

Supporting attendance at work
Return to work meeting



everyone fit
for the future

We know supporting the health and wellbeing of their teams is important to all of our people managers and this brief guide has been developed to provide information on good practice related to health and wellbeing.

Conducting a return to work meeting with an employee who has been absent from work due to health issues, has several benefits. It allows you as their line manager to:



This support might include reasonable adjustments, and/or identifying whether there are any barriers to their returning to work. It also allows you to update them on any changes that may have occurred while they were away.

A return to work meeting should be carried out in an open, friendly and consistent manner to support the employee and their return to work. Employees should be notified in advance that it will be happening. Most of these meetings will be informal and brief and, ideally, should be carried out following each period of absence.

These meetings are known to effectively reduce short-term sickness absence.

What do I need to do?

1 Conduct the return to work meeting

It's important that this meeting is conducted by the line manager whenever possible. It should be focussed on the employee, their health and their return to work, and should be seen as a supportive intervention.

You should:

- Welcome the employee back to work.
- Discuss the reason for their absence.
- Provide an update on what has happened while they have been away.
- Have a discussion about their health and wellbeing, if appropriate.
- Develop a return to work plan (as set out below).

Ideally, a record of this meeting should be kept. If there are concerns that there is a recurrent short-term absence issue, it's advisable to get in touch with HR Direct and/or your local HR Business Partner.

2 Develop a return to work plan

In some circumstances, a return to work plan should be developed for the employee. This will allow for potential reasonable adjustments to be identified by you and/or the employee in order to facilitate their return to work. The plan should focus on what they are able to do, as well as what they may need help or assistance with.

Reasonable Adjustments Policy:

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/CorporateServices/HR/InformationCentre/EmployeeHandbook/ReasonableAdjustmentPolicy.pdf>

Reasonable adjustments guidance:

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/UsefulResources/DisabilityIssues/Everyone-Managing-Disability-in-the-Workplace-Reasonable-Adjustment.pdf>

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Alternative duties that they may be able to carry out until they are fully fit.
- Phased returns to work.
- Flexibility to work from home.
- Adjustments to their physical environment, for example, desk, chair.

Return to work plans can also be developed in advance of employees being absent from work, for example planned surgery. This will set expectations for you and the employee for their return.

The plan should be time-bound and review dates should be set, in order to evaluate its effectiveness and whether the plan's goals have been achieved.

You may also consider partnering or 'buddying' them up with a colleague for their first few days back into the workplace.

③ Consider referral to occupational health

In more complex cases, you may wish to refer the employee to occupational health in order to identify whether there are any reasonable adjustments that need to be considered. When requesting advice from occupational health, it's important to also outline the individual's role so that suitable adjustments can be suggested.

Any occupational health report should be discussed with the employee as soon as it is received, in order for any adjustments to be mutually agreed. These can be incorporated into the return to work plan (as above).

Should the employee be on medication, whether prescribed or over the counter, they must phone the occupational health providers' medication advice service. (Details of which can be found overleaf.)

Medication enquiries FAQs:

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/CorporateServices/HR/InformationCentre/OccupationalHealth/Medication%20Enquiries%20FAQ.pdf>

④ Consider referral to other support services

You may wish to advise your employee that other support services are available, namely: Employee Assistance Programme, online wellbeing assessment tool, and discount fitness facilities, amongst others.

Details from health services menu:

<https://www.safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing>

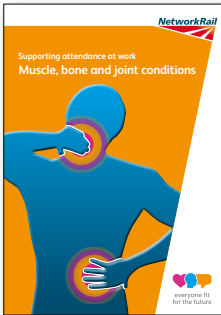
(click on Healthy Rewards and Benefits)

Recap

Conduct the return to work meeting: this is a supportive intervention that will facilitate their return to work

Develop a return to work plan: this will identify potential reasonable adjustments and support interventions that may be helpful for the employee

Refer to appropriate support services, like occupational health and Employee Assistance Programme: to further identify what measures can be put in place for their return



Supporting attendance at work

At Network Rail there are various resources and support mechanisms available to you if you are concerned about your employees' return to work meetings.

1 Employee Assistance Programme

Call 0800 358 4858 or 0330 332 9980
www.validium.com/vclub

2 Occupational health provider

<https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing/HelpingOthers/Supporting-wellbeing-at-work/Occupational-Health>

3 Health and Wellbeing Portal

<https://www.safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing>

4 HR Direct

Call 0800 0 546 547

5 Flexible Working Policy

<http://connect/CorporateServices/HRonline/WorkingArrangements/flexible-working.aspx>

6 Reasonable Adjustments Policy

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/CorporateServices/HR/InformationCentre/EmployeeHandbook/ReasonableAdjustmentPolicy.pdf>

7 Reasonable adjustments guidelines

<http://connectdocs/NetworkRail/Documents/UsefulResources/DisabilityIssues/Everyone-Managing-Disability-in-the-Workplace-Reasonable-Adjustment.pdf>