

# 2014 CIPD report on absence management



## Source

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/absence-management-2014.aspx>

## This will be useful for .....

- Considering absence management policy options
- Benchmarking against sector, region or employment comparators

## Introduction

The CIPD has been following absence management trends since the last century, producing an annual report each year. This report focuses on comparisons between 2013 and 2014 with some analysis for the period 2010 – 14, but no insight into longer term trends. The causal analysis has been conducted at the organisation level, not through employee research, therefore there is no information about variance between reported and actual experience at the individual level.

## Summary findings

The report finds little evidence of a structured and strategic approach to absence management that focuses on the root causes being a widespread practice although absence measures are a very common KPI and flexible working practices are associated with lower short term absence patterns.

The median cost of absence per employee was reported at £609 (towards the lower end of the 2010 – 2014 range between £595 and £673), but such analysis does not factor in the economic impact of increased levels of “presentism”. Positive health and action to promote well-being are programmes most likely to be found in the public and not-for-profit sectors. However, there is only qualitative information on the impact or return on investment from the different well-being, stress management and absence management approaches being deployed in organisations.

Headline figures include the average 6.6 days per year absence per employee, down from 7.6 the previous year. Public sector organisations continue to report higher absence but closer scrutiny shows that, allowing for organisation size and workforce make up, their absence rates are similar to or lower than private sector rates. Private sector services and the construction industry show substantially lower absence rates than other major cohorts. The pattern of longer term absence also shows variance between sectors and organisation size, with public sector and larger organisations reporting consistently more absence of a longer duration.

Minor illness remains the most commonly reported cause of short-term absence for the vast majority of organisations with a growing impact of carers’ responsibilities on attendance patterns. The most effective approaches to address short term absence all emphasise the importance of the line management role.

1. Return-to-work interviews
2. Trigger mechanisms to review attendance
3. Disciplinary procedures for unacceptable absence, including restricting sick pay
4. Sickness absence information given to line managers
5. Line managers trained and take primary responsibility for managing absence

There is a much more diverse approach to addressing long term absence, probably reflecting that such situations reflect a more divergent set of circumstances and often require multiple interventions. Acute medical conditions, stress, musculoskeletal injuries, mental ill health and back pain are most commonly reported as responsible for long-term absence. These patterns are similar across sectors and between manual and non-manual employees. The biggest contributory factor to higher absence levels associated with stress has been identified as redundancy activity.