

QUICK GUIDE

# Managing workplace attendance and absence

# Introduction

Absence and workplace attendance are everyday challenges for many organisations, with often far-reaching impact. At an operational level, managers have the headache of filling a skills or capacity gap at short notice, which may have a knock-on effect on outputs, such as production efficiency or service levels.

However, if absenteeism is widespread or has a pattern, it can be a symptom of deeper underlying organisational issues. If not addressed, in addition to the short-term impact, the organisation could suffer long-term effects, such as service failures,

serious production outages, the loss of clients and damage to its reputation and brand.

Understanding the reasons behind attendance and absence patterns is an essential element of identifying a solution. And to do that requires data. Having the right workforce management technology platform is vital. This provides the data and analytics that enable business leaders to understand problems, identify solutions and take strategic decisions affecting the entire organisation.



# What causes absenteeism?

Although absenteeism is often associated mainly with sickness, [according to HR Magazine's Jenny Hiscock](#), being unwell is actually third on her list of top ten causes of workplace absence:

- Childcare
- Accidents
- Sickness
- Bullying
- Flexibility
- Poor leadership
- Bereavement
- Change
- Travel
- Ergonomics

Whilst identifying the root cause of some of the causes of absenteeism is straightforward, many are more nuanced. Workplace issues such as change, perhaps resulting from an acquisition, poor leadership and bullying, may take time to manifest and require different datasets for root cause analysis.

An organisation with a small number of high-population locations with stable and consistent working patterns has a lower number of variables that can lead to absenteeism. Organisations that have transient and contingent workforces working on shift patterns over multiple sites can find it harder to understand absence patterns.

However, both need complete, consistent and granular attendance data that managers can interrogate to identify patterns and trends. This is generally only possible by using an effective time and attendance solution.



# How you can reduce absenteeism

Some strategies used to tackle absenteeism are practical for any organisation. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) [2021 Health and wellbeing at work survey](#) shows that musculoskeletal injuries are the third main cause of short-term absence due to sickness.

There are many strategies, starting with risk assessments then training and the right workplace adjustments in response, that can mitigate the absence rates arising from this cause.

If an organisation has a workforce management system that features modules for time and attendance, alongside HR records that include induction dates, training records and absences for all reasons, it can be interrogated to determine root cause.

So, for a specific cohort of workers showing high injury rates, it is a straightforward exercise to examine variables such as location, equipment, processes, onboarding and induction processes, training and break policies.

# Workforce management systems with attendance modules are essential

Organisations that have high absence rates at particular offices or depots, on specific production lines or perhaps according to an underlying time pattern on specific shifts, may need to look deeper.

To achieve this requires detailed, consistent and accurate time and attendance data for all workers, captured through a range of input devices on every site or location that are both convenient and cannot be spoofed or gamed by workers, such as fingerprint scanners.

This level of data within a platform that has the right tools enables managers to segment absence data, correlating it with many other variables and datasets to provide trends and insights. Having a strong audit trail underpinning the data is essential, as the data could be used for a disciplinary action, employment tribunal or even court case.

# Absence data and analytics can reveal deep-rooted organisational challenges

Take the example of bullying, the fourth most common reason for absence after sickness, accidents and childcare, according to Hiscock. By using a workforce management platform's analytics, it is possible to correlate high absence levels on a shift with a specific supervisor or manager.

If that pattern is repeated over time, there could be an issue with the supervisor's leadership style, which could be addressed through training and development. Alternatively, analysing worker attendance and absence patterns could highlight a specific individual or small group of individuals as the underlying cause.

Investigation by managers could reveal tensions within the workers on the shift showing high absence levels that arise through any number of reasons. These could include bullying but could also be a group of easily led keen sports fans throwing sickies when an important game is on.

A flexible workforce solution can capture the dates and times of major sports events that enable managers to spot when their workers are truanting. Or even correlating sunny days with absence rates can provide insights into why workers choose not to come to work. These insights can trigger managers to take disciplinary action, if required.





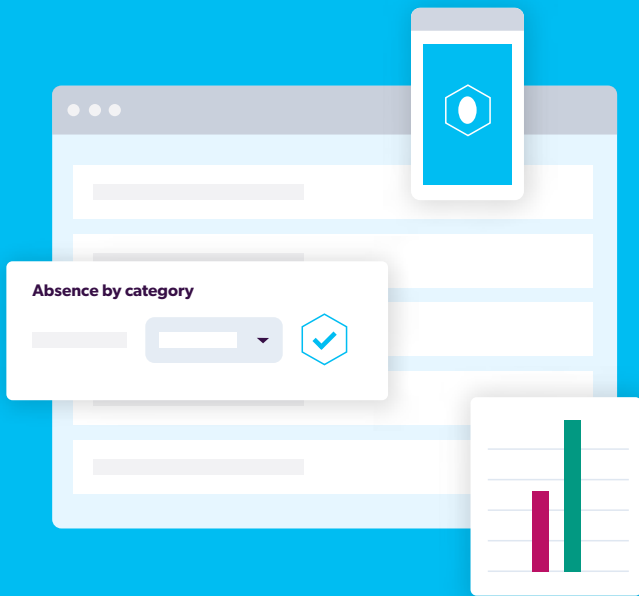
## Reducing absences leads to performance improvement

As highlighted in the introduction above, there are clear organisational benefits to reducing absence rates. If the reason for absences can be removed or mitigated, it leads to workforce performance improvements.

Senior leadership can also use workforce absence data for strategic decision making and change management. Locations, climate, events, macroeconomic factors, local employment

legislation, culture and many other factors can impact on absence rates and therefore organisational performance.

The ability to review the consistent and accurate time and attendance data on every site globally provides senior leadership with strategic insights, and managers with local solutions. All from analysing attendance data.



## Crown Workforce Management's Time and Attendance capabilities underpin our workforce management system

Using a range of input devices, Crown's system enables organisations to capture detailed information about worker hours.

Using staff attendance and efficiency data for detailed analysis provides many insights. Organisations can develop intelligent future schedules, more efficient and accurate payroll processing and many other benefits.

To learn how Crown could help your organisation reduce absenteeism, get in touch with one of our specialists today.

[Speak to a specialist](#)