

~~UNAPPROVED~~

Managers Guide: Managing Unauthorised Absence

Introduction

From time to time, you may have an employee who fails to attend work without notifying you or obtaining permission.

These unauthorised absences can range from a day or two to indefinite periods of non-communication. This guide outlines the steps you should take to address such situations effectively.

Initial Contact with the Employee

As soon as it becomes evident that an employee is absent without notice, the first step is to attempt to reach them by phone. This should ideally occur on the first day of their absence.

Keep detailed records of all contact attempts, whether by voicemail, messages left with others, or unanswered calls. Use all available contact information, including mobile and landline numbers.

If direct communication with the employee fails, proceed to contact their designated emergency contact. This may include close family members such as parents, siblings, or a partner.

Should there still be no response by the second day of absence, escalate the situation by sending a formal written notice to the employee. This letter should document the absence dates, previous contact attempts, and request that the employee reach out by a specified deadline to explain their absence.



Investigating the Absence

Often, the employee will respond and return to work. In these cases, promptly hold a return-to-work meeting to discuss their absence. If their explanation is insufficient or unjustified, the matter should be handled as a disciplinary issue.

Even in cases where sickness is cited as the reason, ensure the employee provides adequate reasoning for their failure to notify the company as per absence reporting policies. Unexplained or dishonest claims of sickness may warrant further investigation and disciplinary measures.

Repeated or extended unauthorised absences can justify stronger actions, up to and including dismissal, particularly if prior warnings about the consequences of such behavior have been issued.

Unauthorised Holiday Leave

In some instances, employees may inform you in advance of their intention to take unapproved leave. This often occurs following a rejected holiday request, with the employee claiming they have already booked travel.

When a holiday request is declined, document the decision in writing, especially if there are indications the employee intends to ignore it. This letter should clarify the legal basis for the refusal, reiterate that unapproved absences are a severe breach of company policy, and warn that such actions could lead to unpaid leave and disciplinary consequences, including dismissal.

If the employee disregards the warning and takes leave anyway, organise a formal disciplinary meeting upon their return. Suspension may be appropriate pending the hearing, provided all procedures are conducted fairly and transparently.

Get in touch

This document is intended as a guide. If you have any concerns regarding its content, or for further information about managing unauthorised absence, or anything else to help make managing your HR easier then please get in touch. We'd love to help.

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