online support or care conference with HR) | 27   | 24                           | 20               | 25                       | 47              |
| Attendance record is a recruitment criterion   | 21   | 15                           | 15               | 29                       | 36              |
| Nominated case manager/ management team  | 17   | 15                           | 14               | 14                       | 32              |
| Employee absence taken into account when considering promotion                         | 16   | 21                           | 15               | 11                       | 17              |
| Attendance driven by the board   | 9  | 10                           | 7                | 6                        | 15              |
| Attendance bonuses or incentives   | 8  | 15                           | 8                | 7                        | 3               |
| Outsourced absence management process  | 1  | 1                            | 1                | 0                        | 1               |

### Most effective approaches for managing long-term absence

The involvement of occupational health professionals is identified as the most effective approach for managing long-term absence by respondents from all of the four main sectors. Return-to-work interviews are also rated highly for the effective management of long-term, as well as short-term, absence. The use of flexible working, as well as rehabilitation programmes to enable a consistent and co-ordinated approach to help employees return to work after long-term absence, are also rated highly. See Table 24.

Public sector organisations are most likely to rate occupational health services as most effective, probably as they are also more likely than employers in the three other main sectors to provide access to such services. Non-profit organisations are most likely to rate return-to-work interviews as effective, while manufacturing and production employers most commonly identify the use of rehabilitation programmes as effective.

Private services sector employers most commonly identify flexible working as effective for managing long-term absence.

Table 24: The most effective absence management approaches for long-term absence

|  | % of organisations citing as a top three most effective approach for managing short-term absence |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|  | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Occupational health involvement  | 44   | 47                           | 32               | 52                       | 57              |
| Return-to-work interviews  | 17   | 15                           | 18               | 25                       | 17              |
| Flexible working   | 16   | 15                           | 21               | 19                       | 10              |
| Rehabilitation programme   | 15   | 24                           | 12               | 10                       | 14              |
| Changes to working pattern or environment  | 12   | 12                           | 10               | 11                       | 13              |
| Capability procedure restricting sick pay  | 10   | 13                           | 9                | 8                        | 11              |
| Employee assistance programme  | 6  | 4                            | 8                | 7                        | 6               |
| Risk assessment to aid return to work after long-term absence                              | 6  | 8                            | 7                | 7                        | 4               |
| Tailored support for line managers (for example online support or care conference with HR) | 5  | 3                            | 6                | 0                        | 10              |
| Managers are trained in absence-handling   | 5  | 3                            | 4                | 7                        | 7               |
| Line managers take primary responsibility for managing absence                             | 5  | 5                            | 2                | 7                        | 8               |

## Line manager behaviour in supporting return to work

The CIPD is involved in a joint research project with the British Occupational Health Research Foundation (BOHRF) exploring the role of the line manager in supporting employees in making effective and lasting returns to work after long-term absence. To support this work, this year's CIPD absence management survey questionnaire included a question asking HR practitioners to identify the most important thing a line manager can do to support returns to work. See Table 25.

Table 25: The most important thing a line manager can do to support an employee's return to work

|   | % of respondents identifying as the most important |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|---|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|   | All  | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Remain in contact with the employee during their absence  | 38   | 38                           | 37               | 38                       | 45              |
| Understand the nature of the employee's illness and how the symptoms may impact on their return to work | 24   | 25                           | 26               | 18                       | 19              |
| Discuss possible adjustments to work with the returning employee  | 19   | 22                           | 16               | 21                       | 19              |
| Have regular one-to-ones to discuss progress  | 11   | 14                           | 13               | 4                        | 8               |
| Set realistic objectives to help the employee get back up to speed                                      | 7  | 8                            | 7                | 11                       | 8               |
| Provide flexibility over working hours  | 4  | 6                            | 3                | 1                        | 4               |
| Find ways of welcoming the employee back into the team  | 3  | 3                            | 3                | 3                        | 2               |

# Employee well-being

The recession appears to have had an impact on employers' plans to invest in employee well-being with a significant reduction in the proportion of organisations anticipating increasing investment in this area over the coming year.

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A third of employers (33%) have an employee well-being strategy in place, a slight increase from last year's figure of 30%. Public sector organisations are most likely to have an employee well-being strategy (58%), with non-profit organisations least likely to (18%).

The most commonly provided employee well-being benefit is access to counselling services, with nearly half of employers offering this benefit. About 7% of organisations restrict the provision of counselling services to senior-level staff.

Employee assistance programmes, stop-smoking support and subsidised gym membership are the next most commonly provided benefits, with most employers that offer them doing so for all employees.

Healthy canteen options are another popular employee well-being benefit, provided by 23% of employers to all employees and by a further 3% to senior-level staff.

Private medical insurance is provided to all employees by just under a quarter of employers, with 27% providing this benefit to senior-level employees. See Table 26.

Table 26: Employee well-being benefits provided by employers (%)

|  | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|--|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Access to counselling service</b>                                       |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 45  | 37                           | 36               | 53                       | 73              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 7   | 9                            | 5                | 12                       | 9               |
| <b>Employee assistance programme</b>                                       |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 34  | 31                           | 32               | 40                       | 42              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 4   | 5                            | 3                | 8                        | 4               |
| <b>Stop-smoking support</b>  |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 28  | 33                           | 16               | 18                       | 57              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 2   | 3                            | 2                | 0                        | 3               |
| <b>Subsidised gym membership</b>   |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 27  | 26                           | 25               | 22                       | 39              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 3   | 3                            | 3                | 1                        | 3               |
| <b>Healthy canteen options</b>   |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 23  | 25                           | 17               | 12                       | 47              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 3   | 4                            | 2                | 0                        | 5               |
| <b>Private medical insurance</b>   |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 23  | 27                           | 37               | 10                       | 4               |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 27  | 43                           | 32               | 12                       | 3               |
| <b>Long-term disability/ permanent health insurance/ income protection</b> |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 21  | 25                           | 28               | 14                       | 7               |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 9   | 12                           | 12               | 3                        | 2               |
| <b>Health screening</b>  |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 20  | 29                           | 15               | 14                       | 26              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 10  | 12                           | 12               | 3                        | 4               |
| <b>Advice on healthy eating</b>  |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 17  | 19                           | 12               | 8                        | 33              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 1   | 2                            | 1                | 0                        | 3               |
| <b>Health care cash plans</b>  |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 16  | 19                           | 16               | 12                       | 14              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 3   | 5                            | 4                | 3                        | 1               |
| <b>Access to physiotherapy</b>   |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 16  | 17                           | 8                | 7                        | 36              |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 3   | 4                            | 2                | 1                        | 3               |
| <b>Critical illness insurance</b>  |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees  | 13  | 18                           | 19               | 6                        | 4               |
| Depends on grade/seniority   | 11  | 18                           | 14               | 3                        | 4               |

Table 26: Employee well-being benefits provided by employers (%) (continued)

|   | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|---|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Dental illness insurance</b>                             |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 12  | 15                           | 14               | 10                       | 6               |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 4   | 5                            | 7                | 0                        | 1               |
| <b>Free fresh fruit</b>                                     |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 10  | 6                            | 15               | 8                        | 4               |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 1   | 2                            | 1                | 0                        | 1               |
| <b>In-house gym</b>   |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 10  | 7                            | 6                | 8                        | 24              |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 1   | 2                            | 1                | 0                        | 1               |
| <b>On-site massage</b>                                      |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 7   | 7                            | 7                | 4                        | 12              |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 1   | 1                            | 1                | 0                        | 1               |
| <b>Walking/pedometer initiatives</b>                        |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 7   | 6                            | 7                | 3                        | 11              |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 1   | 1                            | 1                | 0                        | 2               |
| <b>Personal accident insurance</b>                          |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 5   | 5                            | 4                | 1                        | 10              |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 4   | 6                            | 5                | 4                        | 2               |
| <b>Personalised healthy living programmes for employees</b> |     |                              |                  |                          |                 |
| All employees   | 5   | 6                            | 4                | 1                        | 10              |
| Depends on grade/seniority                                  | 1   | 1                            | 1                | 0                        | 2               |

The recession appears to have had an impact on employers' plans to invest in employee well-being. In all, only 22% of respondents predict their organisation's employee well-being spend will increase next year, compared with last year's survey when 39% of employers predicted an increase in employee well-being investment over the coming year. However, just 7% of respondents are predicting their organisation will cut back on employee well-being over the next 12 months (2% in the 2008 survey), with 48% believing investment in this area will remain static. In all, 18% of respondents said they did not know.

Public sector respondents are most optimistic about their organisations' investment in employee well-being, with 31% predicting an increase in spending and 5% a decrease. Manufacturing and production employers are least likely to increase employee well-being investment, with just 18% of respondents from this sector predicting an increase and 8% anticipating a decrease.

# Employee absence and the recession

Nearly four in ten employers say the recession has increased their organisation's focus on reducing absence levels and costs.

Almost four in ten employers say the recession has increased their organisation's focus on reducing absence levels and cost. A total of 16% say that it has not had this effect and 41% report that the recession has made no difference in this respect. Manufacturing and production and private services sector employers are by some way more likely to say that their organisation's focus on reducing absence levels and costs has increased as a result of the recession. See Table 27.

## Job security and absence

In all, 56% of respondent organisations have made redundancies in the last 12 months and 22% are planning to make redundancies in the coming six months.

About two-thirds of manufacturing and production (66%) and private services sector (66%) employers have made redundancies in the last 12 months compared with 48% of non-profit organisations and 32% of public sector employers.

Just over a fifth (22%) of organisations are planning to make redundancies in the coming six months. Again manufacturing and production (26%) and private services sector (24%) organisations are more likely to be planning job cuts than non-profit organisations (21%) and public sector employers (20%).

Table 27: Respondents saying the recession has increased their organisation's focus on reducing absence levels and costs (%)

|                    | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|--------------------|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes                | 38  | 43                           | 45               | 32                       | 26              |
| No                 | 16  | 16                           | 14               | 19                       | 18              |
| Made no difference | 41  | 38                           | 39               | 41                       | 47              |
| Don't know         | 3   | 2                            | 1                | 3                        | 6               |
| Not stated         | 3   | 1                            | 2                | 6                        | 4               |

Table 28: Respondents saying employee concerns over job security on absence levels have had the effect of increasing or decreasing the overall level of absence (%)

|  | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|--|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Increasing the overall level of absence  | 11  | 9                            | 12               | 10                       | 13              |
| Decreasing the overall level of absence  | 16  | 21                           | 20               | 4                        | 7               |
| Has made no difference to absence levels | 55  | 56                           | 55               | 59                       | 49              |
| Don't know                               | 15  | 12                           | 11               | 21                       | 26              |
| Not stated                               | 4   | 1                            | 1                | 7                        | 5               |

Table 29: The proportion of organisations using employee absence records as part of the criteria when selecting for redundancy (%)

|            | All | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
|------------|-----|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes        | 41  | 60                           | 44               | 27                       | 22              |
| No         | 42  | 28                           | 43               | 58                       | 52              |
| Don't know | 12  | 11                           | 10               | 8                        | 21              |
| Not stated | 4   | 2                            | 2                | 7                        | 6               |

A positive net balance of 5% of employers think employee concern over job security has the effect of decreasing the overall level of absence. In all, 16% of employers say that employee concern over job security in their organisation has had the effect of decreasing the overall level of absence, compared with 11% who believe the opposite. Just over half of respondents don't think concerns over job security have made any difference to employee absence and 15% don't know. Manufacturing and production employers and private services sector organisations are more likely to believe that employee concerns over job security have had the effect of decreasing absence levels than employers in the other two main sectors. See Table 28.

#### Absence records and selecting for redundancy

Just over 40% of respondent organisations use employee absence records as part of the criterion when selecting for redundancy, with 42% not using absence records for this purpose and 12% of respondents not knowing if they are used or not. Manufacturing and production organisations (60%) and private services sector employers (44%) are significantly more likely to use absence records when selecting for redundancy in comparison with employers in the non-profit or public sectors. See Table 29.

#### Presenteeism

One possible response to increased employee concerns over job insecurity is an increase in the proportion of people that struggle into work sick. The survey asked whether respondents had noticed an increase in people coming to work ill in the last 12 months. Just over a fifth of employers (21%) said yes, but 67% said they had not noticed an increase. In all, 9% of respondents did not know.

Research by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health estimates the annual cost of such 'presenteeism' attributable to mental health problems amounts to £605 for every employee in the workforce.

Line managers should be aware of changes in employees' performance and behaviour and not just their attendance, which might indicate that all is not well.

#### Mental health

One in five respondents said there had been an increase in reported mental health problems such as anxiety and depression in the last 12 months. Public services employers are most likely to have noticed an increase (29%), while manufacturing and production organisations are least likely to (19%). See Table 30.

Table 30: Respondents reporting an increase in reported mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, among employees in the last 12 months.

|            | % Respondents |                              |                  |                          |                 |
|------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|            | All           | Manufacturing and production | Private services | Non-profit organisations | Public services |
| Yes        | 21            | 19                           | 22               | 23                       | 29              |
| No         | 65            | 71                           | 68               | 60                       | 51              |
| Don't know | 11            | 10                           | 8                | 10                       | 17              |
| Not stated | 3             | 1                            | 2                | 7                        | 4               |

# Conclusions

Almost four in ten organisations have increased their focus on reducing absence levels and costs as a result of the recession. This might partly explain the drop in the average level of employee absence to 7.4 days per employee per year, which is the lowest level recorded by the CIPD's absence management survey since it began in 2000.

Another reason for the fall in the average level of absence might be increased employee concern over job security. A positive net balance of employers think that staff concern over job security has had the effect of decreasing the average level of absence. This is perhaps not surprising given that 56% of respondent organisations have made redundancies in the last 12 months and that four in ten employers use employee absence data as part of the criterion when selecting for redundancy.

One potential consequence of employee fears over job security is that some may feel under pressure to come into work when they are not well. A fifth of respondents reported an increase in this type of 'presenteeism'. Research by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health estimates the annual cost of 'presenteeism' attributable to mental health problems amounts to £605 for every employee in the workforce. Line managers should be aware of changes in employees' performance and behaviour and not just their attendance, which might indicate that all is not well. Joint research by the CIPD, the Health and Safety Executive and Investors in People on the link between line management behaviour and stress highlights the importance of line managers having regular one-to-one conversations with their employees, regularly asking them how they are and having an interest in their lives outside work. Managers that exhibit these behaviours are more likely to know if someone is not well enough to be at work.

The survey shows that a fifth of employers have seen an increase in reported mental health problems such as depression and anxiety in the last 12 months. Again it is line managers who are best placed to identify employees that are struggling to cope at work for whatever reason. In many cases early referral to occupational health services or encouraging someone with a mental health problem to see their GP sooner rather than later will help support their recovery and return to work.

The survey also reveals that the gap between average public and private sector absence levels has increased to 3.3 days from 2.6 days. The increasing gap between the public and private sector is likely to concern policy-makers under pressure to make savings on public spending and improve public sector productivity and service levels. There is no straightforward explanation for the public/private absence gap, with a number of factors at play. These include differences in demographic profiles between the sectors, with a higher proportion of women and older workers in the public sector. The public sector also has a higher proportion of challenging public-facing roles, such as those in policing, nursing, teaching and social care. These front-line public service workers frequently have to deal with the public in difficult and emotionally charged situations, which probably contribute to higher levels of stress-related absence in the public sector.

There is also a fundamental difference in management culture and absence management practice between the public and private services. The public sector is more likely than the private sector to: use trigger mechanisms to identify high levels/patterns of absence; provide leave for family circumstances; and train line managers in managing absence. Public services employers are also more likely than their private sector counterparts to provide access to occupational health services, counselling services and physiotherapy.

However, CIPD research shows public sector employers are less likely than private sector organisations to refer to disciplinary procedures in absence policies, and are less likely to discipline or dismiss employees for unacceptable levels of absence. Public sector organisations are also less likely to restrict sick pay to help manage absence, continue to pay occupational sick pay for longer to those off on long-term sick leave and they are also less likely to use employees' absence records as part of the criterion when selecting for redundancy.

Effective absence management involves finding a balance between providing support to help employees with health problems stay in and return to work and taking consistent and firm action against employees that try and take advantage of organisations' occupational sick pay schemes. Some public sector employers have still not got this balance quite right.

# Background to survey

In March 2009 an online survey questionnaire was sent out to 12,015 CIPD people management specialists in the UK; this generated 642 responses.

The survey included 36 questions exploring absence levels, costs and causes, as well as the most effective absence management approaches. This year's survey included a focus section on the impact of the recession on employee absence rates.

The average size of organisation was 2,974 employees. In all, 26.4% of responses were from the public sector, 43.2% were from the private services sector, 10.65% were from non-profit organisations and 19.7% were from public sector employers.

Table 31: Distribution of responses by sector

|   | Number of responses |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>Manufacturing and production</b>                                       | <b>181</b>          |
| Agriculture and forestry  | 2                   |
| Chemicals, oils and pharmaceuticals                                       | 17                  |
| Construction  | 19                  |
| Electricity, gas and water  | 10                  |
| Engineering, electronics and metals                                       | 39                  |
| Food, drink and tobacco   | 16                  |
| General manufacturing   | 32                  |
| Paper and printing  | 5                   |
| Textiles  | 4                   |
| Other manufacturing/production  | 36                  |
| <b>Private sector services</b>  | <b>296</b>          |
| Professional services (accountancy, advertising, consultancy, legal, etc) | 55                  |
| Finance, insurance and real estate  | 34                  |
| Hotels, catering and leisure  | 16                  |
| IT services   | 24                  |
| Legal and property services   | 19                  |
| Media and publishing  | 13                  |
| Retail and wholesale  | 35                  |
| <b>Transport and storage</b>  | <b>20</b>           |
| Telecommunications  | 10                  |
| Other private services  | 64                  |
| Call centres  | 6                   |
| <b>Public services</b>  | <b>135</b>          |
| Education   | 31                  |
| Central government (including defence)                                    | 18                  |
| Local government  | 39                  |
| Police  | 7                   |
| Fire  | 3                   |
| Health  | 24                  |
| Other public services   | 13                  |
| <b>Non-profit organisations</b>   | <b>73</b>           |
| Housing associations  | 15                  |
| Charity services  | 34                  |
| Care services   | 16                  |
| Other voluntary services  | 8                   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>685</b>          |

NB: The total number of sector responses is greater than total survey respondents as some organisations operate in more than one sector.





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