

Open Access Training Case Study – QDP Services

Background to the Organisation

QDP Services is an independent supplier of questionnaire data processing services with approximately 30 staff based in Manchester. Their clients consist of 70 per cent of English Colleges and a growing number of UK schools.

Participation in the Open Access training

QDP Services staff attend Acas training sessions a couple of times a year. This case study is based on the Sick Note to Fit Note session attended by one of their staff in July 2010. The staff attended the training to improve her knowledge of Attendance/ absence management procedures.

QDP Services as a small company cover sick pay at the discretion of their management team; however there are very few cases when sick pay is not paid. In an attempt to combat an increase in the number of people taking sick leave, a representative from the organisation attended the Attendance/Absence management training session in order to improve their knowledge around this area. The training session covered different types of absences due to illness, and approaches to reducing the rate and length of sick leave. The session was accompanied by a pack of handouts.

An aspect of the training that the organisation's representative who attended the training felt had worked particularly well was the number of opportunities offered during the day for participants to share their experiences around Attendance/ Absence management.

"The other key thing I quite enjoy are the other companies that are there that have the same problems as you have, whether it be a small company or a large company, you've got the same pattern, the same people... so its nice to listen to other people's opinions in their problems... It's absolutely brilliant, that's why I like Acas."

The representative also felt she had benefited from the knowledge and experience of the tutor:

"They're absolutely brilliant, they know their stuff. I don't think I've ever been to an Acas course where I've thought the tutor wasn't any good...I wouldn't go otherwise."

Overall, the representative felt the training session had given her ideas on how to tackle the rising number of sick leave absences.

"It [the number of absences] was just creeping up and up and up and I didn't know what to do about it so that's why I went on the course and I got some really good ideas about how to manage it [absences]."



Outcomes of the training

The training session has led to a number of outcomes. The representative from QDP Services feels the training has improved her understanding of Attendance/ Absence management policies, and, consequently, has made her more confident in dealing with issues that may arise around this area.

In addition to the skills and knowledge acquired by the representative through the training, QDP Services has revised their Attendance/Absence management and recruitment policies. The key revisions made to the absence management policy include introducing a return to work interview process, developing a formal flowchart for reporting sick absences and updating the induction process.

Introducing a return to work interview process

QDP Services felt there was a need for a formal return to work interview with staff that had been off work sick. The purpose of the return to work interview was to explore the nature of the absence and reflect on the staff member's absence record. In addition to this, QDP Services also changed the recording of sick absences to a rolling year, rather than the sick leave year. This made it easier for them to monitor absences.

Developing a formal flowchart for reporting sick absences

QDP Services had a process for reporting cases of sick absences; however, this had not been strictly adhered to.

As a result of the training which emphasised the need for a formal process, QDP Services has developed a flowchart which outlines the steps that employees need to take if they were off sick. This includes telephoning their line manager before 9am and every day of their absence. The only exception to this rule is if they are aware that the employee is likely to be off sick for several days.

Updating the induction process

QDP Services also updated their induction process for new starters which included their new policy around sick pay procedures. All new starters are therefore taken through the sickness and absence procedures and provided with a copy of the policy.

One of the key lessons that QDP felt they had learnt from the introduction of these changes was the importance of raising staff's awareness of sick leave procedures.

"I think before, even though we've always monitored sick, I think they thought it was a bit airy fairy, but now they know these things are in place and you will have a return to work interview, that we're looking at it and recognising it."



Impact of the training

Reduction in absences taken due to illness

Although it was acknowledged that external factors played a part, the QDP representative believes the introduction of the flowchart for reporting sick absences and the changes they have made around their Absence/Attendance policies have had an impact by reducing the number of days taken off by staff to due to sickness. They feel these processes have acted as a deterrent for those who may want to abuse the system.

Summary of benefits of the training

QDP believe the training has helped to increase their understanding of managing sickness absences which has contributed to a reduction in the number of sick leave taken by employees.

