

An illustration of a man with brown hair and a worried expression sitting at a wooden desk. He is wearing a white shirt and a blue tie. He is holding a red telephone receiver to his ear with his right hand. On the desk, there is a stack of white papers, a blue mug, and a black computer monitor. A round clock on the wall behind him shows the time as approximately 10:10. The background is a light green wall with a darker green diagonal stripe.

The Growing Prevalence of Presenteeism

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What is Presenteeism and how does it affect your business?

Whilst it is commonly recognised around the world that absenteeism can impact on the overall running of a business, more recently there has been a growing shift towards presenteeism at work – causing a loss of productivity for the employer and an overall risk to health and wellbeing for the employee.

Our CEO, Kevin Rogers, examines this ever-growing phenomenon, the significant impact Presenteeism can have on an individual and the wider organisation, and what steps employers can take to not only identify it, but actively prevent it within their workplace...



“Presenteeism is essentially the act of showing up for work while feeling unwell or unable to function effectively. Whilst employees are ‘physically’ present in the workplace, they’re unable to operate at their full capacity – possibly due a number of factors including illness, stress, a long-term condition, or relationship issues.

According to a survey by Aviva UK, workers in the UK are said to be three times more likely to struggle into work than take sick leave when needed – with seven in ten (69%) private sector workers (equivalent to 18 million nationally) admitting to having gone into work when they should have taken the day off ill. Not only does this have a huge negative impact on the individual – presenteeism can cause a rise in stress-related illnesses according to a report by the CIPD – but the financial costs to a business can be crippling.

Presenteeism is particularly common-place in companies where there is an ‘always on’ culture, long working hours are the norm, and where the responsibility of the job takes over the importance of employee wellbeing. And, unlike absenteeism, presenteeism is often extremely difficult to detect – or indeed accept – as employees are still showing up for work as normal to perform their assigned duties.

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Workers feeling pressurised into going into work when they're ill is a reflection of working cultures, and indicates some organisations are not considering their employees' health and wellbeing as a top priority. Whilst many employees assume going to work when ill is beneficial, it could actually be doing more harm than good —decreased productivity, poor work quality and compromised safety, and longer recovery times, to name but a few.

So, what steps can employers can take to support workers when they're feeling unwell and encourage them back to full health?

Policies

Take a close look at your company's sick leave policy. Strategies that implement strict rules about hours of work may discourage staff from taking time off when they need to. The knock-on effect of this is that workers feel that they have little choice other than to turn up for work. To overcome this, make sure your line managers are supportive towards absence at work and adopt a more flexible approach to illness by encouraging time off when needed. You can read about flexible working benefits [here](#).

Workloads

Demanding jobs and high-level workloads can cause staff to become stressed or over-burdened. It's important for managers to recognise signs of stress and adopt positive working practices...

Engage with staff

Encourage open and honest discussions

Look for changes in the behaviour or appearance of your employees

Try to listen to their needs, restructure workloads if they are struggling and make it clear that their wellbeing is important to your organisation



Work/Life Balance

Focusing on the work/life balance of your employees is also vital for their wellbeing.

Take small steps to encourage better behaviours, for example:

Encourage individuals to take breaks away from their desk or work stations

Discourage staff to send emails outside of work hours

Make sure workers take their full holiday entitlement, so they can fully switch off from their duties

Wellbeing

In addition to the above – which are all pretty straightforward and in most cases absolutely statutory – there are a number of additional ways in which employers can support their staff when they're not feeling 100%. Services focused on ensuring the overall wellbeing of staff can not only ensure individuals stay healthy, but they can ensure that, if they do become unwell, that they are fully, and quickly supported back to full health.

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EAPs | Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are designed to help individuals facing difficult or challenging situations in their personal lives which might cause their performance at work to suffer, or could impact on their general health and wellbeing (from financial worries, to relationship problems, grief and stress). These programmes offer confidential one-to-one advice over the phone and they are a cost effective way for employers to provide specialist help to an employee if they need it.

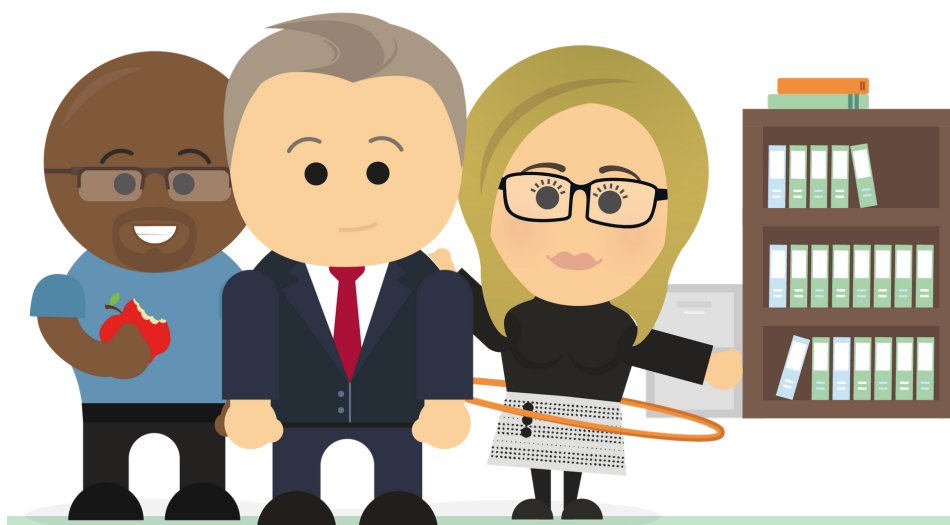
Some organisations choose to adopt health screening plans for their staff, where employers refund 100% of the cost up to a yearly total, dependant on the agreement and the level of cover that the employee chooses.

To protect the health and wellbeing of an employee, another option available to companies is a 24 hour GP advice service. It's not always convenient for an employee to speak to or video call with a GP during work hours, so this gives the option of round-the clock reassurance and peace of mind, knowing that they're able to speak to a qualified GP any time of the day, or night.

Many employees assume that their employer doesn't value their health and wellbeing, but the motivation and physical wellness of employees is vital in maintaining a happy, productive and profitable workforce.

It's imperative that employers not only acknowledge that individuals aren't able to perform at their best 100% of the time, but that they take an holistic view of their team's physical and mental health and proactively implement programs to discourage Presenteeism within their organisations.

If you're a manager and would like more information on how to maintain a happy, productive and profitable team by reducing the impact of Presenteeism in the workplace, please do get in touch with a member of our team on 01902 371000 or email enquiries@paycare.org – we're happy to help!



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