



Return to Work Form

Part 1: Self-Certification *(to be completed by employee)*

Name:	Job Title:
1 st Day of Absence:	Date Returned to Work:
Number of working days absent:	Are you: full time / part time * <small>*Delete as appropriate</small>
State briefly why you were unfit for work (specify nature of illness or injury. Words like "illness" or "unwell" are not enough)	
I reported my absence to: _____ on (date): _____	

Signed (employee): Date:

Part 2: Return To Work Discussion *(to be completed by manager)*

Date of meeting:
TOTAL ABSENCE OVER LAST 12 MONTHS: <i>(including this period of absence)</i>
No. of occasions: _____ Total days (or hours for part time staff) lost: _____
Currently under absence monitoring ? Yes / no
Explore absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are you now and are you able to carry out normal hours and duties?• Did you consult a Doctor or other medical practitioner?• Have you suffered from this complaint before?• Has the GP made any recommendations on your Fit Note in relation to your return to work?• Are you on any medication which may affect your performance or impact on your ability to carry out your role?• Do you consider your illness to be work-related? If the answer is yes in what way is it work related?• If you feel it is work related and it was a result of an accident at work did you complete an accident, incident or hazardous report form?

Review of absence and support

- What was the possible cause of your sickness absence and what action have you taken to avoid any future occurrence (work/accident or personal)?
- Discussion with any links of previous absence and set out expectations
- Do you feel that there is anything we can do to support you?

Update on work during period of absence, e.g. announcements, etc:

Signed (employee):

Date:

Signed (manager):

Date:

Guidance for Return to Work meetings

Effective Return-to-work discussion

When conducting a return-to-work meeting with an employee who has been absent from work due to sickness (short-term or long-term), you need to create a relaxed atmosphere where both participants view it as an informal discussion with positive aims. This guide can be used as a practical framework to help the conversation flow and maintain a sense of direction and progress.

The form is provided as a guidance template to ensure all the key points are covered and as a record for you and the employee and if used would be completed after each period of absence. However, a copy of the discussion should be provided to the employee and you should retain a copy as the line manager.

Preparation

Managing an effective return-to-work meeting requires understanding, structure and preparation if it is to produce a positive result.

The following tasks should be completed in preparation:

- Arrange an appropriate venue for the meeting that will put the employee at ease. Remember, the return-to-work meeting is not part of the disciplinary process. The prime purpose is not to punish the employee, but rather to see what if any measures can be taken to prevent recurrences of the absenteeism.
- Ensure that the meeting will be uninterrupted as some information communicated during the interview may be private.
- You should consult attendance records as this will give you a clearer idea of the regularity of the employee's absence and will allow you to provide details of this to the employee during the discussion. More detailed information can be provided by your HR contact to support this.
- Any previous return-to-work records should be re-visited and reasons for previous absences noted.

The meeting

In order to ensure your discussion is planned thoroughly, a discussion schedule should be prepared. A popular approach to this is Murray's '**WARM**' approach (welcome stage, absence stage, responsibility stage and move on stage).¹

- **The 'welcome' stage**

The purpose of this stage is to make the employee feel valued when they return. You should tell the employee that their work contribution has been missed. This should be a positive introduction to the process and help to put the employee at ease.

- **The 'absence' stage**

This stage is concerned with discovering the reasons that led to the employee's absence and it is important that the employee is allowed to state these reasons uninterrupted. This stage of the return-to-work meeting should also serve as a tool for establishing whether the employee is fit to resume their duties.

You may wish to explain the impact of the employee's absence on their work and on their colleagues.

¹ Hugh Murray, *Improving Attendance: What Managers Can Do* (Fenman, 2001).

- **The 'responsibility' stage**

At this stage of the discussion you will be aware of your employee's reasons for their absence. It is important now to make the employee understand that they are responsible for doing whatever they can to reduce the likelihood of a similar situation arising in the future.

This is also an opportunity to start a discussion with the employee over underlying issues, which might be causing the absence. Questions about how the employee is coping with their workload and their domestic situation may be considered here. However, be aware that the employee may not wish to discuss the issue with you.

- **The 'move on' stage**

This final stage focuses on getting back to work, catching up on any work missed and agreeing post-absence priorities. This stage should be viewed as an opportunity for both parties to agree some positive action.

Final points to remember

The reality is that in many cases the return-to-work meeting can be carried out in just a few minutes in a very informal conversation with the employee, particularly if they have only been absent for a day or two and this is not a regular occurrence. This can be as simple as welcoming them back, asking whether they are fully recovered and updating them on anything that has happened whilst they were away. In this case you may find some of the questions on the return to work form as being unnecessary. However, it is essential that a return to work discussion is undertaken and recorded for each period of absence and for everyone who is absent, this ensures the process is fair and consistent and can be relied upon for any future discussions.

In cases where short term absence is becoming a problem or if someone is returning from long term absence the return-to-work meeting needs to be more formal. For example although the conversation can be kept informal, you should keep a record of the meeting for future reference.

The record of the meeting should be brief and factual and you should agree that its contents are accurate with the employee concerned. The contents will be particularly valuable if you are following an absence management programme.

Remember that the return-to-work form and process is designed to enable you to offer support and guidance to your employee, signalling that their absence was noticed and enabling a discussion.

Although the forms do not need to be returned to HR it is important that you retain copies of these to ensure employees are supported and managed in a fair way.

Finally, you should avoid conflict in the return-to-work meeting at all times as the discussion is designed to develop a constructive way forward after a period of absence. This can be achieved by reinforcing the idea that the interview is not part of a disciplinary process.