

Mid-Year Annual Leave Check: Is Your Organisation on Track?

With the summer now well underway, this is an ideal time for Organisations to review annual leave arrangements and ensure Employees are taking their leave in a balanced and timely manner.

While many Employees will have scheduled summer holidays, others may have taken little or no annual leave to date. If this scenario is left unaddressed, it can result in a significant build-up of untaken leave later in the year, creating operational challenges and placing unnecessary pressure on both Employees and managers.

A mid-year review provides an opportunity to assess leave balances, encourage forward planning and ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained throughout the remainder of the leave year.

Reviewing Annual Leave Balances

Monitoring annual leave balances at regular intervals enables Organisations to identify Employees who have accumulated a higher proportion of their annual leave entitlement and may require encouragement to book time off.

Sending a reminder to Employees to review their outstanding leave and submit requests for the remainder of the year can help avoid a late surge in leave requests during the final months of the leave year.

Where significant leave balances remain, managers may wish to discuss annual leave during one-to-one meetings, encouraging Employees to plan their remaining entitlement while considering both operational requirements and personal wellbeing.

Supporting Employee Wellbeing

Annual leave plays an important role in supporting Employee health, wellbeing and productivity. Taking regular breaks from work allows Employees to rest and recharge, helping to reduce the risk of fatigue and burnout.

Organisations have a duty, so far as is reasonably practicable, to protect the health, safety and welfare of their Employees. Encouraging Employees to take their annual leave throughout the year forms part of a proactive approach to supporting workplace wellbeing.

Understanding the Legal Position

Annual leave entitlements are governed by the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. While Employees are entitled to statutory annual leave, the timing of that leave is determined by the Employer.

When deciding when annual leave may be taken, Organisations should have regard to:

- The Employee's opportunities for rest and recreation.
- The Employee's family responsibilities.
- The need to consult with the Employee.

Employers must also ensure that Employees receive their full statutory annual leave entitlement within the relevant leave year.

Where statutory annual leave cannot be taken during the leave year, the Organisation must facilitate the taking of that leave within the first six months of the following leave year.

Organisations should also consider the provisions of their own Annual Leave Policy, which may provide for additional carry-over arrangements.

Managing Leave Fairly and Consistently

As demand for annual leave continues through the summer months and into the autumn, Organisations should ensure their leave approval process is transparent and consistently applied.

Practical measures include:

- Encouraging Employees to submit leave requests as early as possible.
- Applying clear notice requirements.
- Setting appropriate limits on the number of Employees who may be absent at the same time.
- Applying consistent criteria where multiple Employees request the same period of leave.
- Communicating decisions promptly to assist Employees with planning.

Having clearly documented procedures helps minimise misunderstandings and promotes fairness across the workforce.

Supporting Managers

Line managers play an important role in monitoring annual leave and encouraging Employees to use their entitlement appropriately.

Regular discussions regarding outstanding leave balances can help identify potential issues early and avoid a situation where Employees seek to take extended periods of leave during the busiest time of the year.

Where appropriate, Organisations may keep a record of these conversations as evidence that Employees have been encouraged to avail of their statutory leave entitlement.

If an Employee does not arrange to take their statutory leave despite reasonable reminders, an Employer may require the leave to be taken, provided the Employee receives at least one month's notice of the proposed leave dates.

Looking Ahead

Although many Organisations focus on annual leave during the summer period, a mid-year review can help avoid unnecessary operational pressures later in the year.

By monitoring leave balances, encouraging Employees to plan ahead and ensuring managers apply annual leave procedures consistently, Organisations can better balance operational requirements with Employees' entitlement to rest and recreation.

Taking action now can help reduce the risk of significant leave accrual, support Employee wellbeing and maintain appropriate staffing levels throughout the remainder of the leave year.

How Adare Trusted People Partners Can Help

Our services include tailored HR and employment law advice delivered by experienced and expert HR practitioners. Support and guidance are provided to enable Organisations to case manage individual and collective employment issues under all areas of HR and employment law including:

- Employment law compliance throughout the Employee lifecycle
- Retirement compliance, including contractual retirement ages, longer working requests and objective justification
- Contracts of Employment, Policies & Procedures, Managing Compliance
- HR Best Practice
- Advice on day-to-day matters
- Dedicated Client Manager
- Mitigation of Risk & Financial Liability
- Help desk support
- Commercial HR advice tailored for your Organisation

Adare is a team of expert-led Employment Law, Industrial Relations and best practice Human Resource Management consultants. If your Organisation needs advice, support, or guidance about employment law compliance, Employee relations or any HR issues, please contact Adare by calling 021 486 1420 or emailing info@adarehrm.ie to learn what services are available to support your business.