

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.

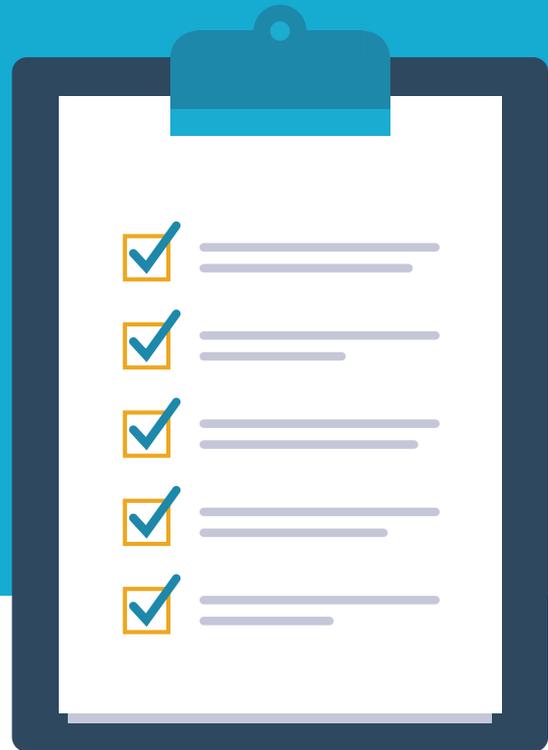
Return to work facts

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)
- Discuss possible suitable duties and required workplace accommodations with the RCM
- 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 the RCM on the process to help future managers