

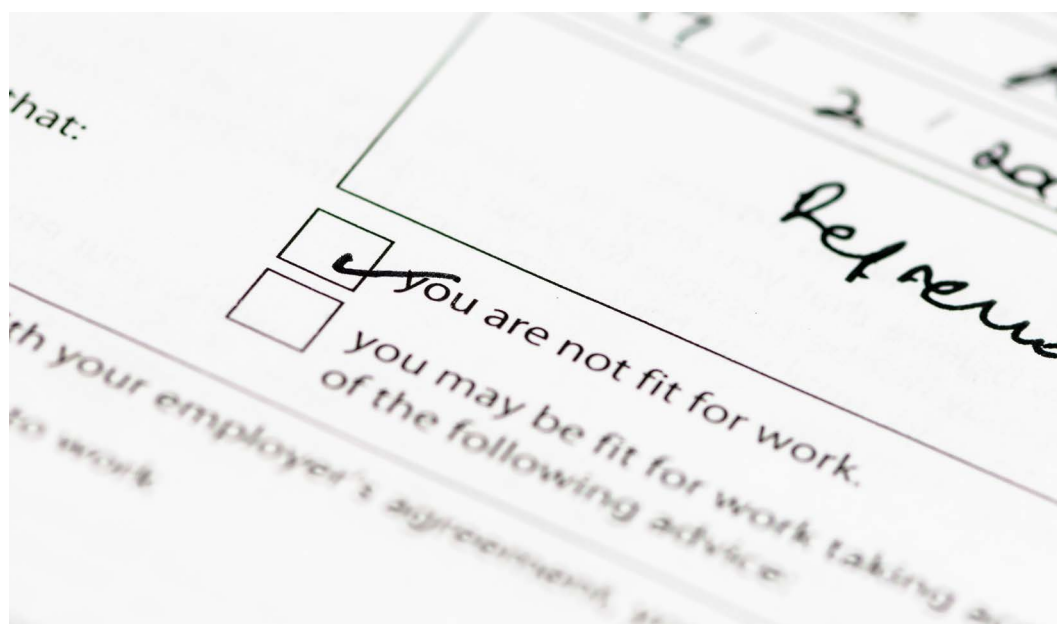
# MORE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS GIVEN POWERS TO CERTIFY FIT NOTES

**New legislation to allow a wider range of healthcare professionals to certify fit notes (formerly sick notes) has been introduced by the UK government to ease pressure on GPs. This legislation change applies across England, Scotland and Wales.**

**T**he list of those who can sign fitnotes extended on July 1, 2022, to also include nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists, reducing pressure on doctors, particularly GPs.

**“By giving powers to more providers to legally issue fit notes, it should be quicker and easier for employees to prove reasons for their absence, making it a win-win solution for all.**

HR Team co-director, Breda Cullen, said: “By giving powers to more providers to legally issue fit notes, it should be quicker and easier for employees to prove reasons



for their absence, making it a win-win solution for all.

“However, employers should take steps to ensure that HR and payroll teams are aware of the changes which are now in effect, and are provided with any necessary training. For anyone who has been off work due to illness for more than seven days, a fit note provides evidence to their employer about the reason for the absence and any relevant

advice on supporting the employee to remain in or return to work.

“It will be deemed unfair for an employer to refuse a fit note which is provided by one of these newly authorised health professionals. As a result, there could be risk of claims regarding unlawful deduction from wages, constructive dismissal and discrimination,” Ms Cullen added.

The extension of fit note

certification follows changes made in April 2022 that allow for fit notes to be certified and issued digitally, making the process more efficient for employees, their employers and GPs.

They also deliver on commitments to reduce ill health-related job loss made in the government’s ‘Health is Everyone’s Business’ consultation response.

# 5 REASONS WHY RECORDING ANNUAL LEAVE IS ESSENTIAL



**P**roper leave management will allow your business to operate more effectively, help you meet your employees' need for time-off, and ensure you satisfy your legal obligations.

If organisations mismanage their annual leave, the errors can be costly. Here are five reasons why recording your annual leave efficiently is crucial to managing your business successfully.

## 1. It Is The Law

First and foremost, keeping track of leave and paying correctly keeps you on the right side of the law.

Under the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997, all Irish employers must keep accurate records of the daily hours every employee works, and the pay for those hours, as well as the leave accrued, entitled leave, and leave taken.

The law exists to ensure that all employees get the paid leave they are legally entitled to, as follows:

- Four working weeks for any leave year in which an employee works at least 1,365 hours; or
- One-third of a working week for each month in the leave year in which the employee works at least 117 hours; or
- Eight per cent of the hours that the

employee works in a year are subject to a maximum of four working weeks. Keeping accurate track of leave and holidays will eliminate or minimise errors in leave entitlement and payment calculations. Your employees will get the right amount of leave and pay, and your business will avoid having to pay backdated leave, or worse, a costly tribunal or fine for not following the law.

## 2. Reduced Costs

Effective leave tracking and management can lead to a reduction in costs. Paid time-off has a significant financial impact on a company's bottom line.

Temporary workers and contractors can cost much more than your regular staff. Or, if your existing employees provide cover, you may have to pay overtime.

There are other indirect costs and effects, including a potential drop in the quality of goods or services (due to understaffing, fatigue, or less-skilled replacement workers) which could lead to a drop in customer satisfaction.

There may also be increased administration costs and management time (finding suitable replacements, bringing them up to speed, maintaining team morale

etc.), and potential safety issues with replacement or overworked staff. Another financial implication of failing to manage leave properly is allowing employees to accrue weeks or years of leave, which is a liability to the company if the employee resigns and has to be paid out in a lump sum.

## 3. Sufficient Leave And Holiday Planning

Properly planning your employees' leave means you can plan absences and ensure you have adequate cover, rather than being short-staffed or under pressure.

While there is not much you can do if multiple employees fall sick at the same time, planning annual leave and holiday cover will help reduce work disruptions, ensuring there is no drop in productivity and that the business can continue to meet its obligations and deadlines.

Using an efficient leave management service or software will make keeping track of leave easier and more accurate. Management will spend less time monitoring and responding to leave requests. The system will maintain accurate company-wide records, so you can easily check leave totals and demonstrate legal compliance.



#### **4. Employee Confidence And Wellbeing**

If your team members know they are getting their proper leave entitlements, they will have more confidence and trust in the business. This means happier, more engaged employees who are motivated to be productive and help the business succeed.

Your employees also want to know that the business is organised. If leave is poorly managed and several team members take leave simultaneously, the remaining people may have to do extra work to cover. This could lead to resentment if it happens regularly, and the damage will be even greater if it turns out

you haven't been calculating your employee's leave or holiday pay correctly.

Modern leave management systems allow employees to see their leave balances and request leave electronically. This provides transparency and the automation also reduces admin for the business.

#### **5. Reduced Absenteeism**

Taking leave is essential. It promotes good physical and mental health in the workplace and improves people's work-life balance, which reduces stress and unscheduled days off. Absenteeism can have a significant impact on any business. If you do not have the tools to track leave -

especially sick leave - accurately you may not know how many days a year your employees are taking and how much that is affecting your business. Proper leave management systems can give you a much better understanding of leave patterns across the business, and if there are issues, you have the chance to work on solutions with your employees.

HR Team has an exciting new HR leave management software launching soon. Register your email [here](#) for more information on how our new software can help you manage leave accurately and efficiently.



# BREDA'S EMPLOYMENT LAW TIPS

## DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES



**M**any employers ask: "Is a disciplinary hearing appropriate?" It is important to investigate all allegations in the workplace with a disciplinary procedure. Breda's top tips for employers on the matter are as follows:

- **Decide who respectively will deal with the investigation, the disciplinary hearing and the appeal.**
- Consider suspension in serious cases of misconduct.
- **Send the employee a copy of the company's disciplinary procedure.**
- Take minutes of all hearings and ask employees to confirm they are correct.
- **Allow the employee the right to be accompanied at all formal hearings.**
- Do not inform the employee of decisions at the disciplinary hearing. Reconvene the meeting to discuss the outcome and confirm the decision in writing.
- **An employee has the right to appeal against any warnings and dismissal.**
- Seek advice as these processes carry considerable risk to your business.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Deal with any performance management issues informally at first and follow company procedures.

At all hearings, employers are advised to:

- **Clarify the standards the employee has failed to meet.**
- Allow the employee to explain poor performance and to ask questions.
- **Discuss measures, set targets, and establish timescales for improvement. (timescales must be reasonable and realistic.**



## UPCOMING HR TEAM WEBINARS IN 2022

**Tuesday, September 27**

**Effective Recruitment and Selection**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, October 25**

**How to Manage Social Media in the Workplace**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, November 29**

**Using the Probationary Period Effectively and Compliantly**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, December 13**

**Measuring Employee Performance**

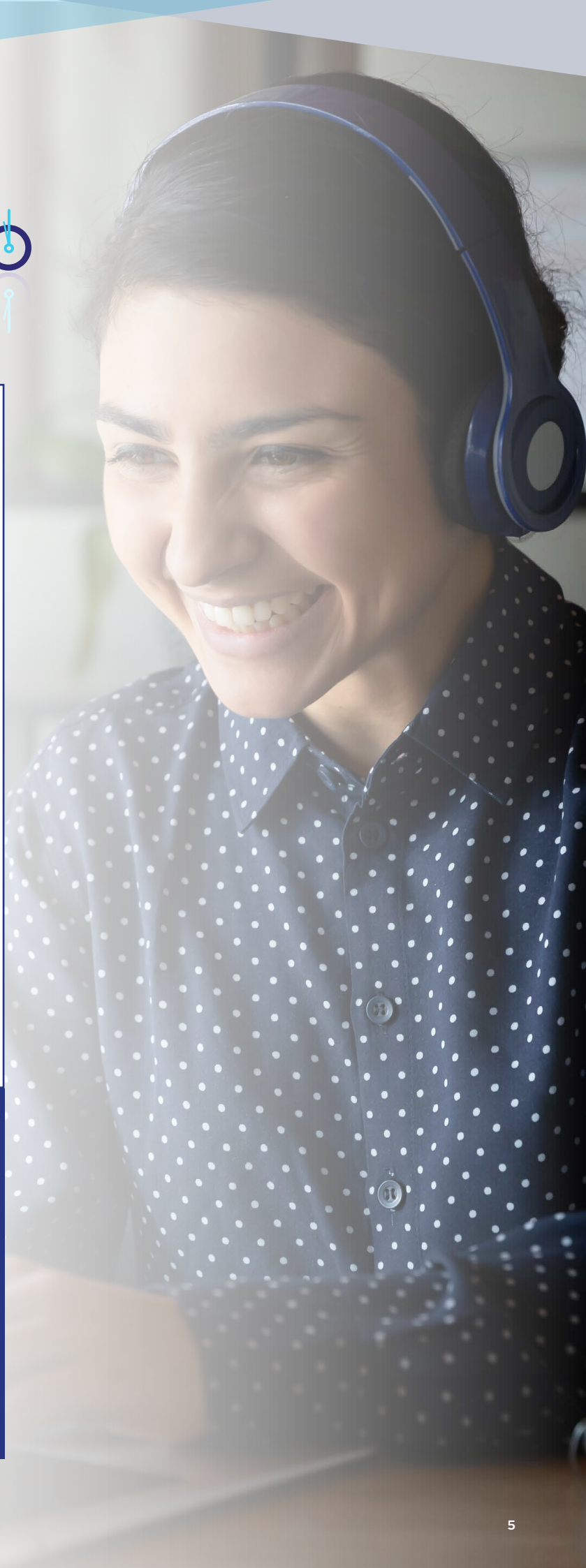
[Register Now](#)

## Do you have an employment law question?

Team HR can help business start-ups, SMEs and large multinational organisations. Call to speak to us today on any aspect of employment law or strategic human resource services.

**Tel from NI: 028 71271 882, or from ROI: 01 695 0749.**

**Alternatively, contact us via email:  
[hello@hrteamgroup.com](mailto:hello@hrteamgroup.com)**





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