

Return-to-work risk assessment

Before someone returns to work after an absence, they should talk with their employer. This is to ensure that they are ready to return, and so that you can put in place any support they may need.

Beforehand, you should plan to carry out the return-to-work discussion in a private setting, gather any relevant information, prepare questions and make sure that you know what support is available for them.

You should understand the company policy around any requests from the employee for flexible working or a phased return. If the employee has been off sick, you should make sure that they bring their fit note to the meeting or send it ahead of time, to allow you to read any recommendations.

Supporting someone with a health condition to come back to work can have many benefits. It can save you money, minimise disruption, and getting the person back to work can have a positive effect on their physical and mental health.



Here are some of the basics that you would need to consider for an employee's return to work, following an absence due to illness

- Make sure that you have a fit note from the employee's doctor, and have noted and implemented any recommendations that have been made.
- Ensure that the fit note has covered whether the employee is expected to be fit for work when the note expires.
- If the doctor has made comments concerning the requirement for further medical guidance, ensure that this has been sought, or arrange for occupational health advice immediately.
- Consider making workplace adjustments to help the employee: these could include shorter hours, flexible or part-time working, or adapting the work environment or equipment.
- Make a note of any specific control measures that must be in place.
- The return-to-work risk assessment must be reviewed at an agreed timescale, depending on the nature of the work and the severity of the illness or injury. The fit note will give you an idea how long this should last.
- The advice in the fit note is about your employee's general fitness to work, and not specific to their current role. This allows you the maximum amount of flexibility to discuss potential alterations that will allow them to return to work.
- The risk assessment must be completed alongside the employee, and communicated out to everyone within the organisation that it affects.
- Ensure that, when making adjustments to the risk assessment, you do not negatively affect the working environment for other employees.
- You do not need to be an expert in the employee's health condition to have these discussions: you should focus on practical ways to support them, rather than the condition itself.
- If you cannot implement the required changes, you can use the fit note as evidence for sick pay.

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