

Phased return to work – Guidance – Schools ***(Informal guidance only- Revised November 2018)***

The purpose of a phased return to work is to rehabilitate an employee to their full duties and gradually build back up to undertaking their normal working hours within the earliest agreed timescale. An employee may be allowed to work reduced hours for a temporary period following a period of sickness absence or an injury, the onset of a medical condition or deterioration /worsening of an existing condition (particularly if the condition constitutes a disability under the Equality Act 2010 (Disability Discrimination Act)).

In some cases a graduated or phased return to work will be recommended. This may follow:

- A long period of absence
- An injury
- A surgical procedure
- A condition affecting stamina/concentration

All recommendations will vary depending upon the nature of the condition, length of absence and nature of the employee's duties.

With the introduction of the 'Fit Note', which replaces 'Sickness Certification', recommendations on adjustments or phased return to work may be recommended by the employee's GP as well as Occupational Health.

It is the Headteacher's decision if they are able to accommodate the recommendations, taking into account service delivery, financial implications and impact on other members of staff. The Headteacher should liaise with the Occupational Health Unit where there is difficulty meeting the suggested hours/duties to agree a way forward. Where the adjustments cannot be made the employee will need to remain on sickness absence until their health improves.

Ideally a phased return should be completed within a four-week period. Cases where the employee has serious health issues and reduced stamina may require a longer recovery period the Headteacher can facilitate a further period of 2-4 weeks where there is a gradual increase in duties and hours.

In the case of an employee with a disability temporarily reducing hours may be appropriate while investigating long-term adjustments or waiting for implementation of agreed adjustments. Longer-term reduction in hours may result in pay adjustment.

It is not possible to provide definitive recovery times as in many medical conditions recovery time varies with each individual. Therefore, it is very important that:

- The Headteacher meets with the employee **prior** to a return to work.
- The terms of the phased return are agreed i.e. hours/duties.
- Allow some time initially for readjustment/familiarization.

- The Headteacher meets with the employee at least **weekly** to assess progress and determine if the next stage of the return can be implemented i.e. increase in hours/workload.
- The Headteacher indicates that the employee must raise any difficulties/issues immediately.
- Where difficulties arise that cannot be addressed, the employee should be referred back to Occupational Health.

In some cases where recovery may be lengthy, a temporary placement may be suggested to an alternative post i.e. from a manual handling post to a sedentary post.

Important

It is important to agree adjustments in writing with timescales for review and to note whether the adjustments are temporary or permanent.