



Return-To-Work Discussion Aid for Managers

Purpose

This document is a useful aid for managers to use when an employee is returning to work following a long term absence and/or absence due to musculoskeletal problems or stress related absence. It has been developed to support the implementation of WCC Policy.

Introduction

Work has an important role in promoting wellbeing and Warwickshire County Council recognises that there will be times when employees need time away from work because they are unfit (either through ill health or medical conditions). A well managed early return to work will reduce the risk of the absence becoming long-term (long-term is defined as an absence period of longer than 4 weeks). This is also true for employees having shorter periods of absence for other conditions (such as musculoskeletal symptoms, or stress related); therefore we must ensure that employees are supported on return to work from sickness absence and any issues that may impact on their return are discussed and appropriate action taken where necessary.

Examples when this form could be used as an aid to discussion are:

- if the employee has been absent from work for more than 4 weeks
- if the employee has been absent due to musculoskeletal injuries or where stress may be a factor we recommend that this form is completed even if they have been absent for less than 4 weeks
- they are returning after an accident (which could have occurred at work or outside of work) and resulted in an injury which prevents them from carrying out their normal duties

Training

Training is available for managers – “Leading with Resilience and Managing Pressure at Work” to support managers in the use of this form and implementation of their responsibilities, and ‘managing absence’ training is also available. All employees can attend “Developing Personal Resilience”. Full details are available on WILMa www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wilma and school document library.

Using this aid

This document has been developed to aid managers in return to work discussions. Managers can choose to use this aid as and when appropriate and may record their discussion using the included record sheet if deemed useful. This document has been designed to be used by the manager with the employee on return to work from sickness absence or prior to their return dependant on the circumstances (i.e. stress related absence). It will act as an aid by providing prompts, although not all sections may be appropriate, to aid discussion and record and agree actions as appropriate. This can then be reviewed during supervision or one-to-ones as appropriate. It doesn't need to be completed for all absences when the normal Self Certification Sickness Form/ Return to Work Record provides sufficient scope for discussion and action.

If an employee is returning to work after a period of ill-health where a G.P. has recorded that the absence is stress-related, then a 'managing an individual employees resilience' assessment form must be completed so that potential risk factors can be identified and measures taken to ensure a successful return to work. If employees take time off work because of work-related stress, getting them back to work as quickly as possible is important. This form can be completed in addition to the 'managing an individual employees resilience' assessment (where one is required). A manager/employee may wish to have their return to work discussion alongside and in conjunction with the 'managing an individual employees resilience' assessment discussion. This should only happen where appropriate (seek advice from your HR Advisor) and only if the individual employee is aware and been informed that the resilience assessment will be completed in addition to the return-to-work discussion.

If you need further advice or support please refer to the Sickness Absence Policy and Guidance available on the HR pages www.warwickshire.gov.uk/hr

Return-to-Work Discussion Aid – Record Sheet

Name of Employee:	Job Role:
Manager:	Date:
Additional comments:	Review date:

Considerations	What is already in place (state N/A where not applicable)	Issues which may impact on return to work (state N/A where not applicable)	Action/ precautions agreed by whom and timescale
Organisational			
Consider level of re-induction into the workplace, both level and pace – it will depend on reasons for, length of absence/changes or developments			
Provide an update/information on relevant meetings/briefings that have taken place or are scheduled and how to access relevant documentation			
Provide an update on changes to systems/staffing/changes within team/service and wider Group or Partners			
Ensure knowledge and understanding of policies, procedures/arrangements, risk assessments and safe systems of work relating to their role/ workplace and how to access			

Considerations	What is already in place (state N/A where not applicable)	Issues which may impact on return to work (state N/A where not applicable)	Action/ precautions agreed by whom and timescale
Have any new policies been introduced or have any changes been made to existing policies, procedures, arrangements or risk assessments specific to job role?			
Are there any changes with supervisor/manager/colleagues which may impact on role/team?			
If returning to work following an accident that occurred at work, has an accident report been completed, either paper copy or using the WCC electronic accident reporting system? Has an investigation been carried out and action taken to prevent recurrence? Provide feedback on action taken and any changes to risk assessments or procedures			
Are there any outstanding unresolved organisational/relationship issues to be addressed?			
Individual Employee	What is already in place	Issues which may impact on return to work	Action/precautions agreed by whom and time scale
Has OH/GP made any recommendations to support a successful return e.g. phased return, altered hours, amended duties, or workplace adaptations			
Are there any further planned absences e.g. for further treatment, operation			

Considerations	What is already in place (state N/A where not applicable)	Issues which may impact on return to work (state N/A where not applicable)	Action/ precautions agreed by whom and timescale
Is the employee taking any prescribed medication which may impact on their ability to carry out physical tasks; work alone; or drive as a regular part of their job role?			
Consider whether, in the event of an emergency, the employee will require support to evacuate the building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - do they require a Personal Employee Evacuation Plan (PEEP) upon return (this may be a short term or long term requirement) - need arrangements in place to assist with access/egress 			
Is there any outstanding annual leave/TOIL that needs to be planned?			
Are there any external issues with family/home life which may impact on a successful return to work? e.g. consider a phased return to work to care for dependents			
Agree and record programme of supervision, one-to-ones, or support			
Has the employee been given information on how to contact the relevant Staff support and counselling provision (i.e. Staff Care Service) and Harassment Contacts?			

Considerations	What is already in place (state N/A where not applicable)	Issues which may impact on return to work (state N/A where not applicable)	Action/ precautions agreed by whom and timescale
Are there any other issues/changes that need to be discussed/addressed to ensure successful return to work? Such as, changing targets, systems/locations/services/ or structure			
Are reasonable adjustments or further advice needed from OH, HR or H&S, before employee is able to return to work e.g. support with specific risk assessment and required equipment?			
If the absence is stress related then the health and wellbeing management of 'managing an individual employees resilience' assessment must be completed. Any agreed measures must be in place for the date of return to work.			
Job Role and Resources		Issues which may impact on return to work	Action/precautions agreed by whom and time scale
Consider whether reasonable adjustments are needed in the short term, e.g. changes need to be made to working hours. Is the employee able to work early or evenings and weekends if required? Are there any difficulties with travel, if essential to job role and how will this be managed?			
Is employee able to work alone with limited supervision, if essential to job role? (via the risk assessment process, lone working risks must be considered			

Considerations	What is already in place (state N/A where not applicable)	Issues which may impact on return to work (state N/A where not applicable)	Action/ precautions agreed by whom and timescale
and control measures must cover supervision and action to be taken in the event of an emergency which includes ill health)			
Can working hours and workload be managed satisfactorily, to ensure regular breaks?			
Provide an update on new customers or changes to service provided for existing customers. Are there any perceived difficulties with these changes?			
Provide an update on new areas of work or tasks (if necessary, the findings of a risk assessment and any required information, instruction and training must be provided)			
Is training/competency up to date or is refresher training needed?			
If employee manages staff, are they able to carry out this role or is additional support needed in the short term?			

Finally,

If there are any issues raised by this aid that affects other team members (for example, the amended duties means that an employee cannot partake in any manual handling activities for a certain period) then please agree what information can be shared with colleagues within the team and how it will be circulated.

If completed, this record sheet needs to be monitored and kept under review during supervision/ one-to-ones to ensure successful return to work