

21. How to Conduct a Return to Work Interview

1 WHY CONDUCT A RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW?

It is good practice to conduct a meeting with an employee when they return to work following sickness absence, so that you can:

- Confirm the employee’s fitness to return to work.
- Update the employee on any changes that may have taken place in the workplace whilst absent.
- Discuss with the employee any necessary support that may be required and make arrangements for this as appropriate.

2 WHAT TO COVER DURING A RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW

Prepare for the meeting beforehand by gathering information you may need, including:

- Notes from previous return to work interviews.
- Fit notes/self-certification form.
- Occupational Health reports.
- Organise a quiet and private room where you won’t be disturbed.

Ensure the meeting is scheduled to take place as soon as possible when the employee returns to work in case you need to make any adjustments. Make sure the employee is aware they will be having a return to work meeting and that it is an informal meeting.

Greet the returning employee warmly and start the conversation with a general question to help the employee feel able to speak openly.

Discuss the reasons for absence and any underlying medical conditions. Discuss any advice the employee has received from their GP.

Discuss any other issues the employee may have about returning to work and ideas for how the return can be best managed.

Use questions that are of a fact-finding nature without being too intrusive.

At the end of the meeting, thank the employee for their responses and make them aware of any next steps.

Retain the notes from the meeting on the employee’s HR record in accordance with Data Protection Regulations.

3 NEXT STEPS

- Develop a return to work interview template form for use when an employee returns from an absence. This will ensure consistency when you are conducting return to work interviews.
- Conduct a return to work interview every time an employee returns from sickness related absence.
- Remember to keep records of employee absence and the notes from the return to work interview in accordance with Data Protection regulations.

4 FACTSHEETS TO HELP

- How to Manage Sickness Absence
- How to Manage Other Types of Absence
- Promoting an Equal Opportunities Workplace and Avoiding Discrimination

5 FOR MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

ACAS - (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. www.acas.org.uk

Achieve in Bath & North East Somerset - free recruitment support, advice and help. Matching job seekers, employers and course providers to help employers recruit, train and retain employees. www.achieveinbathnes.co.uk

Future Bright - free help & support for businesses and employees to realise their full potential. Provide access to training and development, workshops and networking. HR support to promote career progression and best practice to attract and retain staff. www.futurebright.org.uk

***Bibliography** - this fact sheet was produced by Rathbone HR Solutions in association with Cool Ventures Ltd in December 2018 with content sourced from; HR Inform (www.hr-inform.co.uk), ACAS (www.acas.org.uk), CIPD (www.cipd.co.uk), the pensions regulator (www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers), HMRC (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs), the Information Commissioner's Officer website (www.ico.org.uk)*



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