

Sickness Absence Management Checklist for 2026

Use this checklist to review and tighten up how your business notifies, certifies, pays and supports staff through sickness absence — including the day-one SSP changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025.

Reporting & Notification

- ☐ Set a clear deadline for staff to notify their manager — e.g. before their normal start time.
- ☐ Require a personal phone call to the line manager, not just a text or email.
- ☐ Capture what's wrong, likely duration, contact details, and any urgent handover work.
- ☐ Confirm how often staff must check in for ongoing absence (e.g. daily until certified, then weekly).
- ☐ Set out how sickness during annual leave should be reported and evidenced.

Certification Requirements

- ☐ Require self-certification for absences of 7 calendar days or less.
- ☐ Require a GP fit note for absences beyond 7 calendar days.
- ☐ Confirm process for renewing fit notes if absence continues beyond the certified period.
- ☐ Reserve the right to request medical evidence for frequent short-term absence.
- ☐ Require a fit-for-work certificate if an employee wants to return early.

Sick Pay — Updated for ERA 2025

- ☐ Remove references to the 3-day waiting period before SSP starts.
- ☐ Remove any lower earnings limit qualifying condition.
- ☐ Confirm SSP is payable from Day 1 of sickness absence for all eligible employees.
Employment Rights Act 2025: SSP day-one entitlement applies regardless of earnings.
- ☐ Clarify any Company (occupational) sick pay scheme and how it sits above SSP.
- ☐ State clearly that Company sick pay remains discretionary, where applicable.

Return to Work

- ☐ Hold a return-to-work conversation after every period of sickness absence.
- ☐ Use the meeting to log details, flag patterns, and address any underlying concerns.
- ☐ Record outcomes consistently to support fair, evidenced decision-making.

Medical Reports & Data Protection

- ☐ Obtain written consent before requesting an independent medical or GP report.
- ☐ Explain employees' right to withhold consent and the implications of doing so.
- ☐ Store all medical information securely and in line with your Data Protection Policy.

Long-Term Sickness Support

- ☐ Seek occupational health or medical advice early in a long-term absence.
- ☐ Consider reasonable adjustments to role, hours, or workplace.
- ☐ Explore redeployment options where a return to the original role isn't possible.
- ☐ Agree a structured, phased return-to-work plan where appropriate.
- ☐ Maintain reasonable, supportive contact throughout the absence.