



# NATIONAL SICKIE DAY



Reasons reported to ELAS by suspicious employers include the usual bugs and viruses that make the rounds at this time of year, but some far more elaborate excuses also appear. One woman claimed she could not come into work because she was trying for a baby and in another instance a driver failed to make it in because he was 'over the limit'.

As a result of National Sickness Day, employers could suffer losses of close to £30 million in wages, lost hours and overtime as workers call in with short-term mystery illnesses.

ELAS head of consultancy, Peter Mooney, says: "With morale traditionally at rock bottom in the New Year, we always expect staff absence levels to soar. Meanwhile, more and more bosses have drifted into accepting text messages and emails as confirmation that staff will not be heading into work, making it much easier to get away with a duvet day.

"Our research shows that people are resorting to ever more outlandish excuses to avoid spending a day in the office. However, there are steps that businesses can take to mitigate high levels of absence and subsequent financial losses. It's essential that companies have a clear absence policy in place before ensuring it is implemented properly and that disciplinary steps are taken, should the need arise.

"The policy needs to be clear and concise, supporting the notion of flexible working and working from home."

#### **OTHER FAR-FETCHED EXCUSES ON ELAS' RECORDS INCLUDE:**

- A worker called to say he couldn't come in because his girlfriend's sister was having a baby. A follow up call by the employer to verify this revealed that there was no girlfriend (and therefore no sister or baby)
- A woman called to say she couldn't come in because she had been play fighting with her boyfriend and hurt her finger as a result
- A worker called to say they couldn't make it to work that day because their car exhaust has fallen off on the driveway
- One man said he only had one pair of work trousers and that they were wet because his mum has washed them, so he couldn't make it into the office
- Another person said they needed new tyres on their car and it would otherwise be illegal for them to drive to work
- One person said they couldn't afford to put petrol in their car to get to work
- One person said the weather was too bad to cycle to work while another said they were too tired to cycle to work
- One employee took a leave of absence after saying his grandfather had died. The company's HR manager knew the family and bumped into the grandfather, who was very much alive and well, at the supermarket. The worker was dismissed as a result

**Jane Whitham of Cream Consultancy recalls:** "We had an employee last year who texted in sick.....he'd been dog-sitting his mum's dog and it had kept him up all night howling.

"The dog has wrecked me. I can't come in," he said. To two female bosses with young kids (who frequently find themselves up all night) it didn't go down too well. He's now an ex-employee!

#### **Colin McAndrew, Director of Col HR Ltd has a small collection of anecdotes:**

- "I found my car in the harbour, so I've no way to get to work. Can I take a sick day?"
- "My mum hit me on the head with a hammer last night, so I won't be in today"
- "Someone spiked my drink with alcohol at the pub yesterday, so I won't be in today"
- "I got beat on FIFA last night and punched the wall. I broke my hand and will be off today"
- "I wasn't in yesterday because I had to take my son to buy new trainers"
- "I got my wife arrested last night, so I won't be in as I have no babysitter for the kids"