

Returning to work after absence

When someone is ready to return to work after an absence, the employer should have a procedure they follow. It's a good idea to check your workplace's absence policy for this.

This could be whether the employee has been absent due to:

- long-term or short-term sick leave
- a mental health condition
- [bereavement](#)
- [helping a dependant](#)

If your workplace does not have a policy for this, it's a good idea for the employer and the employee to:

- talk about the return to work
- agree on a plan that suits you both, for example a phased return to work
- consider any recommendations from the employee's doctor
- consider any recommendations from occupational health or make a referral, if available
- discuss an employee assistance programme (EAP), if available

5. Return to work interviews

For both long-term and short-term absences, an employer might have a policy for meeting with employees when they return to work.

A return to work meeting or interview is the chance to:

- check on the health and wellbeing of the employee
- make sure they're ready to return to work
- see if they need any support or reasonable adjustments
- talk about any workplace updates that happened while they were off
- talk about [what could happen next](#) if there have been a lot of absences and the employer has concerns

Making reasonable adjustments

If an employee is disabled, by law their employer must make [reasonable adjustments](#) if needed, to help them return to work.

Reasonable adjustments could include making changes to the employee's:

- workstation or working equipment
- working hours
- duties or tasks

This can help:

- get people back to work quicker
- prevent any further problems

For the best course of action, the employer should take advice from:

- the employee themselves
- the employee's doctor
- their [occupational health](#) adviser

Phased return to work

A 'phased return to work' is when someone who's been absent might need to come back to work on:

- reduced hours
- lighter duties
- different duties

For example after a:

- long-term illness
- serious injury
- [bereavement](#)

The employer or their HR manager and the employee should agree on a plan for how long this will be for.

For example, they could agree to review how things are going after a month and then decide to increase the working hours or duties, or they might decide they need to stay reduced for longer.

The employer or HR manager should continue to regularly review the employee's health and wellbeing in the workplace and make new adjustments if necessary.

Pay during a phased return to work

If the employee returns to their normal duties but on reduced hours, they should get their normal rate of pay for those hours they work.

For the time they're not able to work, they should get [sick pay](#) if they're entitled to it.

If the employee is doing lighter duties, it's up to the employer and employee to agree on a rate of pay. It's a good idea to make sure this agreement is put in writing.

If an employee is unhappy with how their return to work has been handled,

they should first [raise it with their employer](#).

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