



## SOUNDS GREAT Boffins have suggested workers be allowed to call bosses at the last minute to take a “chill day”

Employees could enjoy some extra time in bed or a TV binge instead of going to work if a new proposal gets the go-ahead

BY KATY PAGAN | 17th February 2017, 1:49 am



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**EMPLOYEES could enjoy some extra time in bed or a TV binge instead of going to work if a new proposal gets the go-ahead.**

A study has suggested workers be allowed to call bosses at the last minute to take a “chill day”.

The scheme is the latest idea to help tackle a £23.5billion sickness benefit bill and would require only an hour’s notice.

The Institute for Public Policy Research think tank suggests the “wellbeing days” will prevent stress and fatigue.

And life coach Connie McLaughlin reckons it’s a great idea, believing it could help staff flourish.

Connie has found many employees crave a sense of control in their job, which “chill days” could provide.

She said: “Employees can easily feel constrained in terms of start times and paying bills and their mortgage.

“So giving them some level of control with wellbeing days can only be a positive thing.

“It will make employees feel valued. In turn, employers can get more from them in terms of motivation, enthusiasm and productivity.”

The IPPR report – which also recommends increasing statutory sick pay from 28 weeks to 52 weeks – says placing “wellbeing” on a par with sickness could help cut Britain’s spiralling illness absence rate. Connie, managing director of motivational firm Inner Buzz, believes the scheme could tackle the stigma of taking days off ill.

She said: “It will take away any element of guilt many people feel when they take a sick day. Sometimes people might not feel emotionally up for a day at work, or just slightly under the weather.

“Instead of taking a sick day and feeling guilty about it they can opt for a chill day instead.”

But Connie stressed the plan could only succeed if workers did not abuse that notion of trust. She said: “In any relationship – at home or in the workplace – boundaries need to be clear.

“If chill days were introduced, employees would need to know what they’re allowed to do or not. Basically, workers need to make sure they’re not taking the p\*\*\*.”

Professor David Hoey, an employment lawyer with BTO, agrees trust would be crucial.

He said: “You have to be careful with employee relationships. Employers have to be trustful of their staff.

“One should hope that this element of trust means something can be arranged to accommodate an employee’s last-minute emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.”

But David argues this doesn't necessarily mean 'chill days' are the answer. He added: "Unpaid leave already gives workers the right to cope with such issues. I think many people will see chill days as a step too far."

There are also concerns that some businesses would not be able to cope with wellbeing day absences.

David said: "In many roles, you can't afford not to be there. The absence can impact the business as a whole."

And the professor, who also teaches employment law at the University of Strathclyde, fears the scheme could also cause tension between colleagues.

He said: "There will be employees who won't be happy picking up the slack and may feel annoyed with their employees for leaving them in the lurch."

"It could pit employees against each other."

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