

Absence trigger points

Some organisations have absence policies that set automatic triggers to review absence. They're sometimes called 'trigger points' or 'review points'.

There are no legal rules about how or when absence should be reviewed. It depends on what works for an organisation.

Review point systems are usually based on either:

- the number of absences an employee has within a certain time period
- the length of an employee's absence

A review point system can be an effective way to help manage absence in an organisation. However, employers should be flexible and sensitive to individual circumstances.

How to use review points

If an employer uses a review point system, they should set this out clearly in an [absence policy](#).

They should make clear:

- what the review points are
- the process for flagging up that an employee has reached a review point
- that reaching a review point will start an absence review

An employer should not use review points to automatically trigger disciplinary action for absence.

If employees view the system as a way to punish them, this could cause more absence. For example, employees might try to come back to work too early when they're unwell, to avoid reaching a review point.

Absence reviews

An absence review is an opportunity for an employer to look into the cause of an employee's absence.

Before deciding if further steps are needed, the employer should have a conversation with the employee to:

- check on their wellbeing
- discuss the reasons for their absence
- see how the employer can support them

When reviewing an employee's absence, an employer should follow any relevant policy their organisation has.

They should consider whether:

- they should refer the employee to [occupational health](#)

- the absence might be disability-related – the employer should consider what [reasonable adjustments](#) they could make to help the employee
- the absence is related to pregnancy or mental health – in these cases they might need to take a different approach
- the employee might be entitled to [time off for dependants](#), if the absence is because of an emergency relating to someone that depends on them
- any of the absence was caused by work, such as an accident or work-related stress
- they should offer more flexible ways of working, if the absence is because the employee is struggling to balance work and home life
- they believe the reason for the absence is genuine – if not, they might need to deal with it as a misconduct issue

Avoiding discrimination

When using absence review points, employers must not discriminate against employees.

For example, a disabled employee might need to take time off work for regular medical treatment. This means they could reach the organisation's review points more quickly, leading to action from their employer.

Being flexible with review points can help employers avoid discrimination. For example, they could:

- adjust review points
- decide that absence related to disability or pregnancy will not count towards review points

[Find out more about discrimination](#)

Reasonable adjustments

An employer might find out through an absence review that their employee has a long-term health condition.

They should consider:

- whether the employee could be disabled
- what reasonable adjustments they can put in place to support the employee

[Find out more about supporting disabled people at work](#)

Get more advice and support

If you have any questions about absence review points, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).

Acas also provides:

- [tailored support for employers](#)
- [training on managing absence](#)