

PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



Easy read

Supporting you through sickness absence and
return to work - Conversation 5



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What is this easy read guide about?

This is part of a series of 6 easy read guides HSE has developed to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in the workplace.

Managers could find the 'questions managers may ask' section useful to start conversations with disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions.

This document will use the word 'disabled' to speak about disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean straight after they have been used.

What is the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national **regulator** for workplace health and safety.

A **regulator** is an organisation that sets standards. HSE prevents work-related death, injury and ill health.

Conversation 5: supporting you through sickness absence and return to work

This conversation tells you how your manager should talk to you about how you can be supported during your **sickness absence** and how they can help you to return to work.

In this easy read guide, **sickness absence** is when you are off work ill for a long time due to a disability or long-term health condition.

Here are some of the way managers can support you during your absence and return:

- Managers or a co-worker you trust could contact you while you are on sickness absence.



- The person contacting you should check on your wellbeing and let you know that you are valued at work.

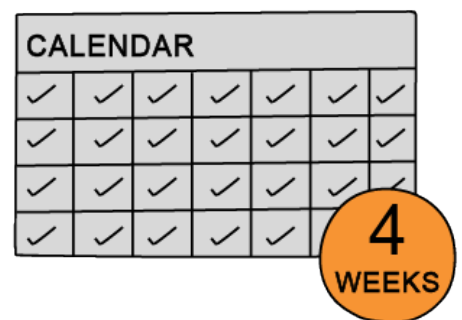


- The person contacting you should find out why you cannot attend work.

They will only contact you when it works for you. For example, when you are not at the doctor or hospital.

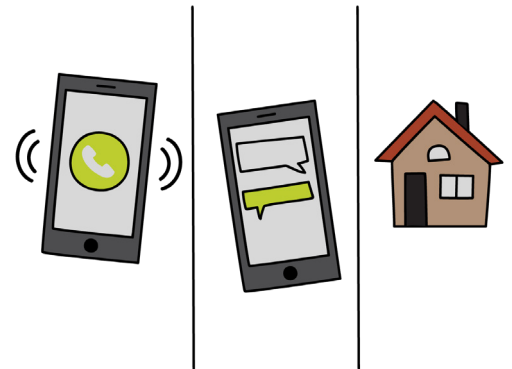


- The person contacting you could contact you in the first 4 weeks you are off work.

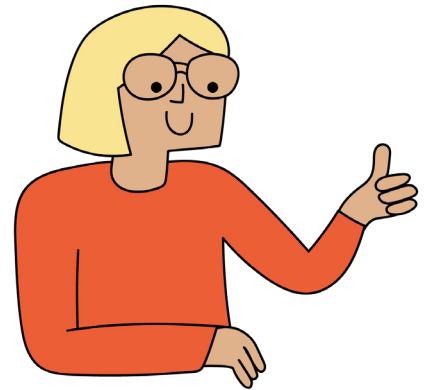


- The person contacting you will agree with you how often you want to be in contact.

They will also ask how you would like to be in contact. This could be through calls, text messages or home visits.



- Your manager will usually only contact you when they need to.



- Your manager can help you get access to **occupational health services** if you need them.

Occupational health services are services at work to help with your health.



Occupational health services can help:

- Check whether you need any adjustments at work after being off ill.



- Support you to feel safe and comfortable when you return to work.



- Give you advice on good health. For example, eating fruit and vegetables.



- Recommend you to support and **rehabilitation** services.
- **Rehabilitation** services can help you feel well and strong after being ill.



Return to work plan:

- Your manager may want to talk to you when you get back to work, this may be called a return to work interview.



- Managers should work with you to design a **return to work plan**.



- A **return to work plan** is a plan that supports you to do your job after being away from work because you were ill.



- Your return to work plan will include advice from occupational health services and healthcare providers. These may be a doctor or a nurse.



- Your return to work plan should include any adjustments needed after your illness.

The plan will take into account that you may still feel ill on some days after your return.



- Managers could allow you to slowly return to work.

You do not need to be back to your normal hours and levels of activity when you return.

CALENDAR						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-

Questions managers may ask

The conversation your manager will have with you may show more can be done to make the **workplace inclusive**.

An **inclusive workplace** is a place where everyone can do their job well and feel safe.

The manager could ask:

1

Do you understand how sickness absence procedures work?

2

Do you know where to find sickness absence procedures?

3

Do you think our sickness absence procedures support you to return to work?

4

Are you getting enough support at work to help you manage your health?

5

How can we help you better manage your health at work?

For example, do you need different workplace adjustments or support groups?

6

Could we have done anything more to support you when you were off sick?

The manager could ask about the support you need during your illness:

7

How would you like to be contacted while you are on sickness absence?

8

Is there anything more we can do to help you during your absence?

For example, do you need support from occupational health services?

9

How can we help you when you return to work?

For example, you could return to work slowly as you start to feel better.

10

Do you need any adjustments when you return to work?

For example, you could lower your normal working hours.