



SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

Helps you cut the cost of sickness absence

AXA ICAS offers an innovative package of services to help you record and manage employee absence more effectively



ICAS WELLBEING

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Sickness absence really can hurt your business

Anyone reading this brochure probably knows that sickness absence is a problem. The key questions are what is the scale of the problem and what can be done about it?

Fact

According to the *CBI/AXA absence and labour turnover survey 2007*, average sickness absence rates vary from as little as 2.5 days per employee to over 20 days in some organisations. Your organisation is likely to be between these two extremes.

What to do

- So, do you outsource the problem to an absence management provider;
- or try to manage the problem as best you can using your own resources?

Our solution

We have been listening to our customers and we've come up with a better way. You don't have to outsource dealing with the problem, which we believe undermines the critical role of the line manager in managing sickness absence. However, you can provide more efficient recording and reporting of absences and obtain help in those cases where additional medical support would be worthwhile.

Recording and managing absence effectively

- The vast majority (94 per cent) of absence spells are short term (fewer than 5 days).*
- Employers believe 88 per cent of all absences are genuine.*
- It therefore follows that, although all absences should be accurately recorded, the vast majority are for relatively trivial, self-limiting conditions, such as colds, and do not need any 'significant' management or medical intervention.

Frequent absences

- By recording all absences you can identify employees whose absences are more frequent than the norm.
- Once identified, frequent absentees can be managed in accordance with your organisation's absence policy.

Long term absence

- Whilst relatively few in number, long term absences account for a disproportionate amount of lost working time (52 per cent and 38 per cent, for example, in the public and private sector respectively).
- By quickly identifying potential long term absentees, you can intervene straight away to secure the necessary investigations and treatment for an early recovery – and their return to work.
- There is overwhelming evidence from UK companies** that early intervention reduces the length of many absences. For example, employers who fail to offer healthcare cover experience average absence levels around 25% higher than those who provide this benefit – 7.74 days versus 6.29 days, respectively.* Similarly, employers who provide access to medical or surgical treatment as part of their rehabilitation policy also experience lower absence levels – 6.55 days versus 7.31 days, respectively.*

*CBI/AXA absence and labour turnover survey 2007.

**HSE research report 493 'The costs and benefits of active case management and rehabilitation for musculoskeletal disorders'

Managing sickness absence more effectively

The CBI/AXA absence and labour turnover survey 2007

Employers believe that each of the following has a part to play in managing absence:

- discipline procedures
- return to work interviews
- giving absence statistics to supervisors
- occupational health provision
- waiting days before occupational sick pay is payable
- rehabilitation, including flexible working, counselling, training and case management services
- private medical insurance
- health and wellbeing services
- dedicated medical advice and support line.

SAM is not in itself a 'magic bullet'. It is, however, the key to ensure that all absences are recorded and reported, and all employees needing support or management action are identified.

The role of an absence management service to support managers

The *CBI/AXA absence and labour turnover survey 2007* also shows that as sickness absence is so important, senior management should be accountable for ensuring that line managers deal with absence properly within their organisation. Having in place procedures and practices to manage sickness absence is all well and good and will of course help line managers, but it does not relieve them of their responsibilities. Without appropriate training and support, they may not perform this critical task effectively.

With SAM, which systematically and consistently records and reports all absences, we'll help you to deal with common problems such as:

- managers' failure to record absences – many of our corporate clients express concern that their levels of absence are under-recorded
- lack of data to identify weak absence management practice – if absence is under-recorded, it follows that inappropriate or questionable conclusions are being drawn
- compliant reporting of workplace accidents – accidents are often logged on paper systems, making data difficult to collate and analyse. SAM provides both an audit trail and a readily accessible database to ensure all workplace accidents are properly logged. This, in turn, helps to ensure you have all the facts you need to meet your requirements and manage absence.

How SAM can help you

SAM can help you accurately track absence levels throughout your organisation.

With this information at your fingertips (literally, as all data is available online) you can quickly identify trends, work-related illness or injury, and employees whose behaviour indicates that management attention is required (frequent short term absentees, for example).

After prevention, early intervention is the next best way to manage absence – especially for employees at risk of long term illness or injuries. Experience shows that only 50 per cent of employees return to work after six months of sickness absence; most never return after 12 months.*

That is why it pays to keep a close eye on sickness absence in your workplace – and to act on the intelligence and guidance that SAM can provide.

*Source: *British Society for Rehabilitation Medicine (2001)*.

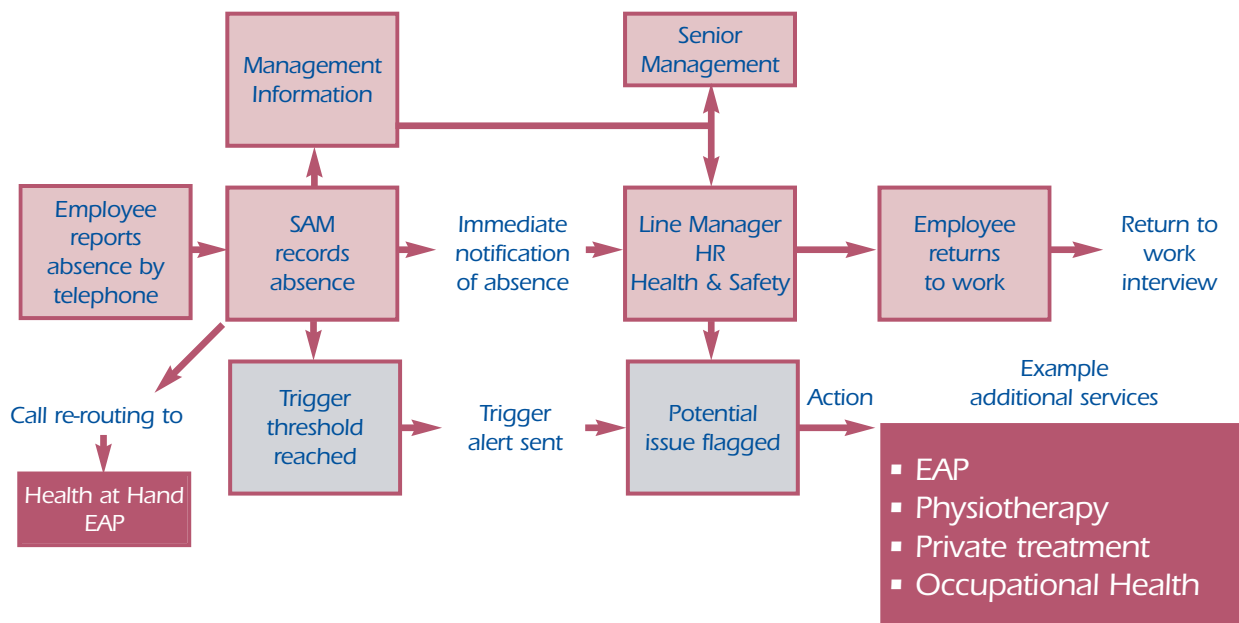
How SAM works

SAM provides a multi channel (telephone, email, SMS text and web based) absence recording and notification service.

Employees use a dedicated telephone number should they need to call to report an absence.

As well as recording their details such as employee name, department and reason for the absence, SAM automatically generates emails and/or SMS texts to report all absences to the designated person(s) in your organisation (generally the employee's line manager and/or your HR department) straight away. SAM also routinely collates absence data and generates summary reports for designated person(s) (HR and senior management, for example) to help you to track and benchmark sickness absence throughout your organisation.

SAM is a genuinely low cost service because we let the software do the work involved in recording and reporting routine absences. This leaves you free to involve healthcare professionals (whose services can be expensive) only where their skills are truly needed.



Recording, reporting and empowering

AXA ICAS's SAM combines an advanced recording and reporting service with optional personal counselling and occupational health services to help you manage sickness absence more effectively.

SAM – a low cost, consistent approach to recording and reporting absence

AXA ICAS appreciates that an important key to successful absence management is gathering reliable information from day one. If an employee is not coming to work, it's critical to the smooth running of your organisation that all concerned are informed as soon as possible.

And you don't just need to know that the employee is going to be absent today – you also need to find out when you can expect them back.

Ideally this information should be automatically recorded and analysed on a secure but easily accessible system such as SAM.

Where appropriate, you can respond quickly to ensure employees get the support they need – for instance, referral to a specialist or assistance from occupational health services, whether your own or provided by us.

SAM puts you in pole position to do all this and more.

Records, notifies relevant management, benchmarks and highlights trends

SAM is a telephone-based, absence recording service captured online for easy access, operated in conjunction with BT, a leading provider of telecommunication services.

Your employees receive a dedicated SAM telephone number that they use to notify sickness absence. SAM is accessible 24 hours a day, so if, for example, they wake up at 6am feeling unwell, they can call in sick and go back to bed.

When they call, SAM responds with customised prompts to record their name, employee identification number, reason for their absence and their anticipated date of return to work. At the end of recording an absence, SAM can also route the call through to one of our healthcare professionals or to an Employee Assistance Programme counsellor if appropriate.

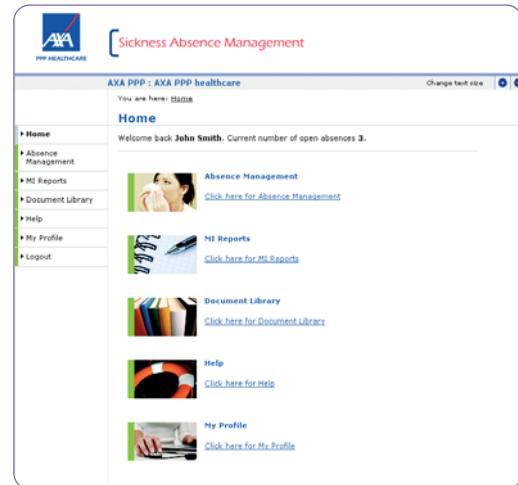
SAM then logs the information in its database and notifies your designated person(s) (generally line managers and HR) by email or text. They can then invoke your absence management policy, and for example, contact the employee to offer their sympathy and, where appropriate, assistance.

To build your organisation's database of employee absences for future analysis, a designated person (generally the absent employee's line manager) quickly reviews the employee's call and then – using SAM's easy-to-use search facility – selects the appropriate absence reason to assign to their absence record. No specialist medical knowledge is required. SAM then automatically assigns the appropriate high level absence category in the background using a database of reasons mapped to management information categories. SAM allows managers to create a range of online reports for their teams to monitor key absence figures, while senior management can compare departments and highlight issues.

Another important feature of SAM is that it records details of any injuries leading to absence helping you to ensure that you have gathered all the necessary information you hold to satisfy your health and safety reporting requirements for work-related injuries.

Once a new sickness absence episode is captured on the database, SAM automatically generates notifications or alerts (with customised settings) of potentially high risk/cost absences to designated persons that indicate further action may be warranted. You can decide who should receive these and which type of absences should trigger notifications, for instance, psychological or musculoskeletal problems or a high level of short term absence.

If an employee is absent for longer than originally expected or if they return to work but forget to call SAM to update/complete their absence record, the system automatically issues a reminder to the designated person(s) so they can remind the employee to call SAM to record the date they returned to work. This helps to ensure that your absence data is complete and accurate.



Trigger alerts help identify employees who need help

To help you identify employees who may need help, SAM will generate trigger alerts (to your specifications) to highlight situations that may warrant further action.

These may include:

- employees with frequent spells of absence
- prospective long-term absence
- injuries (however caused)
- musculoskeletal problems
- psychological problems such as stress, anxiety and depression.

Incidents such as these can generate alerts to prompt you to take action to mitigate the risk to your organisation – for example, to check your health and safety procedures and assess your liability in the case of a workplace accident, to help employees who appear to be struggling to cope with pressure, or to seek an early medical assessment and, if appropriate, obtain treatment to lessen the likelihood of a long spell of sickness absence.

Health information from Health at Hand and access to EAP counselling

SAM also includes access to Health at Hand – our dedicated team of nurses, midwives and pharmacists, on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

To help employees who have health-related questions when they call SAM to report their absence, SAM can be set up to offer employees the choice of having their call transferred to Health at Hand as part of the same phone call. An employee or their family member will be given another number to call Health at Hand directly, if they have non-absence related queries.

By way of example, an employee with chickenpox could obtain expert information about the condition, including details of the duration of the infectious stage, after which they can return to work without the risk of passing on the virus to others.

If your organisation has access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), SAM can also be configured to identify employees who report an absence caused by a psychological problem, so that they can be given the choice of having their call transferred to their EAP service. This provides an important benefit by helping the employer to fulfil their duty of care by offering personal counselling.

Additional and complimentary services to SAM

SAM can easily integrate with your own resources – for example, SAM can alert your occupational health service of designated events such as psychological and musculoskeletal problems

As you would expect, AXA ICAS offers a market leading range of additional healthcare services to help support your employees return to work, from fast track physiotherapy to full occupational health services. We would be pleased to discuss these services with you in more detail.

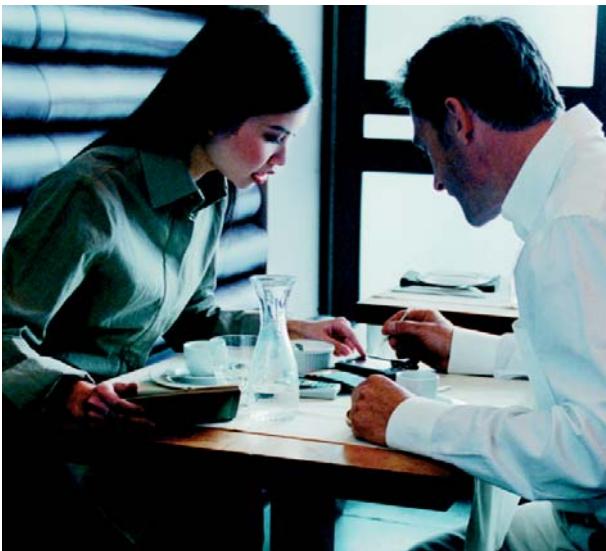
Positive Attendance Management Training

In most organisations while it is the line manager who is given ultimate responsibility for managing absence in their teams they often lack the skills and training to undertake this effectively. This is why we have developed Positive Attendance Management training. Our programme supports positive interventions and the core skills to develop managers' confidence in implementing them.

Management information and database integration

Sam provides on line real time management information and analysis to designated individuals in your organisation. At the touch of a button, absence information can viewed online, saved into PDF format or simply downloaded into CSV format such as an Excel spreadsheet.

Should you require, SAM absence data can be extracted automatically and securely via our generic interface by your HR or Payroll software systems. Further information is available on request.



The technical expertise behind our SAM service

Robust technology

SAM has been meticulously developed in conjunction with BT and tested to ensure the highest levels of operational stability and reliability. The service is operated from two major data centres in the UK, including the BT Data Centre at St. Albans, via fibre-optic networks. Both centres have full generator backup, environmental protection and all of the capabilities demanded from a major 'carrier-grade' hosting facility. Normally, all incoming calls are distributed evenly between the two sites. Should a failure occur at one site, all traffic is automatically redirected to the remaining site. For further resilience, all components within each site are replicated to help ensure that there is no point of failure.

- The advanced call processing platform technology used by SAM provides the capacity to answer and process over 8,000 calls at any one time. This means that SAM can comfortably handle peaks in sickness absence.
- End-user data for SAM is stored within a private database and is segmented from other databases. All database access is password-secured – even from within SAM.
- All data is securely transmitted across the internet using https.
- SAM data is backed up regularly and all backups are stored in fireproof safes, with daily backups kept on site and weekly and monthly backups stored at an offsite location.
- SAM has undergone rigorous penetration testing to provide independent verification that the infrastructure and applications meet security expectations and requirements.

Your system requirements

In order to run the SAM service within your business, you will need:

- Adobe Acrobat reader version 7
- Internet browser – Microsoft Internet Explorer version 6.0 or above
- Media Player – anything that plays .WAV files
- Headphones are a must for DPA reasons, for anyone listening to voice clips (for example, describing the reason for an absence or how an accident at work occurred) within hearing distance of others.

SAM summary

SAM is a market leading, contemporary method of collecting absence data and creating management activity by focussing on the key cause of absence which can be managed.

Key benefits

- Helps employers to manage absence fairly and consistently
- Allows employers to specify accessibility, triggers and notifications
- Consistently captures and records all absences (even non-sickness related absence if required)
- Provides instant notification of absence to designated people (for example, line managers, HR, health & safety)
- Identifies frequent absentees – enabling managers to take appropriate action in accordance with their organisation's absence management policy
- Early identification of employees with healthcare needs facilitates early intervention, leading to an early return to health – and back to work
- Identifies long term absences, which may otherwise be overlooked or allowed to drift
- Identifies potential employer's liability, income protection, and personal injury claims
- Effective notification of absence improves resource planning
- Facilitates evidence-based decision making
- Readily links to occupational health, case management and other employee support services
- Management information reports identify hotspots and important absence issues (for instance, repetitive strain injury (RSI) in employees who frequently change desks) and monitors trends
- Savings from reduced absence may more than offset the cost of SAM.

For further information

To find out more about how Sickness Absence Management and our occupational health team can help your organisation, please contact AXA ICAS on **0800 17 0800** or **sales@axa-icas.com**.

Note that calls may be recorded in case of subsequent query.

While you run your business, let us look after your healthcare needs. Whether it's improving your employee benefits package, controlling the cost of absence, addressing occupational health issues or providing stress and trauma counselling, we can help.

At AXA ICAS we are dedicated to supporting you, your employees and your business.

INDIVIDUAL MEDICAL INSURANCE
COMPANY MEDICAL INSURANCE
INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL INSURANCE
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
HEALTH AND SAFETY
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES
DENTAL COVER
TRAVEL INSURANCE

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