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**How to… implement a phased return to work following sickness absence**

Doctors often suggest a phased return to help facilitate a return to work from long term sickness absence. It normally means working fewer hours or days initially, building up over a period of weeks to normal contracted hours. It may also mean undertaking only some duties initially and building up to the full job role over an agreed period.

Phased returns should be planned along with advice from a medical professional or Occupational Health.

In order to ensure that a phased return is successful, consider:

* Meeting with the member of staff before the return. Agreeing the date of return, and what hours and duties they will be doing, and how the phasing will work (how the hours or duties will build up and over what time period).
* Whether there are any other changes or adjustments that might support the member of staff with their return.
* How the phased return should be monitored to ensure it is working for everyone concerned.
* Putting the agreement in writing so that everyone is clear what will be happening.
* Communicating the return arrangements to colleagues (in agreement with the returning member of staff).
* Setting up a regular meeting with the returning member of staff to ensure that there is regular dialogue during the phased period. Ensure a meeting takes place within the first week as an initial review of the return.

If any issues arise during the phased return, seek advice from HR or Occupational Health.