



CASE STUDY

Managing absence, improving business performance

Post Office has come a long way since it all started nearly 400 years ago – building a network of 11,500 branches across the country to become the largest retail network in the UK. And that means a lot of people – enthusiastic, ambitious and customer-focused people.



Employing 5,200 people and operating in a heavily regulated environment brings challenges, and this requires significant investment in people – personal development, e-learning and continually measuring engagement and wellbeing. Because if employees are not happy, or they're unwell and that absence isn't managed properly, it can have a massive impact on the business – culturally and financially.

That's why Post Office takes employee relations and engagement incredibly seriously, investing in diversity and inclusion (for example, they're a Disability Confident Leader), wellbeing at work, talent development and rewards, not to mention innovation and finding the right partners to support them along the way.

 We've worked with AdviserPLUS for eight years now, through MyHR Help, which has been a great success. But we got to a point where we needed more help – not all managers were raising cases and that was affecting our ability to resolve issues and get people back in work. Naturally, we turned to AdviserPlus for help. 

John Whitefoot, Employee Relations & Policy Director, Post Office

HR transformation and absence management

The Post Office MyHR Help service (an outsourced employee relations advice line delivered by AdviserPlus), identified that, in just three years from 2013/14, sickness absence durations had almost doubled, and from all days lost 25% were attributable to mental health conditions - the national average was 12%. Yet, the number of cases being opened by MyHR Help was very low.

That meant cases were not being managed and employees not supported enough – either before, during or after absence. In addition, and on the back of staff surveys, Post Office discovered that they needed to do more to address mental health and wellbeing. All of which was reinforced by the data.

 We needed some help – we knew absence was on the increase, with a worrying rise in mental health related absence, but cases weren't being raised – so we asked AdviserPlus how additional intervention from our MyHR Help service could support us. 

Martin Kirke, Group HR Director, Post Office

F We want our people to be well, and putting the right tools and processes in place to support this is critical. Since working with AdviserPlus on our mental wellbeing programme, we've heard line managers say how proud they are to work for Post Office and how it has opened their eyes to all the things they can be doing to proactively support their people at work. Spotting the early signs is crucial and we've helped our managers to do that very well.

Amber Kelly, Engagement, Talent and Learning Director, Post Office

Intervening early

AdviserPlus worked with Post Office to deliver 4 new services, all of which were specifically designed to address absence and mental health, and help managers intervene early.

LINE MANAGER TRAINING –



65 workshops, 6 months, 700+ line managers. Refreshing knowledge on ER processes relating to mental health, building confidence in handling difficult and sensitive conversations and spotting the early signs of distress.

PRO-ACTIVE ADVICE LINE SERVICE –



access to a group of dedicated HR advisers, who actively call managers when an absence or mental health trigger occurs, coaching them through the process to a successful resolution.

MI AND VISUAL ANALYTICS –



providing management with the means to measure the impact of the new service and identify key learnings that can be embedded into future business practices.

HR KNOWLEDGE PORTAL –



holding more than 500 templates, HR documents and guides, all tailored around Post Office policies and procedures. More than 5,000 employees and nearly 800 managers can access these resources if they need them.

Capable and confident managers



It's now very clear that when we proactively manage absences, and intervene early, there is a significant reduction in absence rates – and the benefit to our business cannot be understated.

We've seen an increase in employee engagement and satisfaction, absence rates have fallen and we've saved a lot of money.

John Whitefoot, Employee Relations & Policy Director, Post Office

Since Post Office expanded the scope of MyHR Help, ten times as many cases have been opened and absence days reduced. In the next 12 months it's expected that absence will have reduced significantly, resulting in productivity savings of up to £1m based on a reduction in days lost.

In addition, managers are much more aware of what mental health is and the signs they need to look for, enabling them to have difficult conversations with confidence.

The success of the programme, coupled with the Post Office's validation as a Disability Confident Leader, has helped to demonstrate a further commitment to their core values of Care, Challenge and Commit, and importantly enabled managers to access the support network they need to help their staff.

Make your line managers the front line of HR

At AdviserPlus, our experts and technology have one goal: to help your managers manage better. The result? Engaged people, lower HR costs, and improved business performance. Let's talk.

About AdviserPlus

AdviserPlus is the UK's leading provider of managed HR advisory services. We work with organisations of all sizes across all industry sectors, in the UK and overseas. AdviserPlus helps you get the best out of your people by using smart technology and proven HR process expertise to support managers and HR teams to tackle and resolve workplace issues.