



## £23billion spent on sick leave each year!

The statistics for sickness absence across the UK are quite alarming. Here are some figures. Around 140 million working days are lost to sickness each year, which generates an annual bill of £9 billion for employers, and £12 billion in benefits, plus a further £2 billion for healthcare and taxes.

Each year it is estimated that a million employees are absent for a continuous period of at least 4 weeks due to sickness.

In order to manage this more efficiently and help employees to get back to work, new legislation referred to as 'Fit for Work' will be introduced in May 2015. This will effectively replace the current Statutory Sick Pay Scheme.

Employers will also benefit from a tax exemption of up to £500 for each employee that is receiving payments for medical treatment through the 'Fit for Work' scheme.

### Fit for Work?

So how will this new legislation work? There are 2 different stages; occupational health assessment after 4 weeks of continuous sick leave, and health & work advice for those that are returning to work.

#### Occupational Health Assessment

The employees GP can refer them for an occupational health assessment with a professional after 4 weeks of continuous sick leave. This will determine whether they can return to work fully or gradually, or not at all. If they cannot yet return to work then the employer should discuss employment options with the employee as the employer can decide to dismiss them.

The employer can also request a referral for an occupational health assessment on behalf of the employee.

#### Return to Work plan

Once an assessment is complete, a Return to Work plan will be put in place. This should include recommended steps the employee should take to recover such as medical care from their GP, reasonable adjustments made by their Employer, and any additional help & advice.

The employer should encourage employees to return to work by offering to change the working conditions e.g. fewer/flexible hours, working from home, adapting equipment, moving desk, audio-visual alarms for deafness, ramps for wheelchairs, moving floors, offering training, making recreation/refreshment facilities available.

#### Health & Work Advice

If the employee suffers from a disability or illness they will benefit greatly from additional health and work advice. This could include tips on how to manage symptoms while at work and how to make sure that other employees are aware, for example if you require audio-visual equipment for deafness others should be aware so that they do not tamper with the equipment or get frustrated if they or a customer is not being acknowledged.



## How can People Inc. help?

People Inc. is a very flexible piece of software, which means that changes to legislation can easily be incorporated into the system. The example screen below shows how 'Fit for Work' information might be recorded in People Inc.

The screenshot shows a software window titled "Absence History : [Annabelle Greene] [13/10/2014]". The window has a menu bar with "Data", "Action List : 0", and "Documents : 0". Below the menu bar are icons for "Reports", "Letters", and "Email". The main content area has two tabs: "Absence" and "Fit for Work". The "Fit for Work" tab is selected and contains the following information:

- Fit for Work (4 weeks )
- Referral: GP
- Sickness Status: Receiving Medical Care
- Returned to Work: [Dropdown]
- Occupational Assessment:
- Assessment Completed: 18/11/2014
- Outcome: Returning to Work
- Return to Work Plan: Prescription medication for recovery from GP. Agreed to work flexible hours until fit for full time work. GP has provided a leaflet and web links for further help & advice while at home.

At the bottom of the window, there is a toolbar with various icons and a status bar showing "Absence History", "1 : 22 : 22", and "Full Absence History".

This screen design is very easy to accomplish, and the layout/language/information recorded can be altered to suit your exact needs. For example, instead of having a memo box for the Return to Work Plan, you could simply attach the plan to the record, and fill the space with other information that you would like to record, or leave the space blank.

Once this is recorded in People Inc. you can then create reports and letters which include this information. For example, whilst a simple sickness report may include an overview of sickness within a year, it can be enhanced to include the Fit for Work information for employees.

If you would like to know more about how to incorporate something like this into your system, please contact us on **01908 265 111**.