



## Return to work resources for Managers

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### Away from work: first contact

EMAIL SUBJECT: Reminder – Reach out to [EMPLOYEE]

EMAIL BODY:

Hi [MANAGER]

This is just a quick reminder to reach out to [EMPLOYEE] if you haven't already had a chance to. Research shows that making early contact helps staff feel supported in their recovery – that's why it's a key part of our return to work policy.

You don't need to discuss anything in particular, just check in with [EMPLOYEE] and let him/her know you're available to chat whenever s/he needs.

### Make first contact

To help structure your first conversation here's a

Conversation starter

To learn more about your role at different return to work stages, you can use this

Checklist

### Return to work process

And here is a short video providing an overview of the return to work process:

Return to work

# Away from work: first contact

Step 1 

I will be back in touch in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, feel free to get in touch with me anytime to chat about how you can support [EMPLOYEE]'s recovery back to work.

Kind regards

[CASE MANAGER SIGNATURE BLOCK]

# Early contact

## CONVERSATION STARTER

This tool aims to assist you in your conversations with your injured/ill employee



If you are unable to have regular conversations with your employee, this role should be carried out by your manager.

## As soon as you know the employee is off for an injury/illness

- Start simple: Ask how they are and actively listen.
  - Open-ended questions are better e.g. How are you feeling generally? What can I do to help?
  - Actively listen by asking questions that show you care. This can make a big difference to the employee's motivation.
  - If the employee is comfortable talking, let them guide the direction of the conversation as much as possible.
- Employees can sometimes feel that their injury or illness is being questioned. Don't focus on aspects of the injury or illness at first contact.

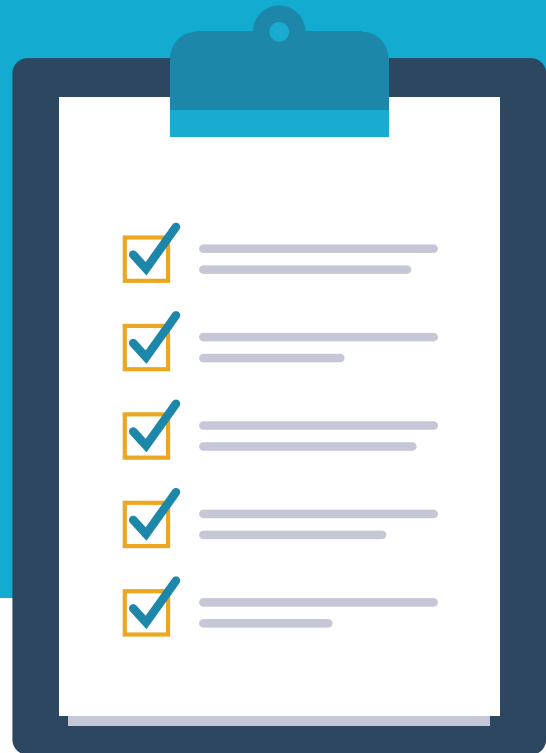
## Return to work facts

Early contact is important: research shows injured/ill employees contacted by their employer within the first few days were twice as likely to achieve stable RTW compared to those contacted after two weeks.

- Don't say when you expect them back at work, but reassure them that there is no rush and you are looking forward to having them back when they are ready.
- Make a plan for how to keep in touch, taking into account the employee's preferences (e.g. via phone once every two weeks to begin with and over time you may want to change the frequency or mode of contact).

# Return to work checklist

This checklist touches on some of the key things you should be doing at different stages of the RTW process.



## 1. Away from work

- Reach out to the employee early to show support
- Establish regular contact with the employee
- After checking with your employee, let co-employees know the broad circumstances for why the employee is away and encourage them to reach out where appropriate

## 2. Preparing to return

- Prepare for their return to work by thinking about what work must be done, and when and how it can be delivered
- Start discussing suitable duties and workplace accommodations with the employee (focusing on what they can do, not what they can't do)
- Consider how the return to work will impact the team and how to talk to them about possible changes. Remember to respect privacy – ask the employee what they would like you to tell the team
- Put in place any changes needed to the work environment, e.g modified desk or headset

## 3. On return/first week

- Meet with the employee on their first day back
- Discuss a plan for checking in regularly to see how the employee is going and whether the support still works

## 4. Within three months of return

- Check in with the employee to chat about progress towards sustainable return goals
- Provide feedback to HR on the process to help future managers