

Step 4: Preparing for return to work



KEY FACTS:

- When a return to work fails, it is often because people come back to work and resume their full workload too soon.
- There are a number of things that have been found to be helpful to managers who are managing the process. These can also improve the experience for the returning employee. Your employee is the best person to tell you what they need in order to come back to work safely. However, if you have prepared some thoughts too, it will be easier to reach a more constructive solution.
- While there are some things we cannot change about work, there are some things that can be easily adjusted, at least in the short term, to help employees. Most adjustments cost little or nothing to implement, they just require some time to make a change in a process or task.



WHAT TO DO:

- Reflect on the knowledge and skills you have developed from Step 2 of this guide.
- Take time to think about what the employee's role involves. Think about what the priorities are. Consider whether there are any schedules/ tasks/ ways of doing things that can be changed.
- Consider work adjustments. Don't pre-judge what the employee needs but do think about how you could change the way they work, if you need to. Identify some possible adjustments that could be put in place; and consider how long you, as a business, could accommodate these. [See exercise.](#)
- Take time to plan the employee's return to work. See the [checklist](#).
- [Prepare for the return to work conversation.](#)



EXERCISE:

[Identifying work priorities.](#)



EXERCISE:

[Reviewing example adjustments to help formulate ideas.](#)



CHECKLIST:

[Planning for the employee's return to work.](#)



CHECKLIST:

[Preparing for the return to work conversation.](#)

WATCH OUT: One size does not fit all

Everyone's experience of mental health is different. Everyone's work is different. Just because something has worked before, does not mean it will work this time.

WHAT TO SAY:

Dos

- ✓ We are looking forward to welcoming you back. You have been missed.
- ✓ Take some time to think about what will be helpful to you on your return: what do you need us to do to make you feel supported?
- ✓ Would you like to meet up, maybe for coffee locally, before you come back?
- ✓ Lots of people find coming back for the first day quite nerve-wracking. Shall I meet you in the car park/ train station/ pick you up on your first day so that we can go in together?

Don'ts

- × Your clients are desperate for you to get back on track.
- × Glad you are coming back, we have been so busy covering your work.
- × You have a lot to catch up on, so I hope you are feeling better.