

Background and Problem

A light industrial company, without any formal employment contracts, was experiencing growing problems over absenteeism. A HCBA Business Advisor helped them to comply with the law and quickly overcome their staff problems through the introduction of progressive systems

The client was a company engaged in light industrial processing and had 28 employees. Like many businesses of this size, they had no written contracts of employment or staff procedures in place. Although everything had worked well in this situation for several years, they were now experiencing growing problems with absenteeism. The MD was particularly concerned over what seemed to be a pervasive attitude of “sickness entitlement” which was spreading amongst the staff.

Actions Taken

The first priority was to prepare proper written statements of the terms and conditions of employment and to issue these to all members of staff. This brought the client into compliance with the current statutory requirements (Employment Rights Act 1996) and gave them protection from any possible claim for failing to observe this rule.

The problem with attendance was addressed through the introduction of a staff handbook, which provided detailed rules and procedures for all elements of the employment relationship. Rather than using the handbook as a “rod of iron” (which might have the effect of demoralising or antagonising staff) it was recommended that the client should pursue a “velvet glove” approach.

The handbook was drafted in such a way as to express the employer’s sympathy and support for those staff who suffered from genuine ailments, while giving staff responsibility for the monitoring of their own attendance and absences. A structured system of reports (both verbal and written) was introduced, alongside a simple tracking arrangement and it was made clear to staff that failure to work within this system would impinge on such benefits as sick pay.

The Result

The staff handbook and new procedures were introduced in September. By the end of November, sick leave had been reduced to minimal levels and the three ringleaders of the “sick leave culture” had unwittingly identified themselves to the management. By the end of the year two of these three had resigned. Through the introduction of fair and progressive procedures, relations between staff and management were improved and old problems and attitudes were overcome.

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and how we can support your business – contact us today.**