

Return to work conversation

A return to work conversation should happen at the earliest convenience for the employee concerned after a period of absence. It's an opportunity to find out how they're doing and explore any potential support they may require to be healthy, both physically and mentally, at work to perform at their best.

The table below has some questions that may help you have a great return to work conversation.

Question bank

- How are you?
- How do you feel about being back at work?
- Did you consult a medical practitioner/doctor while you were off? What advice did you receive?
- Have you suffered from this complaint before? If so, what action (if any) have you taken to prevent any future occurrence?
- Are you on any medication which may affect your performance or impact on your ability to carry out your role?
- Was the absence a result of an accident at work? (Check that it was logged on the SHE portal.)

NB: If a colleague who is required to drive as part of their role has been absent with a condition which could impact their ability to drive, they should not be permitted to drive until this return to work conversation has been completed and you are satisfied that they are fit to undertake driving duties.

If the absence was due to stress, anxiety, depression:

- What may be the contributing factors that led to your (stress, anxiety, depression)?
 - If personal-related: What's helped? What else could you do? How can you get access to the appropriate help/support? Have you considered contacting our employee assistance provider?
 - If work-related: What are you most comfortable about getting back to work? Any potential challenges for you? What support would be of most use to you?

Manager action: Set-up a meeting to discuss/complete a stress risk assessment as a preventative measure

If the absence was due to a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) (for example, back pain, neck pain, arthritis, rheumatism, fracture or injuries):

- What contributes to your musculoskeletal disorder?
- What medical support and advice have you sought? How have you been following this? What impact is it having? What else might help?
- What adjustments, if any, could be made to prevent any future occurrence?

If the absence was related to a disability:

- What reasonable adjustments, if any, could be considered to ensure you are fully supported at work?

Manager action: Seek advice from occupational health on the amount of absence that might reasonably be expected, given the disability.

Review of absence history, support and action points

- Discuss any previous absence and set out expectations in line with the sickness absence policy.
- What else can be done to support you to be healthy?
- Summarise the action points agreed.