**Guidance for managers on return to work interviews**

* Managers should make contact with an employee returning to work after each spell of sickness absence.
* Contact should always be made on the day or as near as possible to the day the individual returns. As the nature of the discussion is confidential and potentially sensitive, conversations should always be carried out in private,
* Managers should ideally meet with staff face-to-face, however, if this isn’t possible the conversation can take place over the phone. What is appropriate may depend on the nature of the illness and the length of absence. For example:
  + after a couple of days absence with a cold, the manager may have a brief discussion by phone or in passing to confirm the employee is better.
  + after two or three separate days off with a various illnesses within a short period of time, the manager should meet with the individual to discuss any ongoing problems or emerging patterns of absence.
  + after any period of absence (even one day) for stress or any illness which may have an underlying cause, the manager should meet with the employee in private to discuss any problems and actions required to alleviate them.
  + After a few weeks off for an operation, the manager should meet the employee in private to welcome them back, confirm they are fit to work and update them on work related issues.
* The aim of the discussion is to check whether the individual is fit to return to work, check if any support is required and to ensure that absence is being managed to reduce further absences.
* Discussions should follow the format set out below:
  + Establish cause of absence and the likelihood of the illness recurring.
  + Establish whether the employee is better and if he/she is fit to work.
  + Update on work issues if appropriate.
* This may be all that is necessary. Where there are ongoing health problems a more in-depth discussion may be required.
  + What help/support /treatment is the individual receiving? Have they been to see their GP? Refer to Occupational Health if appropriate, through Human Resources.
  + Establish if any adjustments are required to their job or workplace to minimise further problems/absence. Occupational Health may be able to help assess the situation. Managers may also refer to the Disability Advisory and Support Service for advice on adjustments.
  + Establish if there are any other underlying reasons for absence.
  + If absences relate to a disability, pregnancy or a work place accident, always ensure a risk assessment is carried out.
* Where a pattern of absence is developing:
  + Refer to Occupational Health and/or the Disability Advisory and Support Service if appropriate.
  + Discuss any actions the individual or the manager can take which may minimise further absences.
  + Discuss the next steps within the policy should an absence trigger be reached.
* Where a trigger point is reached follow the steps outlined in the Procedures for Dealing with Short Term or Long Term Absence as appropriate.
* In some circumstances, some individuals feel that their reasons for absence are too personal or sensitive to discuss with their manager, or they may wish to discuss their health with a member of staff of the same gender. In these circumstances a member of the Human Resources team may be asked to conduct the meeting.
* Managers must keep a record of their conversation by completing either:
  + the Self-Certification & Return to Work Form, or the Return to Work Form for absences covered by Fit Notes.
  + All documents should be confidentially stored in accordance with our document retention schedule.