



# Influenza is a Corporate Issue

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Influenza kills an estimated 35,000 people yearly in the US and 600 people in the UK, results in 7.6 million sick days and cost UK organizations £1.35 billion. Whilst sickness is an everyday issue that occurs all year round, a large number of flu-related sick days compressed into such a short period can wreak havoc on business productivity and profitability.

The Influenza season generally peaks in January/February and tapers off in March and generally results in 5 to 7 days off work for those infected. The impact on business is not simply the cost of overtime/agency cost in covering the sickness, but also loss of expertise, poor quality, delivery/service delays, and as a result, reputational damage.

Managing the absence of a few people for a few days is par for the course, but Influenza can decimate your workforce and for a much longer period and be fatal.

It is for this reason, that in 2020 organizations should make Influenza a priority to safeguard their business and their colleagues. Organizations should carefully draw up a plan and consider;

- 1.** Increased awareness of the Flu season within their teams including hygiene, vaccinations and absence policies.
- 2.** Encouraging staff to get the Flu vaccination and providing time off to do so.
- 3.** Where possible encouraging staff to work from home during high-risk periods, e.g. January and February.

- 4.** Reducing staff meetings during this period to reduce the opportunity for contagion. If you normally have company day/training events during this period, you should consider rescheduling.

- 5.** Implementing clear guidelines about when colleagues can return to work. In general, you are contagious from day 1 (some experts suggest the day before) you have symptoms and remain infectious for 5 to 7 days. Those diagnosed with Flu should be encouraged or mandated to stay away from the office until after this infectious period. Again, in some situations, home working may be appropriate. It is far better to have one employee be off work a few extra days than risk infecting the whole team.

- 6.** Plan effectively and make use of technology. A good rostering system can help with planning cover during the influenza season. Hope is not a strategy so organizations should roster cover so that the business can continue to operate within the expected absence projections. If you don't have this data, then investing in a Time and Attendance solution would provide you with key absence metrics (filtered for Flu) to enable you to plan effectively for 2021. Software such as HFX's 3D Rostering and Time and Attendance solutions can help with this.

Organizations that plan effectively are only taking care of business, but not also taking care of their staff (and their families) whilst reducing the burden and cost on the NHS.