

Sickness absence policy audit checklist

2026 update · for UK employers

Most UK sickness absence policies went out of date on 6 April 2026, when SSP became payable from day one. Run yours through the checks below: any box you cannot tick is an update priority.

1. Legal foundations and sick pay (2026)

- Sickness and sick pay terms are set out in writing.
- Sick pay wording reflects day-one SSP: no waiting days, no Lower Earnings Limit (April 2026).
- Reporting rules are specific: who to tell, how, and by when on the first day of absence.
- Self-certification (up to 7 days) and fit note rules are stated clearly.

2. Triggers and the Bradford Factor

- Absence triggers and review points are written down and applied to a clear timeframe.
- Triggers are applied consistently to everyone, not case by case.
- Any scoring method (e.g. the Bradford Factor) is a flag that starts a conversation, never an automatic penalty.

3. Short-term, long-term and return to work

- Short-term, frequent absence and long-term absence are handled in different ways.
- Return-to-work expectations are set out for every absence, however short.
- Keep-in-touch contact and occupational health steps exist for long-term cases.

4. A fair, defensible process

- Disciplinary and capability stages are clear, staged, and documented at each step.
- Disability and protected-reason absences are handled separately (adjustments considered first).
- The same process is followed for every employee.

5. Records and accuracy

- Absence is recorded accurately from the first day, not estimated later.
- Records are kept in one place and stay up to date.

How did you do? Any box you could not tick is your update list, starting with the sick pay and day-one SSP wording.

A policy only works if absence is recorded accurately and acted on quickly. Shiftbase keeps absence management, employee scheduling and time tracking in one platform, so a first-day sick call is logged, the schedule updates, and the gap can be filled before the shift starts.

[Learn more at shiftbase.com/absence-management](https://shiftbase.com/absence-management) · Try Shiftbase free for 14 days

This checklist is general guidance for UK employers, not legal advice. SSP rules described reflect the Employment Rights Act 2025 changes in force from 6 April 2026. For decisions involving dismissal or disability, take advice from an employment specialist. Sources: ACAS, GOV.UK, CIPD, ONS.