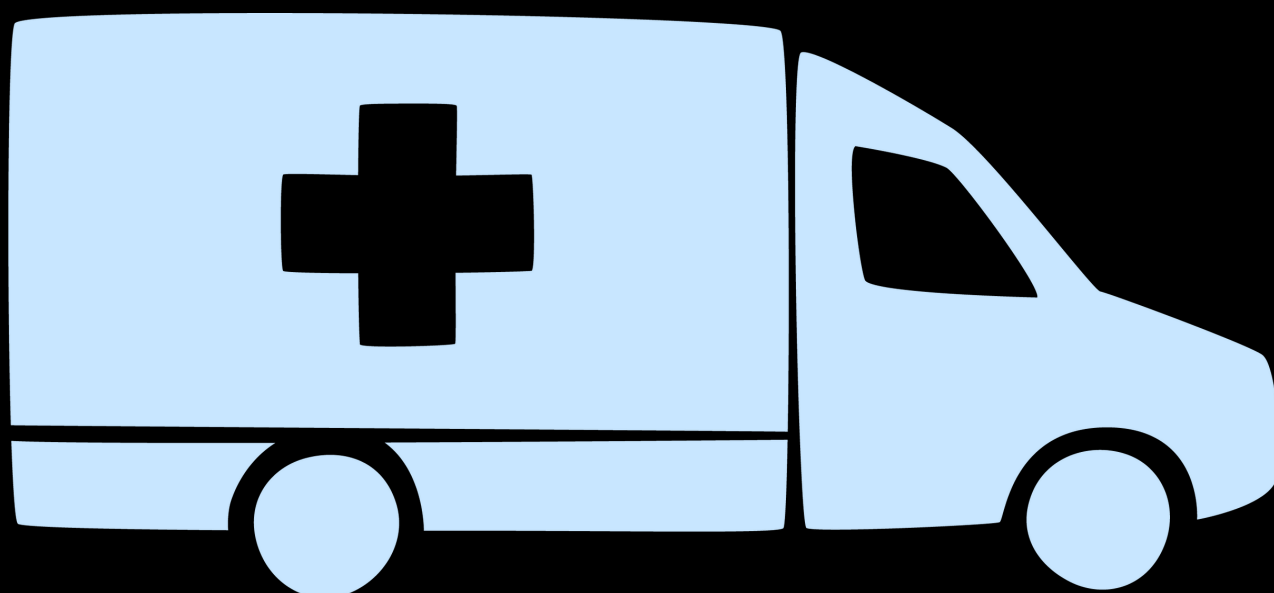
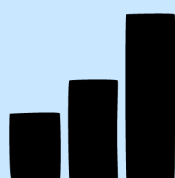


The impact of employee absence on care delivery in the NHS.



© GoodShape UK 2024. All rights reserved. Not for publication without prior permission.



Based on NHS Workforce Reports with analysis by GoodShape, and supporting data from GoodShape's proprietary database.

**GOOD
SHAPE**

Contents.

- 3 **Foreword from Professor Manoj Ramachandran**
- 4 **Current challenges facing the NHS**
- 6 **Research findings**
- 9 **Reshaping the future of absence management**
- 11 **Conclusion**

Foreword from Professor Manoj Ramachandran.

**GoodShape Medical Advisor and Consultant
Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgeon,
Barts Health NHS Trust**

The NHS is facing critical challenges, with waiting lists at record highs (a problem that existed prior to, but was accelerated by, the COVID-19 pandemic) and public satisfaction at an all-time low. Underlying this crisis, the NHS is struggling with inherent inefficiencies compounded by an absent workforce, with over 100,000 staff vacancies in England alone.

Austerity measures throughout the 2010s resulted in real-term spending growth of just 1% annually, significantly below the historical average of 3.4%. This chronic underfunding, coupled with inadequate capital investment, has left the NHS with outdated infrastructure and a shortage of essential resources.

While increased investment is crucial, reform is equally important to ensure the long-term sustainability of the NHS. The Labour Party's 10-year plan offers a potential roadmap for reform, focusing on expanding the GP workforce, improving access to appointments, and shifting care closer to home. However, simply pouring more money into a broken system without addressing the root causes of inefficiency and staff absenteeism will not solve the crisis.

A key element of reform must be a fundamental shift in how the NHS approaches staff absence management. Traditional solutions often fail to reduce absence effectively because they rely on inaccurate data, lack real-time compliance tracking, and offer limited insights. To address these shortcomings, the NHS needs to embrace a more holistic, data-driven approach that prioritises personalised employee support and seamless signposting to appropriate services for absence management, offering early intervention and a supportive work environment.

In this report, GoodShape explores the potential impact of their three-pronged approach to absence management: identification, intervention and intelligence. By providing real-time data capture, personalised self-care resources, automated referrals for early intervention, and in-depth reporting, GoodShape aims to empower both employees and managers to effectively manage absence and improve workforce productivity.

The data paints a challenging picture, but proven solutions exist. By implementing meaningful reforms, the NHS can optimise outcomes for both staff and patients and build a healthcare system that is resilient and fit for the future.



State of play: Current challenges facing the NHS.

An institution in distress

The NHS has long been confronting severe internal challenges that threaten its stability as a UK healthcare institution. A recent report by The King's Fund¹ paints a troubling picture of an overstretched workforce, with more than 100,000 vacancies in England alone and limited funding to support employees, creating unmanageable workloads and severe burnout. This strain has led to a sharp decline in staff morale, exacerbating already high stress levels and contributing to rising sickness absence.

While the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan² has introduced ambitious recruitment targets, it falls short in addressing the critical need for staff retention and wellbeing. Insufficient funding, coupled with inadequate support systems, is pushing NHS staff to their breaking point, compromising the quality of care and patient outcomes. Without urgent reforms that tackle these underlying issues, the NHS risks further decline, endangering both its workforce and its ability to serve the public effectively in the years to come.

Absence drives poor outcomes

Absence among NHS staff is a significant issue that directly impacts operational efficiency and financial stability. In April 2024, the absence rate across the NHS stood at 4.8%. This figure translates to an estimated 64,560 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions lost, resulting in a staggering cost of £207.5 million for that month alone. Depending on the season, costs can fluctuate to an even higher level.

To put this in perspective, with 1.3 million workers in the NHS, the 4.8% absence rate results in an estimated £2.49 billion in costs annually. This financial burden highlights the need for effective absence reduction strategies to stop the drain on resource.

Furthermore, a concerning 30.38% of NHS staff reported feelings of burnout due to their work, according to the 2023 NHS Staff Survey. This high level of burnout not only affects staff wellbeing but also contributes to increased absenteeism, creating an ongoing cycle for those who remain. Our data also shows that one mental health absence doubles the risk of an employee leaving an organisation, so identifying and supporting these individuals early becomes an essential need.

Impact on patient care

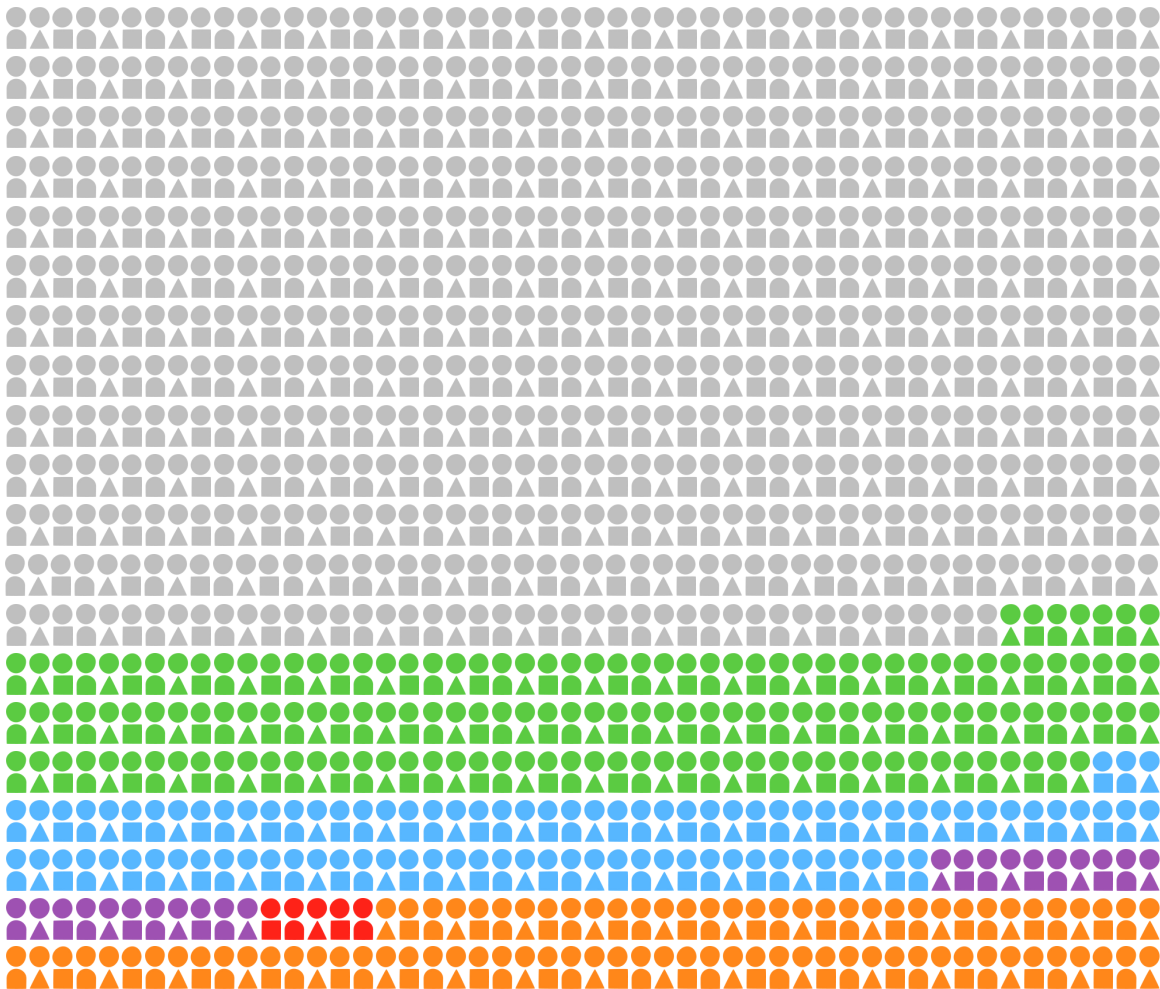
High levels of staff absence significantly hinder frontline care delivery, directly affecting patient outcomes. Preliminary analysis by GoodShape and Deloitte suggests a statistical correlation between sickness absence and the delivery of care in the NHS, with increased absence and the resulting strain on capacity directly correlating to longer treatment waiting times, more cancelled operations, and delays in A&E response times.

This report will delve into the evidence linking staff shortages with these critical issues, highlighting how the absence crisis undermines overall care delivery in the NHS.

A picture of absence across NHS England.

GoodShape has been working with the NHS for more than a decade to help reduce absence, cut costs, and improve outcomes for staff and patients. Our proprietary database of 1.2 billion data points, including historical data from over 120,000 NHS employees, allows us unparalleled insight into the frequency of absence within the institution, across both mental and physical health.

Below is a projection of the employee health issues facing an average NHS Trust of 5,000 employees each year, generated by GoodShape's proprietary forecasting model.



Research findings.

In this report, we explore the correlation between absence levels and care delivery across NHS England.

This report aims to shed light on the significant impact absence can have on key care delivery metrics, using examples from real NHS Trusts.

Data has been derived from NHS Digital Workforce reports and NHS Care Delivery Metrics reports.

Supporting data comes from GoodShape's extensive database of workplace absences, encompassing over 800,000 UK employee records.

Data covers the years 2015-2023, with a break between January 2020 and June 2022 due to COVID disruption.

Headline statistics

Equivalent number of full-time employees lost to sickness absence each year in the NHS:

73,876 FTEs¹

This represents 73% of the 100,000 positions that it's looking to fill in 2024.

Total cost of absence to the NHS each year:

£4.3 billion²

Annual cost for the average NHS Trust:

£19.3m³

equivalent to

330 FTEs

¹ Average NHS absence rate of 5.5% (NHS Digital, January 2024) x 1,343,208 FTEs (NHS Workforce Statistics, February 2024)
² 73,876 FTEs x average total FTE cost of £58,411 (Sample of 50% of NHS Trust annual board reports from 2022-23)
³ Based on 5,000-employee Trust x average total FTE cost of £58,411 x average 5.5% absence plus 10% replacement cost

The impact of absence on frontline care delivery.

A total of 160 out of 215 total Trusts in NHS England exhibit at least one correlation between absence and crucial patient outcomes. Here's an anonymised example for each:

Treatment waiting times vs absence rate



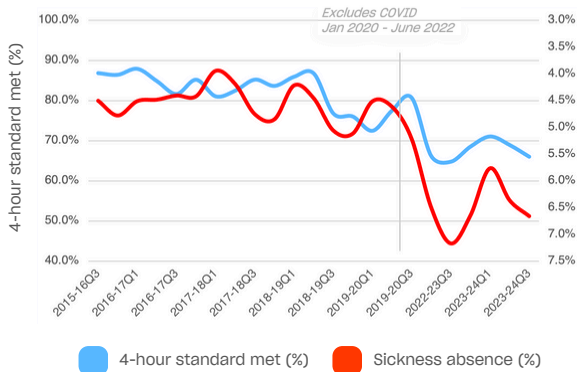
Treatment waiting time is classified as the period between a consultant-led referral to treatment. As evidenced, increased absence rates can have a significant effect on this metric, with a post-COVID spike in absence increasing treatment waiting times in this Trust from 6.6 to 12.8 weeks.

This correlation is seen in 115 Trusts.

4-hour standard A&E response times vs absence rate

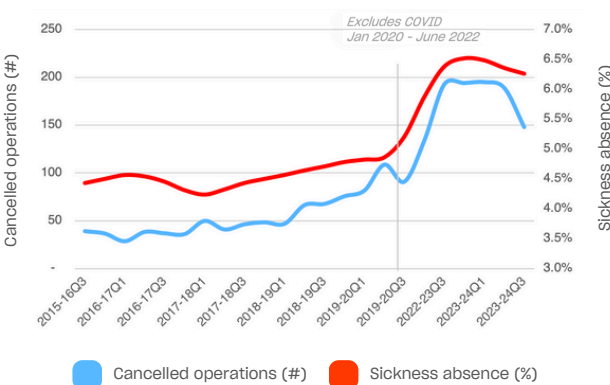
The NHS 4-hour standard for A&E requires that 95% of patients attending an A&E department should be admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours of arrival.

The Trust featured here has seen a slow but consistent decline in this standard being met, correlating closely with absence rates: 2023-24 data shows a 69% success rate over the past 12 months (rolling) and an absence rate of 6.4% across the same period.



This correlation is seen in 116 Trusts.

Cancelled operations vs absence rate



The ability to carry out scheduled, non-emergency surgeries is highly dependent on staff availability. For the Trust featured opposite, growing absence rates that reached a peak of 6.5% bumped the number of quarterly cancelled operations to 195, with a slight dip as absence rates have improved.

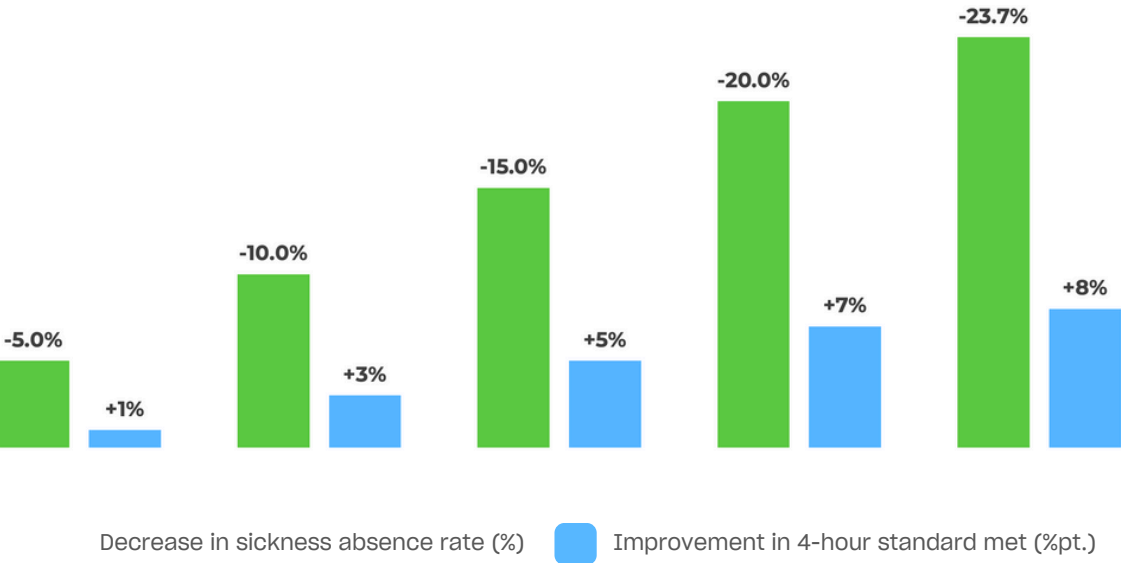
This correlation is seen in 37 Trusts.

How reducing absence can improve care delivery.

Reducing staff absence in the NHS can significantly enhance care delivery by increasing workforce capacity, allowing for timely treatment and improved patient outcomes. With more permanent, experienced staff available, waiting times for appointments and procedures can be reduced, fewer operations would need to be cancelled, and patients would receive quicker consultations and emergency care. A stable, fully staffed workforce also alleviates pressure on remaining employees, reducing burnout and improving morale, in turn further enhancing the quality of care.

Impact on care delivery

Below is a graph modelling the impact absence reduction could have on 4-hour standard A&E response times. The final pair of columns features a 23.7% absence reduction, which is the average absence reduction GoodShape clients achieve in their first year on the platform.



Further impact

Based on an absence reduction of 23.7%, a 5,000-employee Trust could achieve the following results annually:

£4.6m¹
annual savings

Equivalent to
73 FTEs²
back at work

Reshaping the future of absence management.

Limitations of traditional solutions

Absence management has been around for decades and is utilised by all large companies. Traditional solutions, although good for recording absence, are often not effective in actually reducing it. This lack of results is largely due to four key limitations:



Inaccurate data

Traditional absence systems often rely on manual entry or outdated tracking methods, leading to incomplete or incorrect records. This inconsistency makes it difficult for organisations to assess absence trends accurately, identify underlying issues, and implement effective interventions to mitigate future absence.



No compliance tracking

Most traditional solutions lack real-time compliance tracking, making it hard for organisations to ensure they are adhering to legal requirements and internal policies regarding absence management. This gap can expose the organisation to legal risks and reduce the effectiveness of absence reduction strategies.



Lack of insight

Traditional systems may collect absence data but often fail to analyse patterns, identify root causes, or offer actionable insights and predictive analytics. Without this, organisations struggle to take proactive steps towards reducing absenteeism and improving wellbeing.



No personalised support

Traditional absence systems often lack the capability to recognise and address individual employee needs when they are unwell. This can lead to employees feeling unsupported, potentially prolonging recovery times and increasing the likelihood of future absences.

A new way to approach absence management

GoodShape revolutionises the absence management process through a data-led technology platform which enables real-time data capture and personalised employee self-care, automated processes to drive efficiency, and in-depth reporting and tools to support managers and help identify trends and steer investment in health and wellbeing support.

Identification

Our single platform solution offers 24/7 absence reporting for employees via mobile and web, and delivers instant notifications and live dashboards for managers and HR teams.

Intervention

Employees are fully supported throughout their absence with personalised self-care plans, a comprehensive wellbeing advice library, and automated referrals for early intervention.

Intelligence

60+ customisable reports on absence trends, high-risk areas, third-party services and more demonstrate the value of your investments through actionable insight and help steer strategy.

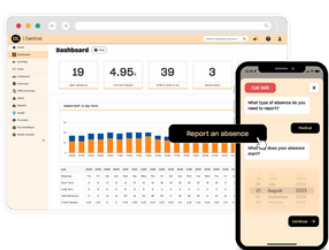


Introducing GoodShape.

The only platform proven to reduce employee absence.

GoodShape is a single, centralised platform that offers a data-led approach to absence management. For 20 years, we've supported over 800,000 employees across large organisations in the public and private sectors.

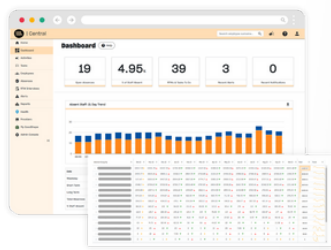
GoodShape helps you to:



Understand the real causes and levels of employee absence in your organisation



Help employees get back to health - and to work - as early and safely as possible



Develop resource plans and justify wellbeing investment based on actionable insight

Making a difference to NHS Trusts

With almost two decades spent supporting 125,000 employees across 42 Trusts, we have seen significant results amongst our NHS clients. Here's one example:

Context

This NHS Foundation Trust of 6,500+ employees has been working with us since 2021. Upon joining, they had a high rate of mental health absence and poor absence recording due to not all of their employees being on the roster.

Approach

During our time with this Trust, their approach to managing employee absence and employee health has been radically overhauled. The GoodShape platform has helped to deliver operational efficiencies and cost savings while also providing a critical support service used by a significant proportion of employees.

Results



Conclusion.

The data paints a bleak picture, but a solution exists.

For the NHS to get back on its feet, Trust leaders need to overhaul the way they manage absence. Traditional approaches are no longer enough - to facilitate lasting change, a holistic approach is required.

GoodShape is on a mission to transform absence management by providing real-time data, personalised support, and actionable insights that empower both employees and managers. By integrating technology and AI tools with absence management processes, GoodShape aims to reduce absenteeism, cut bank and agency costs, enhance workforce productivity, and ultimately improve patient care across the NHS.

"It's our mission to get the NHS back on its feet and fit for the future. Achieving our mission will take time, investment, and reform. Reform is even more important than investment. Because pouring ever-increasing amounts of money into a system that isn't working is wasteful in every sense. [...] I argue that our NHS must modernise or die, not as a threat but a choice."

Wes Streeting, Labour's Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Quoted from October 2023 Labour Conference

"In challenging financial times, maximising staff attendance and performance is a priority in ensuring high quality services to patients and for carers.

We have been using the GoodShape service since 2007 and the responsive service and real-time data flow from GoodShape enables us to continually review our health and wellbeing strategies, review our sickness statistics in a more efficient way and ultimately continue to reduce overall sickness absence levels within the Trust."

Deputy Director of Workforce & Organisational Development
NHS Foundation Trust

"I can't tell you how important it is to have a service like GoodShape in an organisation like mine. Having a first day absence reporting system where the person is having a structured conversation and getting to a clinician when they need it feels like an absolute must do.

I get to see absence by department. I get to see short term and long term. I get to see percentages and numbers. And it is very easy to digest quite a lot of information ... on one page. So I always know where I need to go and ask the question, or if something is not looking like it's going in the right direction. The data is great and it's presented really simply."

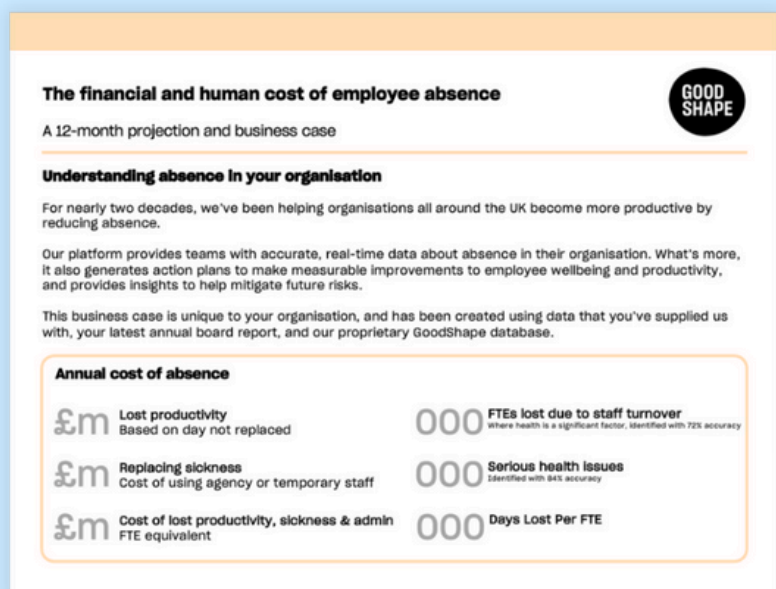
CEO
NHS Ambulance Trust

How much is employee absence costing your Trust?

Is employee absence affecting your frontline care delivery?

Find out how absence is impacting your organisation - and how to reduce it - by requesting your FREE absence management report today.

Head to GoodShape.com/nhs to get started.



Reduce absence, cut costs and improve productivity.
goodshape.com

+44 (0)345 456 5730
questions@goodshape.com

**GOOD
SHAPE**