

HR NEWS ROOM

March 2026

Enabling businesses to grow
& thrive through their people

HAUS
OF
HR®

Hello and welcome to our **March edition** of the Haus of HR News Room.

As we head into spring, sickness absence is creeping up for many SMEs and it can quickly impact performance, morale and fairness if it isn't handled consistently. With day-one SSP and other proposed changes expected from April, now is a good time to tighten up your approach.

This month we're focusing on **managing sickness absence** - practical steps to spot patterns early, support people well and take action confidently when needed.

You'll also find an **HR legal update** on what's coming from April 2026, a blog hotspot for **My Whole Self Day**, and our **Question of the Month** covering whether employers need to actively remind employees to take annual leave.

We're also marking **International Women's Day**, sharing a quick update on **Breathe Health & Safety**, and of course, CHO Buddy is back for the **International Day of Happiness**.

As always, if you'd like help applying any of this to your business, we're here.



Rachel



EFFECTIVELY MANAGING SICKNESS ABSENCE



Managing sickness absence is no longer just an HR task - it's a business priority. With day-to-day capacity already stretched in many SMEs, even a small rise in short-term absence can quickly impact delivery, morale and customer experience. And with changes around SSP and day-one rights taking effect next month, the cost of getting this wrong is only increasing.

Many employers want to be supportive (and they should), but without a clear approach, absence management can become inconsistent: some issues get ignored for too long, others get handled too harshly, and managers end up unsure what's "reasonable" and what's risky.

Why It Matters

Unmanaged or poorly managed absence doesn't just affect attendance - it affects performance, engagement and fairness. Patterns go unnoticed, workload gets redistributed to the same people, and resentment builds. Over time, what starts as "just a few days here and there" can turn into a capability issue, a wellbeing issue, or a legal issue.

A confident absence process helps you spot trends early, support people appropriately, and protect the business when tougher decisions are needed.

What Employers Should Do

- *Set clear reporting rules and apply them consistently*
- *Train managers to hold early, human return-to-work conversations*
- *Monitor patterns (not just total days) and act before they escalate*
- *Use wellbeing support and adjustments where appropriate - with clear boundaries*
- *Keep accurate records to support fair decisions and reduce risk*

We help SME business owners build absence processes that are supportive, structured and legally sound. From policy updates and manager scripts to case support and long-term absence pathways, we help you reduce disruption and handle absence with confidence - not guesswork. Because managing sickness absence well isn't about being strict. It's about being consistent, fair and proactive.

Want help managing employee absence? We're here to support you - just get in touch

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HR LEGAL UPDATE

From **April 2026**, several employment law changes are strengthening day-one rights, expanding eligibility and increasing the need for clear, consistent people processes - particularly for SMEs. Here are two key areas where changes are taking place...

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

What's expected:

- SSP for all employees, regardless of earnings (removing the lower earnings threshold)
- SSP payable from day one of absence (instead of starting on day four)

Day-one SSP is likely to influence short-term absence behaviour and could increase the number of "one or two day" absences that now trigger payment. It also means managers may need more confidence in handling early absence conversations consistently - particularly where patterns start to develop.

Employer action:

Update absence policies, check payroll settings and brief managers - day-one SSP may influence short-term absence patterns and return-to-work conversations.



Family Leave: day-one entitlement

What's expected:

- Day-one right to paternity leave
- Day-one right to parental leave

For many businesses, family leave requests are already managed informally, but day-one rights mean the process needs to be consistent and clearly understood from the start of employment. It's also important managers know what they can (and can't) ask, what notice is required and how to respond fairly.

Employer action:

Refresh policies/handbooks and ensure managers understand notice requirements and the correct process for handling requests.



Need support? If you want to sense-check your policies and get a simple action plan in place ahead of April, get in touch with the Haus of HR team.

Blog hotspot!

My Whole Self Day: why it matters for your business not just your people

In our latest blog we explore what it really means to create a workplace where people feel safe to be themselves - without it turning into awkward oversharing or performative wellbeing.

We cover the building blocks that make the biggest difference:

- Psychological safety: why it's the foundation for trust, engagement and honest conversations
- Inclusion & wellbeing: how "whole self" sits at the intersection of both
- The hidden cost of masking (stress, disengagement, silence, attrition) and why SMEs feel it fastest
- Practical ways to mark My Whole Self Day that don't feel forced - simple actions leaders can take
- How to embed it year-round through better check-ins, manager confidence and clearer support boundaries

We also share how Haus of HR can help you build a culture that supports your people and protects your business - with practical frameworks, manager support and real-world guidance.

Read the blog here: <https://hausofhr.com/my-whole-self-day-2026>

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

International Women's Day on 8 March is a moment to celebrate progress and to keep pushing for workplaces where women can lead, grow and thrive without having to shrink themselves to fit.

At Haus of HR, our Founder Rachel is proud to champion women in business with two brilliant communities:

- **Women with Vision**, part of the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, where women connect, collaborate and learn from each other's journeys
- **Women in Enterprise** in Milton Keynes, a network that brings together ambitious women who are building businesses, careers and confidence side by side.

Rachel has also recently written a blog for International Women's Day: **Women Leading Change** - what we get right, what holds us back, and how to rise with authority.

In it, she highlights what women leaders bring in abundance - connection, perspective and courage - while naming the patterns that can hold us back: over-preparing, downplaying achievements, waiting to be invited rather than stepping forward. She also shines a light on the importance of better workplace support for women navigating menopause, so talented leaders aren't pushed out just as they reach their stride.

This International Women's Day, we're celebrating the women who lead with integrity, kindness and impact and we're continuing to create spaces where women can share experience, build networks and claim their authority. Read Rachel's full blog here: <https://www.hausofcoaching.com/blog/women-leading-change/>

Question of the month

Do I have to remind employees that they have to take their holiday?

Since 1 January 2024, the Working Time Regulations confirm that employees can carry over unused statutory annual leave into the next leave year where an employer hasn't done the following:

- Recognised their right to paid annual leave
- Given a reasonable opportunity to take it (and encouraged them to do so)
- Clearly warned them that untaken leave will be lost at the end of the leave year

In other words, employers now have a positive duty to actively support and encourage employees to take their holiday - it can't just sit in the background and become "their problem".

Simple steps to stay on the right side of this:

- Make it easy for people to take leave (plan cover and share visibility of remaining entitlement)
- Build in regular prompts (team meetings, workplace notices, monthly/quarterly leave balance reminders)
- Give a clear, timely "use it or lose it" message - ideally in your holiday policy and in your reminders, with enough notice for employees to book time off

A little structure now can prevent a big carry-over headache later.



CHO'S CORNER

TOP TIPS

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS

Workplace happiness isn't pizza Fridays - it's the basics done well. A few cat-approved ways to boost it:

- **Make appreciation specific:** "That client call was handled brilliantly" beats "good job"
- **Protect focus time:** fewer pointless meetings = fewer humans looking stressed (I don't like stressed humans)
- **Give people autonomy:** trust them to do the job without micromanaging every paw-step
- **Check workloads properly:** tired humans don't purr... they burn out
- **Create micro-moments of connection:** quick check-ins, a walk-and-talk, a "how's your week really going?"
- **Normalise breaks:** hydration, fresh air, lunch away from the desk (and ideally a snack)

On **19 March**, do one small thing that makes work feel lighter for someone. Small changes. Big happiness 



BREATHE HEALTH & SAFETY IS NOW LIVE



If you're an SME business owner, you'll know the reality: health & safety is important, but it can quickly feel like a separate "specialist world" of paperwork, templates and tasks that only gets attention when something goes wrong.

That's exactly why we're excited to share this update.

Breathe Health & Safety is now live - built specifically for growing SMEs who want to manage health and safety confidently without the complexity (or cost) of heavy specialist systems.

What you can now do (in one simple place)

With Breathe Health & Safety, you can:

- Create and review risk assessments with reminders so they don't get forgotten
- Log accidents, incidents and near misses with clear actions and follow-ups
- Track safety roles and certifications across locations
- Manage policies with acknowledgement records (so you can evidence people have seen them)
- Assign and monitor safety tasks so accountability is clear
- Let employees report hazards directly (early reporting = fewer surprises)
- See your overall H&S position in a simple dashboard

Why this matters for SMEs

The biggest risk for most SMEs isn't that you don't care - it's that you're busy. This gives you a practical, structured way to stay on

top of health & safety as part of day-to-day operations, not a once-a-year admin exercise.

It also means you have clear records of what's been assessed, reported and actioned - supporting compliance while reducing effort and stress.

Health & Safety finally sits alongside HR

This is the part we love most: H&S now sits alongside your HR system, not outside it. So when things happen in real time - a hazard, an incident, a training need, a policy update - you can manage it clearly and consistently, with the right visibility.

How Haus of HR can help

If you'd like support getting set up, aligning your policies, or rolling this out in a way that works for your business and your team, we can help you implement it properly (without it becoming another half-finished project).

If you want to explore Breathe Health & Safety and whether it's right for your SME, drop us a message.

NEW: Health and safety, built into Breathe

Compliance, evidence and peace of mind - **all in Breathe HR**

