



Maximising Attendance Procedure

1. Introduction

In accordance with the Maximising Attendance process, this procedure aims to outline how sickness absence is managed fairly and consistently across Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association.

Accompanying both the policy and this procedure is a Maximising Attendance process flowchart and management guidance, both of which can be found at the end of this document.

2. Absence Reporting

If you are too unwell to attend work, you should inform your line manager via a telephone call as soon as possible. In the event that your line manager is unavailable to take your call, you should contact the next line manager in the structure. It is important that you call yourself to inform us of the following:

- why you're absent and how long you expect to be off work
- your phone number so your manager can keep in touch with you
- details of any urgent work or meetings that need to be picked up while you're absent

We do not accept texts, emails, messages on social media or messages from another person unless there are exceptional circumstances. However, during your telephone call, your line manager will confirm the contact required throughout your period of absence. Further information regarding keeping in touch can be found in Section 2.1. If you do not make contact during your first day of absence, your line manager will attempt to call you to check on your wellbeing.

Similarly, if you become ill when you are at work and need to leave, you need to let your line manager, or another manager know.

It is important that you follow the Absence Reporting procedure for every absence. Failure to follow, maintain the agreed contact required or submit medical certificates within a reasonable time frame may be viewed as an unauthorised absence, which may result in your pay being withheld. This may also be viewed as a personal conduct matter, which may lead to action being taken against you under the Disciplinary Policy.

2.1 *Keeping in Touch*

Staying in regular contact with your line manager throughout your period of absence, whether it be short or long-term, is crucial to how we can best support you. As mentioned above, your line manager will confirm how often you should make contact

with them during your absence. The level of contact will depend on the type of illness and how long it is expected to last.

In general, it is recommended that you inform your line manager of any new updates regarding your sickness and make contact prior to a medical certificate expiring so we can make plans for your return to work, if applicable.

2.2 *Sickness Certification*

Whilst the first seven calendar days of sickness can be self-certificated, all absences that lasts longer than this requires you to submit medical evidence to cover from the eighth day onwards. This will normally be in the form of a doctor's fit note, also known as a 'statement of fitness for work'.

You should submit either the original fit note or a scanned copy or photograph to your line manager prior to the expiry of the period of self-certification or previous fit note. Please note that if you submit a copy, there may be instances where you are asked to send the original copy during your period of absence. You should also retain the original copy in case you require this for any future statutory sick pay claims.

3. **Return to Work**

When you are ready to return to work and have notified your line manager of your return date, a return-to-work (RTW) meeting will be arranged with you on your first day back. The purpose of this meeting is to find out how you are feeling, whether any support or adjustments are required and to update you on anything important you may have missed whilst absent.

The RTW meeting will be held after every period of absence and is intended as a support mechanism whilst identifying potential issues relating to attendance and how these can be addressed.

The return-to-work form (Appendix B) will be completed by your line manager during the meeting, providing a summary of the reasons for your absence. Both you and your manager will sign this document.

A return-to-work plan template (Appendix D) has also been developed so that both the employee and manager can have a proactive and structured conversation ahead of the employee's return, ensuring all required support needs are considered and actioned. We would strongly advise managers to incorporate this plan, particularly for employees returning from long-term absence.

Your line manager will also review your absence history with you at the meeting and inform you if you have reached an absence trigger, in line with Section 5.1. If you have not met a trigger but your manager is concerned about your attendance, they will discuss this with you informally to identify if there are any adjustments or support required.

3.1 *Phased Return*

As part of our commitment to supporting you back into work following a period of absence, it may be appropriate for us to consider a phased return to work. This may be discussed with you during the period of 'keeping in touch'. Any agreement to return on a phased basis requires sign off from a doctor or medical professional who should provide you with a fit note stating that you are fit to return in a phased capacity. The phased return arrangements can be captured in the return to work plan.

Once you return to work on a phased basis you are no longer considered to be off sick for the purposes of absence management. However, you will continue to receive Association Sick Pay in line with your entitlement at the time.

All phased returns are to be progressive with respect to working days and hours. In other words, the concept of a phased return is that you build up your days and/or hours over a period of time before assuming your contracted hours as normal. Therefore, all phased returns should last no more than 4 weeks.

3.2 *Adjustments*

If any adjustments have been discussed and agreed prior to your return, these should be captured within the Return-to-Work documentation. When considering any potential adjustments line managers should consult with a member of the HR team, and give consideration to:

- The reason for the adjustment
- The duration of the adjustment
- The operational impact of the adjustment
- The potential cost of the adjustment
- Any medical or Occupational Health guidance

3.3 *Occupational Health*

One way of supporting you during a period of sickness absence is to engage with our Occupational Health provider and subsequently organise a medical assessment. This is often utilised during periods of long-term absence or where there has been frequent, short-term absences for the same reason. For us, it is also utilised in order to support your ongoing attendance at work.

The purpose of an Occupational Health appointment is to obtain advice on your condition, any adjustments that may help you return to work and to help prevent future occurrences of absence. Occupational Health may seek input from your own medical practitioners in order to provide the Association with more detailed information.

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Please be aware that if you do not engage with referrals to Occupational Health, we can only support you and make decisions based on the other information we have available.

4. Association Sick Pay

When you are absent from work due to sickness you may be eligible to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Association Sick Pay (ASP), providing you meet the relevant criteria. Statutory Sick Pay is the legal minimum you must be paid if you are off sick from work. Further information can be found on www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay. Association Sick Pay is a contractual enhanced entitlement that the association pays its employees who are unable to work due to sickness. The allowance is in accordance with length of service, as follows:

Service at Commencement of Absence	Payment	Payment
During probation i.e. a period of 6 months (or 9 months if the period is extended) from date of commencement of employment	Employers' Statutory Sick Pay, except for the first 3 days of sickness.	Employers' Statutory Sick Pay, except for the first 3 days of sickness.
<i>Thereafter the following payments apply</i>	<i>Full Sickness Allowance</i>	<i>Half Sickness Allowance</i>
After 6 or 9 months but less than 1 year	2 weeks	2 weeks
1 year but less than 2 years	9 weeks	9 weeks
2 years but less than 3 years	18 weeks	18 weeks
3 years but less than 5 years	22 weeks	22 weeks
5 years and over	26 weeks	26 weeks

The calculation of Association Sick Pay is based on a maximum rolling 12-month period. Any absences within the preceding 12-month period will be totalled and offset against the full pay entitlement, followed by half pay. Employees will be notified in writing by a member of the Payroll department when they are nearing the point of having exhausted their full and half ASP entitlement.

Where ASP has been fully exhausted, you must work for a period of 3 months unbroken by sickness absence. If you are absent in this time you will be paid SSP only and would require a further 3 months free from absence before the ASP is reinstated. Your ASP will then be reinstated on a staged basis, at 1/12th per month.

The Association also reserves the right to withhold or suspend Association Sick Pay under its contractual sick pay scheme at its discretion. Circumstances in which contractual sick pay may be withheld include but are not limited to:

- You fail to comply with the organisation's sickness absence notification and evidence requirements;

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- You refuse to attend a medical examination at the reasonable request of the organisation;
- You make or produce any misleading or untrue statement or document concerning your fitness to work;
- You have given or received notice to terminate your employment

You will normally be entitled to receive SSP when contractual sick pay is withheld or suspended. You will be given written notice if your ASP is being withheld or suspended.

5. Short-Term Sickness Absence

At Hanover (Scotland), we understand that most short-term absences are genuine and unavoidable. However, like many other organisations, it is only right that we have a process in place to fairly manage employee sickness absence.

Our Sickness Absence Capability Procedure, as set out in the sections below, is utilised to manage such levels. It allows us to clarify attendance expectations, ensure you are being fully supported to carry out your role and to put reasonable adjustments in place to help you be at work.

Under the Procedure, you may be required to attend Capability Meetings to explain high levels of short-term absence however, you will be provided with every opportunity to improve in line with the procedure.

5.1 Triggers

Using absence triggers is an important way of managing attendance fairly and consistently across the Association. We have a set of absence triggers to help us identify short-term and persistent attendance records that give us cause for concern. These are:

Stage	Trigger	Potential Outcome	Live Warning Duration
1	3 periods of absence within a 6-month period	Written Warning	6 Months
2	Further period of absence within 6-months following the written warning issued at Stage 1	Final Written Warning	12 Months
3	Further period of absence within 12-months following the final written warning issued at Stage 2	Potential Dismissal	

The above stages will also be utilised where it is identified that there is a pattern of absences. This may include patterns such as sickness on a particular day, pre or post annual leave, public and school holidays.

Triggers will be adjusted for pregnancy and disability related absence in discussion with your line manager.

5.2 *Formal Capability Meeting*

Should you have 2 absences within a 6-month period, your line manager will advise you at your return-to-work meeting that a further period of sickness in the same period will trigger a Sickness Absence Capability Meeting. If this trigger is reached, the above Stages will be invoked as follows:

- **Stage 1** – When you return from your 3rd sickness absence in 6 months, your line manager will invite you to attend a Stage 1 Capability Meeting. At this meeting, you will have the opportunity to discuss your reasons for absence and to provide any additional information regarding your absence levels. Based on the information you have provided, you may be issued with a First Written Warning, which would remain on your employee file for 6 months.
- **Stage 2** – If you have been issued with a First Written Warning and you then have a further sickness absence in the following 6 months, you will again be invited to discuss your current absence levels. This meeting will be pitched as a Stage 2 Capability Meeting and depending on the information provided, including any relevant medical reports, you may be issued with a Final Written Warning. This would remain on your employee file for 12 months.
- **Stage 3** – If there has been no improvement in your sickness absence levels in the 12 months following the Final Written Warning, a further meeting will be pitched as a Stage 3 Capability Meeting. You will again have the opportunity to justify the reasons for your absence and relevant medical reports may be utilised prior to a decision being made. An outcome of this meeting may result in the termination of your employment with the Association if no alternative options are available.

Please note that live warnings may be extended at any Stage of the triggers listed above.

5.3 *Right to be Accompanied*

As each Capability Meeting is considered part of a formal process, you have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to all meetings held under the Sickness Absence Capability Procedure.

You will be given at least 5 working days' written notice to attend any meeting and if your companion is unable to attend within this timescale, you should notify your manager of this and another date will be made within the following 5 working day period.

A HR Representative may also be present at any meeting in the Stages listed in Section 5.1.

5.4 *Appeal*

You can appeal against the outcome of any Stage by submitting the grounds of your appeal in writing, to your line manager, within 5 working days of receiving the outcome.

Appeals will be heard by a manager who has not previously been involved in the case and, where possible, will be more senior to your line manager. You will be notified of the appeal meeting in writing, and will have the right to be accompanied as outlined above. The decision reached within the appeal meeting will be considered final.

6. **Long-Term Sickness Absence**

Long term absence can be defined as any absence lasting 28 days or more. When absent for this period of time, your line manager will make arrangements to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the reasons for your absence, how the Association can support you and explore other avenues for facilitating a potential return to work. Such meetings will be scheduled regularly throughout your long-term absence.

During your period of sickness, you can expect the Association to arrange Occupational Health appointments and to seek other medical advice as outlined in Section 3.3. It is the employee's duty however, to maintain reasonable contact and submit fit notes in a timely manner to cover the whole duration of the absence.

There are a number of options we may consider to facilitate your return to work, including phased returns, flexible working arrangements and utilising other policies such as hybrid working. However, if it is identified that you are unlikely to return to work within a reasonable timeframe, the Sickness Absence Capability Procedure will be invoked, as set out in Section 5.2.

Any meeting at this point in your absence will be pitched as a Stage 3 Capability Meeting. The outcome of this meeting may result in your employment being terminated on the grounds of capability.

7. **Absence and Annual Leave**

There may be occurrences where you are too unwell to work but are due to be on annual leave. If you fall unwell prior to going on leave and wish to cancel your upcoming holiday, you can speak to your line manager regarding the cancellation at short notice.

If you are unwell during a period of annual leave, this can instead be recorded as sick leave providing you submit a fit note to cover the required period. Please note that this also applies to annual leave periods of 7 days or less.

You will continue to accrue annual leave whilst off sick from work. However, if you are unable to take your full annual leave allowance due to sickness absence, you will

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be permitted to carry forward the statutory minimum of 28 days, minus any annual leave already taken, into the next holiday year. This will be pro-rata for part time staff and any additional days will be lost.

8. Review

8.1 We will review this policy every three years or earlier as required.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Maximising Attendance Process Flowchart

Appendix B – Return-to-Work Form

Appendix C – Maximising Attendance Management Guidance

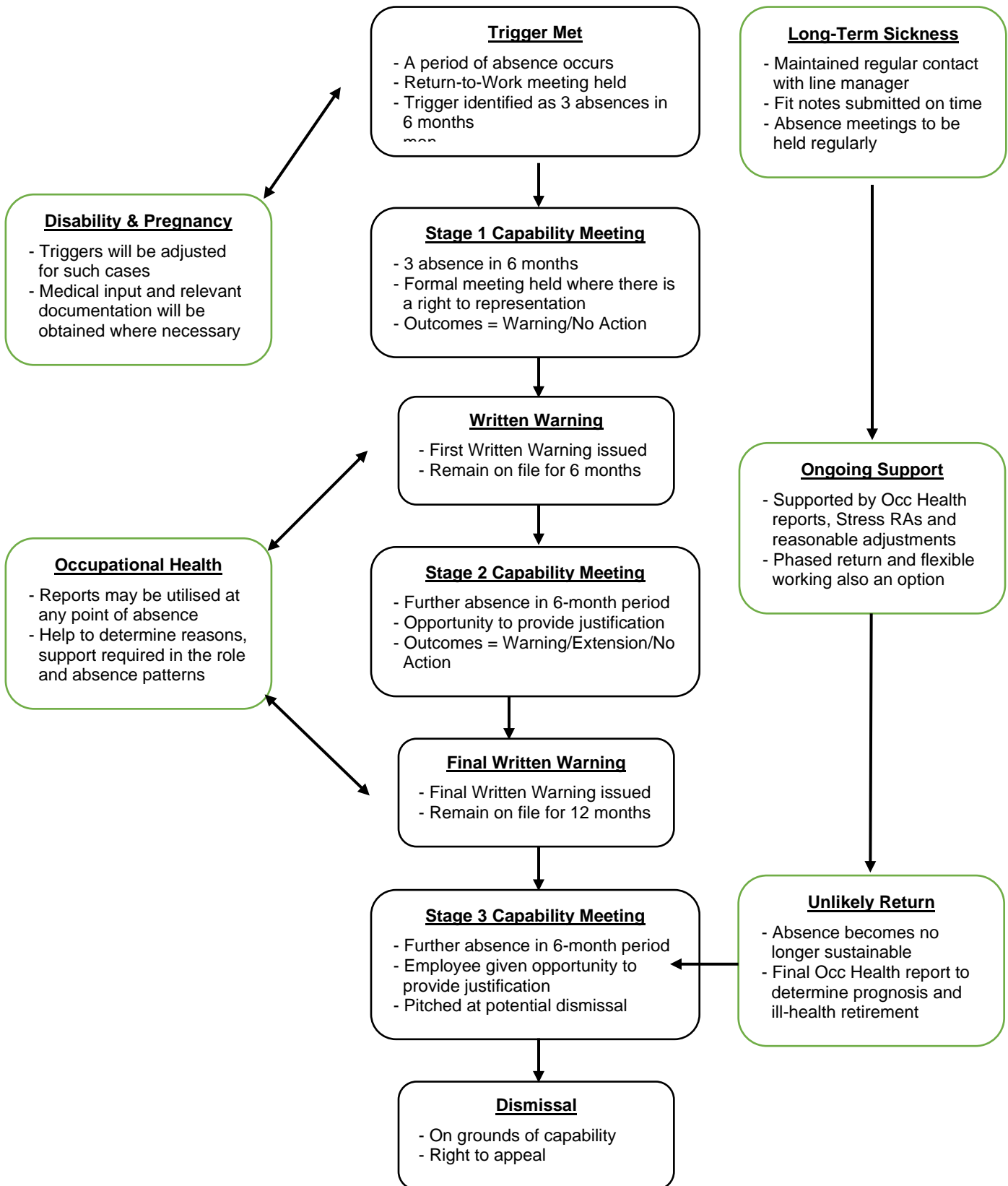
Appendix D – Return-to-Work Plan Template

10. Related Policies and Procedures

- Maximising Attendance Policy
- Maximising Attendance Management Guidance
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Stress Policy and Procedure
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure

Department	Business Support and Transformation
Author	Head of HR and OD
First Approved	14 June 2022
Approved By	People Committee
Next Review Due	June 2025

Appendix A – Maximising Attendance Process Flowchart



Appendix B – Return-to-Work Form

Employee Details	
Name:	Job Title:
Department:	Line Manager:

Absence Details	
First date of absence:	Last date of absence:
Working days absent:	Correct reporting procedure followed:
Absence reason: <i>Please detail the reason for absence including symptoms experienced.</i>	

Support & Adjustments	
Is the employee fit for work?	Yes/No
Is the employee on a phased return to work?	Yes/No
Is the employee taking any new medication following the absence? (If yes, please give detail)	Yes/No
Was this absence related to an underlying condition? (If yes, please give detail)	Yes/No
Did the employee complete a Stress Risk Assessment or were they referred to Occupational Health prior to returning? (If yes, please give detail)	Yes/No
Does the employee require any other adjustments or support? (If yes, please give detail)	Yes/No

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Absence History	
No. of absences in past 6 months:	No. of absences in past 12 months:
Triggers reached:	Patterns identified:
Action: <i>Please detail whether there is to be no action or a Sickness Absence Capability Meeting is to be arranged in line with the policy.</i>	

Additional Comments

Acknowledgement	
Employee Signature:	Date:
Manager Signature:	Date:

Please save this form in the employee's file.

Appendix D – Return-to-Work Plan Template

Return to Work Plan – Checklist

For Managers:

- ✓ Has the employee received reasonable notice to discuss the return-to-work plan?
- ✓ Will this give them enough time to prepare for this meeting? Practically and emotionally?
- ✓ Are we holding the return-to-work plan meeting in an appropriate and confidential space?
- ✓ Do you have all the information you need to support the development of the return-to-work plan? For example, absence reports and copies of medical advice and assessments?
- ✓ Have you spoken with your People Partner ahead of this conversation to gain advice and support?
- ✓ Is there anyone else that needs to be at this meeting with you?
- ✓ Are you clear on your legal obligations and duty of care to your employee as their manager?
- ✓ Do you feel that you are aware of any potential bias and will approach the conversation in a supportive, objective, and human way?
- ✓ Do you anticipate any ICT or log-in issues ahead of the employee returning to work?
- ✓ Where ICT-related actions are identified, are you planning to give ICT sufficient notice ahead of the employee's return to work date?
- ✓ Please make sure to share copies of the completed return to work plan with the employee and your People Partner. Request that the employee return a signed copy if they agree to the plan's contents.

For Employees:

- ✓ Do you already have a Wellbeing Action Plan (WAP)? If not or you are not sure what this is, ask your manager about it in the return-to-work plan meeting.
- ✓ Ahead of your return, do we have up-to-date next of kin details for you? Would these be people you'd be comfortable for us to contact in the event we have health and/or wellbeing concerns in the future?
- ✓ Have you thought about any medical advice or recommendations that you have received whilst on absence? Think about bringing this to your manager's attention so that this can be incorporated into your plan.
- ✓ If a requirement, are you nervous about coming back into an office?
- ✓ Is there anyone else that needs to be at this meeting with you?
- ✓ Is there anything that is worrying you or giving you cause for concern? We'd recommend raising this with your manager, however, you can speak with your People Partner if you'd feel more comfortable doing so.

Return to Work Plan

**Returning Employee:
Manager:**

Considering factors:	Required action(s)/solution(s):
<p>Does the employee have a Wellbeing Action Plan (WAP) and what is included in the WAP that can facilitate the return to work?</p>	<p><i>The Wellbeing Action Plan (WAP) is a new tool being rolled out at Hanover. A template plan is available on the Wellbeing section of the Hub: Home - Health & Wellbeing</i></p> <p><i>Please speak with your People Partner if you need further guidance.</i></p> <p><i>Potential examples: coping mechanisms, indicators/signs of poor wellbeing and more frequent 1-2-1s with the manager.</i></p>
<p>If no WAP is in place, have we discussed the advantages of having this in place with the employee?</p>	<p><i>Potential examples: the manager has discussed the WAP and there is agreement that this should be implemented. The manager should detail here how this will be taken forward.</i></p>
<p>Have we sought medical advice from a healthcare professional to assist the employee's return?</p>	<p><i>Potential examples: we need to gain an up-to-date fit note, there is a need to refer the employee to Occupational Health (OH) ahead of the return to work date.</i></p> <p><i>Manager should speak with their People Partner where OH referral needs to be considered. A conversation between the manager and employee should take place first to discuss the purpose of the referral.</i></p>
<p>If we have gained medical advice from a healthcare professional (such as OH), what workplace adjustments do we need to implement? When will these be implemented by?</p>	<p><i>Potential examples: phased return to work arrangement, amended duties, temporary change to working hours. Manager should speak with their People Partner who will support review of OH recommendations.</i></p>
<p>Is a phased return to work appropriate and what needs to be considered?</p>	<p><i>Detail phased return to work arrangements, this should be supported by medical advice and have the input of your People Partner.</i></p>
<p>Do we need to implement a risk assessment or update an existing one?</p>	<p><i>Potential examples: risk assessment has identified risk factors and control measures that need to be actioned.</i></p>

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How are we going to support the employee to achieve their daily tasks and objectives? Do we need to consider any modifications?	
Depending on the length of absence, have we identified any re-induction or training needs to support the return?	
If the employee still needs to attend medical appointments after returning, how are we going to facilitate this?	
How will we ensure that the employee's recent absence(s) are kept confidential? If there are to be changes in work responsibilities, how would the employee like for this to be communicated with the team?	<i>Any temporary or potentially permanent changes in work responsibilities should be forwarded to your People Partner before formal implementation as this may require further consultation.</i>
Is there any further support that the employee needs to support their return?	<i>Potential examples: do we need to consider increasing awareness and understanding within the organisation? Are there any other support networks we need to add to our suite of wellbeing resources?</i>
How often will this return-to-work plan be reviewed by both the manager and employee? What is the agreed frequency for reviews?	<i>Potential examples: once per week review meetings to check on progress.</i>

Phased Return to Work Plan (if applicable)

If a phased return to work has been informed by medical advice and agreed in conjunction with your People Partner, managers should complete the below phased return to work schedule to reflect each week the adjustment applies. Any phased working recommendations received from a healthcare professional must be followed in full and reflected in this plan. The duration of the phased return to work plan should be guided by medical advice and mutually agreed with the employee.

WEEK 1	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
Normal working pattern:							

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Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							
WEEK 2 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							
WEEK 3 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							
WEEK 4 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							
WEEK 5 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							

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WEEK 6 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							
WEEK 7 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							
WEEK 8 W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Normal working pattern:							
Phased hours to work:							
Remaining hours to be paid as:							

Progress review meetings schedule

Manager and employee to complete below schedule, detailing when meetings shall take place to review progress of the return-to-work plan. Any medical advice that sets out when such meetings should take place must be followed in full. Otherwise, the manager and employee can agree a frequency that is mutually suitable.

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							

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W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							
W/C: [DD/MM/YYYY]							

Acceptance statement

Ahead of my return to work, I confirm that I have had the opportunity to meet with my manager and discuss the full contents of my return-to-work plan. The purpose of the return-to-work plan has been explained to me and I have been able to co-develop the plan with my manager. Where medical advice has been received, for example a Fit Note or Occupational Health referral, I agree that the return-to-work plan and if applicable, phased return to work plan, reflects the recommendations that have been made on my behalf to Hanover. I understand what I need to do to support the successful implementation of the plan and know that I can speak with my manager or People Partner should I have any further questions or concerns. If there is a change to my health/wellbeing and/or if I receive updated medical advice from a healthcare professional, I understand that I should discuss this with my manager so that appropriate support can be considered.

Employee Name:

Employee Signature:

Date:

[Please now return a signed copy to your manager]