



Return to Work Guidelines for Employers

Return-to-work interviews are one of the most effective methods of managing sickness absence. Conducting return to work interviews on a regular and consistent basis gives you an opportunity to identify possible underlying causes of frequent absence at an early stage.

Before the interview

Prior to the interview check the employee's individual attendance records for the following:

- Actual number of days off
- Common patterns (e.g. regular absence following holidays/days off/ weekends)
- Unacceptably frequent short term sickness absence
- Reasons given for any previous absence

At the interview

The following points will help to conduct an effective meeting:-

- Discuss the reasons for the recent absence, referring to the Self-Certification Form or medical certificate.
- Fully discuss any issues which may affect ongoing performance and ensure that an action plan is agreed
- Show how the employee's absence levels compare with departmental absence percentage levels, taking care if it may be deemed a disability
- Ask the employee if there is anything they would like to discuss that is affecting their attendance at work e.g. are they struggling with their job role?
- Remind them that prolonged absence, or persistent short term absence, is a potential breach of their contract and may put their long term employment at risk
- Discuss any potential patterns to their absence
- Make notes during the discussion and ask the employee to sign them. Provide the employee with a copy and place a copy on their personnel file
- Discuss their sickness and whether it or the medication may affect work and consider making reasonable adjustments if required

After the return to work discussion

- Store all documentation in the employee's personal file
- Stick to the actions and timescales agreed in the attendance improvement plan, if you have set one
- Keep the documentation secure whilst in your possession, so that it is not accidentally seen by others.
- Keep your discussions with the employee private and confidential

Issues raised during the interview

Unauthorised Absence

If the employee's absence was unauthorised contact the [Advice Line](#) before referring to the Disciplinary Procedure. Ensure you obtain full details of their absence and the reasons for their lack of contact before calling.

Patterns in sickness records

When common patterns and/or unacceptably frequent short term sickness absences have occurred, you may need to agree actions to improve attendance through your Capability Procedure. Contact the [HR](#) for advice and discuss any planned actions with a senior manager.

Health or prolonged absences

If there is an underlying health problem causing frequent short term absence or prolonged absence, you may need to obtain medical advice, particularly if the problems are caused or aggravated in the workplace. Contact the [HR](#) for further advice before you proceed.

Pregnancy and Disability related Absence

Absences linked to pregnancy must not be counted for absence monitoring purposes and potentially disability related illnesses too. Absences linked to a disability must be discussed with [HR](#) before you proceed, as you may need to request a medical report and make reasonable adjustments.

Personal Circumstances

If the problems that are causing absence are due to personal circumstances outside work, it may be possible to arrange support. *i.e a change in hours, or holidays* may be able to help the employee have the time out they need to resolve problems outside work, if this can be accommodated.

How DS Recruitment & HR Services can help

If you are a business facing these sorts of challenges, get in touch! We can help with a whole range of HR issues. Our fully CIPD qualified HR Managers are on hand to ensure you are on the right path. To find out more about how DS Recruitment & HR Services can help **Contact us today on 0330 022 8775 or 07891 181723**

RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW FORM

Employee Payroll No: _____ Employee Name: _____

Date of first day of Absence: _____ Date of last day of Absence: _____

Was a Doctor's Certificate required (over 7 calendar days) Y / N and provided Y / N

Number of times absent in the last 12 months

Number of working days absent in the last 12 months

1. When did the employee notify us of their absence?

2. What was the reason for the absence?

3. Has either the HR system been updated or a Self-Certification Form completed?

4. Did the employee consult a doctor or other medical professional? If yes, who?

5. Are there any additional circumstances we should be made aware of? Do we need to make any reasonable adjustments on their behalf?

6. What can we do to help prevent further absence?

Employee Comments

I hereby confirm that the employee has been signed back to work by their doctor:

Signed: Employee: _____ Date: _____

Signed: Manager: _____ Date: _____