

How To - Return to Work Plan, Fit Notes and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a management activity to assist an employee to return to work at the end of a long-term period of sickness absence.

Return to work arrangements must start at the earliest opportunity and if possible, in advance of a Fit Note being issued/actual return to work date.

Key activities for managers to undertake when considering the return to work of an employee after a period of long-term sickness are:

Prepare a return to work plan (example with suggestions overleaf):

- v' The plan should be developed in conjunction with the employee, taking into account advice and any other information available (e.g. Fit Note, [Occupational Health advice](#), health information from the employee, Human Resources, Service impact). See [Disability and Reasonable Adjustments](#).
- v' Where the advice originates from a Fit Note, a referral to/or advice from Occupational Health (OH) *may* be required to confirm the return to work arrangements. The employee can return to work, if appropriate, whilst waiting on a specific OH opinion.

If the GP has recommended adjustments, where appropriate, the employee may return to work if a risk assessment has been carried out by the manager in conjunction with the employee.

v' Assess whether it is possible to implement the recommended advice. The main factors to consider are:

- cost (a test of reasonableness may be the cost of making adjustments compared with the cost of training and recruiting a new employee – although the Council will be expected to spend more than a small organisation).
- operational impact, for example on Service Users or pupils.
- how effective the adjustment would be in overcoming the disadvantage.
- impact on the team and any reasonable objections they may have (e.g. re-organising work amongst the team).
- impact on performance or quality of work.
- (in)sufficiency of work during the period of adjustment.
- timeframe in relation to the above (how long it will take to implement the adjustments).

v' If the return to work date is imminent and OH advice is required, an employee may start work on the return to work date on the proviso that referral is made to OH to confirm the arrangements, **and** a [risk assessment](#) is carried out by the manager.

v' **If it is possible to implement the recommendations**, complete the [Return to Work Plan](#).

v' **If it is not possible to implement the recommendations** a record of the discussions and reasons why the recommendations are not possible must be made in writing to the employee by the manager ([letters](#)). If a Fit Note has been issued with adjustments that cannot be implemented, the Fit Note must be treated as if the GP has advised 'Not fit for Work' and the employee will remain on sick pay until the end of the rehabilitation

period stated on the note, after which they must return to work, or return to their GP for a further Fit Note.

- ✓ Implement and regularly review the plan. This is crucial as it allows the manager and employee to decide whether the plan is effective or whether it needs to be amended.

Please also note:

- The Council will fund a reduction in hours (**phased return**) for no more than 4 weeks, after which individual arrangements (e.g. temporary reduction in hours or use of annual leave) must be agreed to facilitate any further periods of rehabilitation. An employee may return to full working before the end of the GP/OH recommended phased return period as long as a [risk assessment](#) has been carried out before the employee returns to work by the manager (who can, if necessary obtain additional OH advice).
- Where a phased return to work has been agreed, an employee who has been in receipt of sickness allowance (either full or half) will receive normal full pay.
- A Fit Note can be issued for no longer than 3 months during the first 6 months of sickness absence.
- Please ensure you notify MyView@pkc.gov.uk of any employee who uses optimum and is on a phased return so that their time is updated on the system to make a complete day.
- Please ensure you email MyView@pkc.gov.uk for a sickness abatement calculation if your employee has been off for more than 3 months. A manual adjustment to correct the leave balance is required before an employee requests annual leave.
- Insurance issues:
 - Council insurance will cover employees where the Fit Note option 'may be fit for work' applies (as long as the procedure above is followed).
 - An employee may return to work as soon as they feel able to, with their managers' agreement. This can be before the date on the Fit Note and provided a suitable risk assessment has taken place if deemed necessary.
 - The Fit Note is the property of the employee therefore a copy must be taken, and the original passed back to the employee.

Return to Work Plan

Upload Completed Form via MyTeam Documents Guidance

Employee Name:		Date of Plan:		Estimated/Actual Return date:
	Action	Who by	Timescale	Progress/Review Notes
Goal of Plan	<i>E.g. facilitate a return to working to full capacity over a 4 week phased return.</i>	<i>Who responsible for overseeing the arrangements – usually the Manager.</i>	<i>e.g 4 weeks from return</i>	
Professional Advice	<i>List - OH and/or GP (Fit Note) recommendations - H+S risk assessment/advice</i>	<i>Who will implement recommendations e.g. manager; H+S Officer, employee.</i>		
Duties & Responsibilities	<i>Any changes to duties/responsibilities/ hours of work e.g. no supervisory duties for the first two weeks.</i>			
Additional Support Measures	<i>E.g. counselling Service; one to one meetings for the first two weeks.</i>			
Other	<i>E.g: any employee concerns.</i>			

Review Date _____ Manager's Signature: _____ Employee's Signature