SmartHR

Monthly People Management Feature

Gail Yeowell - Managing Director, Smart **HR** Solutions Limited

Are you managing stress at work?

According to a recent absence survey completed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) and Simplyhealth covering 592 organisations, stress is the number one cause of long-term absence from work for the first time. *The survey reports that only 58% of organisations are taking steps to identify and manage stress at work. Are you?*

The survey also finds that:

- 40% of organisations have seen an increase in stress-related absences over the past year; within the public sector this rises to 50%.

- Top causes of stress at work are workloads, management style, relationships and family, relationships at work and organisational change/restructuring.

- Job insecurity is found to be a common cause of work-related stress – almost double in the public sector (24%) compared with the private and non-profit sectors (14%).

- Employers planning to make redundancies are significantly more likely to report an increase in mental health problems amongst their staff (51% compared with 32% who are not planning to make redundancies).

- Half of employers use employee absence records as part of their redundancy selection criteria; three-quarters in the manufacturing and production sector.

- The average level of absence remains at 7.7 days per employee per annum (the same as the 2010 average level) – the public sector average is 9.1 days per employee per annum, non-profit sector is 8.8 days per employee, and the private sector is 5.7 days (private sector has reduced from 6.9 days per annum reported in 2010).

- Two-thirds of working time is lost due to short-term absences of up to 7 days.

- Three-quarters of absence in the private sector is short-term.

- Common causes of long-term absence are stress, acute medical conditions (e.g. stroke, cancer, heart attacks), musculoskeletal injuries, back pain and mental ill health.

- Less than half of employers monitor the cost of absence.

- The median cost of absence is £673 per employee per year (compared with £600 in 2010) - £800 in the public sector, £743 in the non-profit sector, £446 in the private sector and £444 in the manufacturing and production sector.

- Popular methods to identify and reduce workplace stress include training for staff/managers, staff surveys, flexible working, and improved work-life balance.

- Common methods to manage short-term absence include return to work interviews, trigger mechanisms to review attendance (e.g. the Bradford Factor), providing sickness absence information to Line Managers, and using disciplinary procedures for unacceptable absence levels.

- The most common methods used to manage long-term absence include return to work interviews, using Occupational Health, providing sickness absence information to Line Managers, using trigger mechanisms to review attendance, and risk assessments to aid return to work.

- Two-thirds of the public sector and one-third of the private sector have an employee well-being strategy in place.

- Well-being benefits commonly provided are access to counselling services, employee assistance programmes and support to help stop smoking.

A proactive approach should be taken to managing absence, including a focus on promoting employee well-being.

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T: 619619   **E:** gail@SmartHR.co.im   **W:** www.SmartHR.co.im

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