

## Crown Computing Improves Payroll Efficiency At Dover Harbour Board

Dover Harbour Board, which manages one of the busiest ports in the world, with substantial general cargo volumes and over 16 million passengers passing through each year, is installing **Open Options** time and attendance software from Crown Computing to help manage its 650 strong workforce.



The Harbour Board's staff undertake an important role in the administration, maintenance and improvement of the Harbour and **Open Options** will interface to its new CiphR HR and Payroll software to help reduce the administration of payroll preparation and improve accuracy.

next 20 years, the Harbour Board is keen to maximise staff usage and minimise costs. The decision was taken to review all existing HR and Payroll Systems and implement new solutions including a leading edge time and attendance system. Crown Computing was selected after a successful 3 month pilot project proved that **Open Options** would help them to drive the efficiencies they needed.

**Peter Tatham, Deputy Head of Human Resources and Administration, said, "we were impressed with the flexibility of the **Open Options** solution and the Crown team provided a good service throughout the sales and pilot process. We are pleased with our decision to purchase **Open Options** and are looking forward to the efficiencies it will bring."**



With a predicted 100% growth in ferry passenger traffic due over the

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## A third of British workers say it's OK to 'pull a sickie'

Despite recent studies indicating a slight decline in absence levels, research commissioned by Crown Computing indicates that over a third (35%) of British Workers feel it's OK to take the odd day off work even if they are not genuinely ill or have a good reason.

see pages 4-5 for our full story that made the news.



# New Crown customer service centre



Open Options™

“We have always been committed to offering prospects and customers the very best levels of service”.

Crown's continued success goes from strength to strength. In the last twelve months sales have increased and as a result we have expanded the customer support team – training and support staff as well as adding additional skills to the R&D team.

Although this recruitment has put some pressure on the space in our existing premises it has provided the opportunity for us to look at the services we offer to customers and improve the facilities we have

available. So in October 2003 we opened a new Customer Service Centre in Tamworth, which allowed us to extend the pre and post sales services we offer.

The new purpose-built facility is adjacent to the existing Crown site in Tamworth. Crown's Managing Director, Mike Hawkesford commented 'this is an exciting time for Crown. We have always been committed to offering prospects and customers the very best levels of

service. This new facility will enable our skilled team to deliver excellent product demonstrations and training in a first class environment.'

The new building will house two fully equipped training rooms and a demonstration suite and will provide a high level of comfort to customers. The help desk, training and project management teams have relocated to the new site.

## Limbering up for Flexible Working

The subject of work-life balance is rarely out of the media gaze and although we are all happy to debate it many organisations are unprepared for flexible working. This is despite legislation that came into force in April 2003 that allows working parents to request flexible working.

To help organisations Crown commissioned Nic Paton, a freelance journalist who writes regularly for the Guardian and The Mail on Sunday, to produce a white paper to review the issues involved in adopting a more flexible approach to working practices. The paper highlights changes in employment law and looks at ways in which flexible working could work for you. To obtain your copy please contact Gail Green on **01827 309800** or visit our web site at [www.crowncomputing.co.uk](http://www.crowncomputing.co.uk)



# regulate -

## time off for public duties



By **Derek Eccleston MIPD ACII**  
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There are quite a number of reasons why employees might request time off work – for example to care for dependants, to carry out duties as a member of the Reserve Forces or to attend a trade union training course. On other occasions people request time off work to carry out what are called “public duties”. Parliament has decided that some reasons are of wider benefit to society and have introduced certain rights to time off to perform some of these public duties.

The relevant legislation is now the Employment Rights Act 1996. This requires employers to permit its employees to take reasonable time off to carry out certain public duties. There are separate rules covering reservists who are called up for military service.

Employees are not entitled to time off in respect of any or every public duty they may perform. The list of duties that do qualify is contained at the end of this article.

The entitlement only extends to employees, i.e. those who work under a contract of service or apprenticeship. This would exclude casuals and agency staff. If the person is an employee, there is no minimum period of continuous service to qualify for these time off rights.

#### What are the rights?

Employees are entitled to request reasonable time off, during working hours, for the following purposes:

- Attendance at a meeting of the body or any of its committees or its sub-committees, and
- The performance of duties approved by the body for the purpose of discharging the functions of the body or those of any of its committees or sub-committees.

This is slightly different wording if the employee is a Justice of the Peace (JP). In this case an employer must permit the employee to take time off during working hours for the purpose of performing any of the duties of that office.

It should be noted that the employee is entitled to take this time off during working hours. Employers should not re-arrange the employees timetable to create this time off. Employees are not obliged to make the time up at a later date.

#### Payment?

Unlike time off for union duties, the right to time off for public duties does not include any right to be paid. Of course employers are at liberty to offer payment to employees in these

circumstances and this should be covered in the employees contract.

It should be noted that the amount of time off which the employee can take always has to be “reasonable in all the circumstances”. If the employer feels that the amount of time off is becoming unacceptable, this should be discussed and the employer may decide to refuse further requests. Employees must remember that there is a need to balance the time taken on public duties and the time required to carry out their normal contractual duties at their place of work.

#### Qualifying time off

The right to take time off for public duties (unpaid) applies to employees who are Justices of the Peace (Magistrates) and to employees who are members of the following bodies:

- A Local Authority, the Common Council of the City of London, a National Park Authority or the Broads Authority
- A Statutory Tribunal
- A Police Authority
- The Service Authority for the National Criminal Intelligence Service or the Service Authority for the National Crime Squad
- A Board of Prison Visitors in England and Wales or a Prison Visiting Committee in Scotland
- A Health Authority, a special Health Authority or a Primary Care Trust
- A managing or governing body of an educational establishment maintained by a Local Education Authority; a governing body of a further or higher educational corporation; a school council or school board or the board of management of a self governing school or college; a governing body of a central institution or a designated institution in Scotland
- The General Teaching Councils for England and Wales
- The Environment Agency or the Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- The Scottish Water and Sewerage Authorities

# A third of British workers say it's OK to 'pull a sickie'

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## Survey highlights hangovers and g

And the most likely reason for them 'pulling a sickie' would be as a result of a hangover, with a surprising 63% of respondents citing it. The Crown research conducted by independent research house, IPSOS Capibus, who polled 975 members of the public in employment also found that people are most tempted to pull a bogus 'sickie' if it's fine summers day (37%), it's their birthday (34%) or they wanted to spend time with a loved one (31%).

While the average worker may deem the odd day off work as harmless, figures released in 2003 by the CBI in their annual absence and labour turnover report estimate that the

problem of bogus absence is costing British industry as much as £1.7 billion a year.

Crown's study backed up recent findings from the CIPD which indicated a 10 per cent fall in sickness absence levels. According to Mike Emmett the CIPD's head of employee relations 'the fall in absence also suggests that action by HR managers is starting to bite. Around three-quarters of the 1,300 HR practitioners surveyed had instituted changes to absence management in the past two years, with return-to-work interviews and new or revised monitoring procedures cited as the most popular measures.'

Crown Computing's study asked respondents for instances that would deter them from 'pulling a sickie'.

The results found that:

- More than half would be less tempted if pay was docked for each day they were absent.
- 40% would be less likely if they knew their company was tracking their absences
- A third of people would be deterred by having to undergo a return to work interview
- A third would be less likely to take an unauthorised day off if they could work more flexibly.



However the research also discovered that 10% of those surveyed stated that nothing would stop them from pulling a sickie every so often. This may be set to change, as the CIPD study discovered.

Almost half the organisations questioned in their study reported an increase in job insecurity due to economic uncertainty attributed to the reduction in absence levels.

Mike Hawkesford, Managing Director of Crown Computing said 'our findings and those of the CBI and CIPD highlight that individuals need to be managed. While keeping an eye on absences can help identify trends and patterns amongst specific areas

of a workforce, developing an understanding that you had a problem is not good enough, businesses need to manage absence as and when it happens.'

Our study also found that absence differs by region. Of those people that cited a hangover as the most likely reason for pulling a 'sickie' Yorkshire and Humberside, the South West and Wales were 'hangover hotspots'. Workers in London and Scotland at the other end of the scale are least likely to let a hangover stand in the way of work.



## Good weather as top temptations

The Crown study findings are backed by the CBI's survey that found:

- Absence rates for public sector organisations have typically been higher than their private sector counterparts – they take 2.4 days more absence per year (2002 average absence 6.8 days)
- Short term absence is responsible for 95% of total absence
- The top reason for absence was short term minor illness such as coughs and colds
- Most employers think 30% of absence is bogus
- Where senior managers take responsibility for absence the average days lost per employee drop dramatically to 5.0 days

The findings of the research all point to the value of employee management solutions in managing and driving down absence. And the features in Crown's *Open Options* make it easier than ever to re-enforce and proactively manage absence and attendance policies.

For more information contact us on [info@crowncomputing.co.uk](mailto:info@crowncomputing.co.uk).

#### Further Information:

The Issue Of Absence – an examination of how absence is affecting the British workplace and guidance on what to do about it.

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#### Absence and Labour Turnover 2003

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# New regulations threaten to undermine UK's flexible labour market

In the survey, 45% of employers confirmed they would offer fewer temporary work assignments if the Temporary Workers Directive was introduced in its present form.

**Proposed European legislation is set to threaten the UK's labour market. The CBI, in their latest Employment Trends Survey, outline the threats this will have to flexibility and choice which has led to low UK unemployment compared to other EU countries.**

It cited the results of its survey as proof that potential EU regulations on temporary workers and limiting working hours would damage the UK economy. And the inappropriate legislation could impose a regulatory straight jacket on employers.

In the survey, 45% of employers confirmed they would offer fewer temporary work assignments if the Temporary Workers Directive was introduced in its present form.

The current draft of the directive would see employers forced to offer temporary workers the same employment conditions as permanent staff from day one of employment and the same salary after six-weeks.

It also found that 59% of firms said the directive would impose additional costs, making temporary staff less affordable and so reducing the flexibility for employers. Most companies use agency workers for short term cover of absent staff.

Business leaders are also concerned about the removal of the UK's opt out from the Working Time Directive, with 39% claiming it would have a serious impact on business. Currently 32% of employees have opted out.

CBI deputy director-general, John Cridland, said both proposed directives will damage the very people they are designed to help, by harming salaries and costing jobs.

Employers and employees benefit if individuals have flexibility and choice about their working hours and working patterns. Indeed flexible working is a critical part of rehabilitation policies to reduce workplace absence according to the CBI's 2003 Absence and labour turnover survey.

Crown Computing Marketing Manager, Julia Legge commented

"The results of these studies indicate that employers need to manage labour costs more tightly than ever before. Our solutions can significantly help by reducing the administration involved in managing the workforce whilst ensuring optimal use of labour"



# Welsh Blood Services



Last year the Welsh Blood Service was successfully accredited under an NHS wide Health at Work initiative reflecting its positive approach to staff health issues. In parallel to this, it also purchased Crown's **Open Options** Employee Management System.

The Welsh Blood Service is part of Velindre NHS Trust, responsible to the Welsh Assembly Government. It employs over 400 staff and holds blood collection sessions at 500 locations throughout South, Mid and West Wales. Around 120,000 donors are bled per annum and the blood and blood products supply 16 hospitals in Wales.

#### Why Choose **Open Options**?

The Welsh Blood Service wanted accurate statistics to help manage attendance. Their previous Bodet system was too slow and was not providing the information they required.

With absence levels running at around 4% they looked at a number of Time and Attendance systems before choosing **Open Options**.

**Open Options** was chosen for its flexibility, its large number of work patterns and its intuitive screens.

#### Benefits

Using **Open Options** will enable the Welsh Blood Service to provide accurate attendance data not least to monitor how the initiatives are working. It is also already better informing managers of their departments' absence levels. The Welsh Blood Service are also examining the feasibility of using the system to help rostering of the blood collection teams.



## What's new at Crown Computing...

#### New trainers earn their Wings

Two newer recruits, Kimberley Targett and Emma Erker have successfully completed their in-house training and have been appointed as Product Trainers for the company. Sue Acock, Senior Product Consultant commented, "Kimberley and Emma are proving to be valuable additions to the team.

Their appointment has allowed us to look at the training department and offer additional services to users. The expansion to the team has enabled Crown to provide a wider range of courses that can help users understand the day to day functions of Crown software as well as using the system to help them manage workplace issues. A range of training courses are available to deal with many subjects including: -

- Absence Management
- Managing Overtime
- Maximising Payroll Efficiency
- Legislation
- Labour Costing

Further details are available from the training department on **01827 309800**.

#### Plan and Manage Staff Attendance from Home - It's your option

##### New Web Based Employee Management System From Crown Computing

My Options, the new web-based Time and Attendance system from Crown Computing allows HR and operations administrators to remotely plan, manage and administer staff attendance. The new software, designed for maximum usability, also gives access to home based and mobile employees to view and update their work schedules and personnel information through a standard Web Browser

Administrators can take charge of the management of people and react dynamically to changing manpower requirements. They can view work schedules, including individual staff skill levels, and acknowledge daily exceptions such as unexpected absences or missed clockings. Having this information at their fingertips enables administrators to make speedy decisions on resource planning in order to maintain service levels.

My Options' employee self-service facility allows employees to have access to their own personnel records using their unique IDs and passwords. They can view their planned work roster, record attendance and activities, request leave or overtime and view their flexi-time work balance if applicable.

Mike Hawkesford, Managing Director at Crown Computing said: 'My Options is an expansion of our commitment to the .Net platform. Any organisation that has a need to connect disparate offices or rural workers with relevant information on working schedules can benefit'

Visit [www.my-options.co.uk](http://www.my-options.co.uk) for more information

# conference success



## Comments included: -

Glad I came, I found the whole event very useful.

Support Clinics were a great idea - very useful to have half an hour to get great advice.

Very well thought out.

Useful, informative, enjoyable - thank you.

Excellent Guest speakers - well done.

This years User Group proved to be a great success once again attracting over 100 delegates to the event in Stratford. Guests listened to Jan Meek's fascinating account of life at sea with her son as they rowed the Atlantic breaching 40-foot waves and encountering Whales and Dolphins on the 101 day adventure.

Her inspiring after dinner speech provided a fitting end to an informal evening designed to allows users

to meet one another. The main conference, held the following day, provided users with the opportunity to discuss issues affecting their organisations and see how **Open Options** and FM&C can help.

Derek Eccleston of Employment Law Training provided an informative update on the latest in employment legislation and the Crown team demonstrated how our products can be used to support employers.

Following requests from users that attended last year's event, Ruth Purdie of North Wales Police highlighted the progress they have made using **Open Options** and how it is now providing a significant impact to policing in the area. With support clinics, product updates and general networking opportunities users felt this event was the best we have ever run.

## FREE Workforce Management Workshops

A review of legal and practical aspects to help you manage your people better

- London Heathrow - 16th March 2004
- Stratford-upon-Avon - 22nd April 2004
- Leeds - 19th May 2004

## FREE Working Time Forum

London Kensington - 29th April 2004

With representatives from leading organisations this forum will look at the changes in working time - why are people where they are? Why are they working at certain times? How can employers conform to employment legislation whilst remaining competitive? How can we motivate the workforce to ensure sustainable productivity? How can we manage workforce costs more effectively? Learn how to make your organisation leaner and meaner whilst maintaining a happy workforce and high levels of customer service.

For more details please contact Gail Green on **01827 309800** or visit our website: [www.crowncomputing.co.uk](http://www.crowncomputing.co.uk)



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