

No. 156/25

29<sup>th</sup> July 2025

To: All Branches

## **Supporting Vulnerable Workers: Five HSE 'Easy Read' Guides Launched**

This LTB is to update Branches that five newly launched HSE easy-read guides have been designed to complement the HSE Talking Toolkit, which can be used as an individualised Stress Risk Assessment to support structured conversations with disabled or vulnerable workers.

The 5 easy-read guides explain how formal conversation processes, such as the HSE Talking Toolkit can be used to create an inclusive approach to worker and workplace health. These easy-read guides explain the HSE Talking Toolkit in full.

The HSE Talking Toolkit is an example of a **best practice** model Stress Risk Assessment. Employers will very often have their own variation, however, the HSE Talking Toolkit has been used many hundreds of times for the benefit of CWU members since its launch, the link below provides information on how to use it and also provides valuable information on the applicable health and safety law and equalities law for disabled workers.

[Talking toolkit: Support disabled workers with long-term health conditions in work](#)

## **Easy read guides are specifically designed to help support vulnerable workers.**

An easy-read guide is a way of making written information much easier to understand. It uses simple language, short sentences and clear images to help explain content. It is increasingly used to help those people who have any type of learning disability, where reading and language-related tasks are much more challenging. Easy-read guides can also be useful for people who speak English as a second language.

The 5 easy-read guides can be useful for creating workplace inclusivity, with prime focus concentrated on the following 5 workplace issues:

- **Workplace Culture**  
Helping workers and managers create a supportive and enabling workplace culture.

- **Workplace Health**

Helping workers and managers take a fully inclusive approach to workplace health.

- **Workplace Barriers**

Understanding the work barriers that impact on disabled workers.

- **Workplace Adjustments**

Making formal reasonable workplace adjustments.

- **Workplace Absence**

Supporting disabled workers through sickness absence and returning to work

The new HSE easy-read guides also go some way to explaining health or disability passports at work and the fact that managers must make reasonable adjustments as quickly as possible and, if necessary, make any temporary working arrangements whilst any long term lengthier reasonable adjustments are being put in place.

Further HSE best practice guidance principles for supporting disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions can be accessed via the link below. This link also explains employers' duties in terms of protecting disabled people at work.

[Health and safety for disabled people at work - HSE](#)

The above link is primarily for CWU Representatives and members, and it is not in easy-read format, there is however a guide in easy-read format that explains the law and rights of disabled workers. This guide is shared via the link below.

[Easy read - Supporting disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in work - The law and your rights](#)

**This LTB is shared on behalf of CWU Central Services.**

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact:

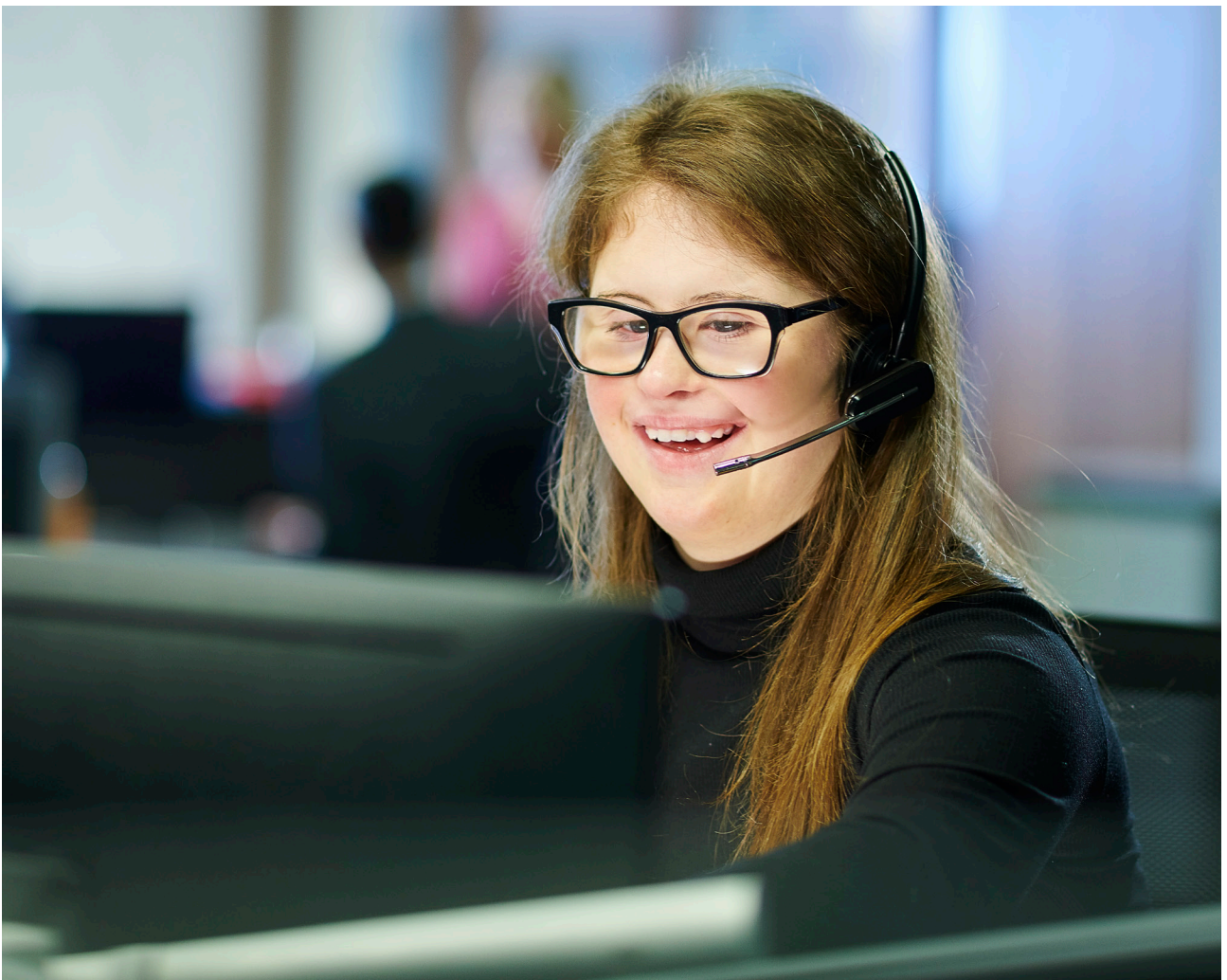
Jamie McGovern, FRSPH MIIAI at [jmcgovern@cwu.org](mailto:jmcgovern@cwu.org).

# PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



## Easy read

Helping workers and managers create  
a supportive and enabling workplace culture -  
Conversation 1



# Contents

What is this easy read guide about?	3
Conversation 1: create a supportive and enabling workplace culture	4
Questions managers may ask	10

# What is this easy read guide about?

This is part of a series of 6 easy read guides HSE has developed to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in the workplace.

Managers could find the 'questions managers may ask' section useful to start conversations with disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions.

This document will use the word 'disabled' to speak about disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean straight after they have been used.

## What is the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national **regulator** for workplace health and safety.

A **regulator** is an organisation that sets standards. HSE prevents work-related death, injury and ill health.

# Conversation 1: create a supportive and enabling workplace culture

This conversation tells you how your manager should support you to feel valued and comfortable at work.

Here are some of the ways managers can create a supportive workplace:

- Managers should focus on your health and wellbeing.



- Managers should promote a **diverse workplace** where you feel safe and included.

**A diverse workplace** includes all people no matter who they are. This includes disabled people.



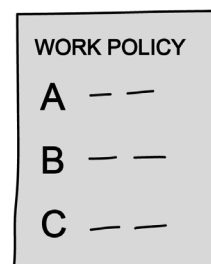
- To be included means all workers are treated equally and encouraged to take part in workplace tasks.



- Managers should stop behaviour that treats a person differently from others.



- Managers should make sure that **workplace policies and practices** support you to do your job well.





- **Workplace policies and practices** are the rules and guidelines for the place where people work.

They help everyone understand how things should be done and keep everyone safe.



- Managers should make sure that policies and practices in the workplace are clear and always used fairly.

This means that every worker should be treated in the same way.



- Managers should explain what you need to do at work and how you should behave.

This should be explained when you start work and you should be reminded after you have been working for a while.





- Managers should behave the right way and show you how to behave in the right way. This will create a **positive culture** in the workplace.

A **positive culture** is having a happy atmosphere at work where everyone gets along.



- Managers should listen to your needs and support you in areas that affect you at work and outside of work.

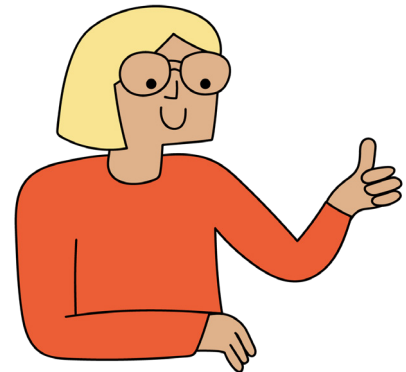


- Managers should remove any barriers in the workplace that might stop you doing your job.

For example, a barrier could be a desk that is too high for a wheelchair user.



- Managers should make sure that your privacy and dignity are respected in the workplace.



- Managers should work with **worker representatives** and disability networks to make sure the needs of all workers are met.

A **worker representative** is a person who speaks up for all workers.

The **worker representative** makes sure that workers' ideas and problems are heard by managers.



- Managers should sign up to the **Disability Confident scheme**.

The **Disability Confident scheme** has been set up by the UK government.

It supports managers to employ disabled people and people with long-term health conditions and keep them in work.



# Questions managers may ask you

The conversation your manager will have with you may show more can be done to support you at work.

The manager could ask:

1

What can managers and senior leaders do to help you reach your full **potential**?

**Potential** means becoming the best version of yourself.

2

How easy is it for you to get a job and develop in the job?

3

How does this compare to non-disabled workers?

4

Are you asked how you feel about changes at work and do you feel your ideas are taken seriously?

An example of a change at work could be lowering your normal working hours.

5

Do you feel you can safely talk about your **concerns**?

And, do you feel that something will be done when you raise **concerns**?

A **concern** is a worry you may have about your job.

6

What do you think could be done to help improve problems you have with work?

# PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



## Easy read

Helping workers and managers take an inclusive approach to workplace health -  
Conversation 2



# Contents

What is this easy read guide about?	3
Conversation 2: take an inclusive approach to workplace health	4
Questions managers may ask	11



# What is this easy read guide about?

This is part of a series of 6 easy read guides HSE has developed to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in the workplace.

Managers could find the 'questions managers may ask' section useful to start conversations with disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions.

This document will use the word 'disabled' to speak about disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean straight after they have been used.

## What is the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national **regulator** for workplace health and safety.

A **regulator** is an organisation that sets standards. HSE prevents work-related death, injury and ill health.

# Conversation 2: take an inclusive approach to workplace health

This conversation tells you how your manager should support you to feel accepted and included at work.

Here are some of the ways managers can create an **inclusive workplace**:

- Managers should create an **inclusive workplace**.

An **inclusive workplace** is a place where everyone can do their job well and feel safe.



- Managers should provide **accessible workplace practices**.

**Accessible workplace practices** are ways of doing things that make it easier for you to do your job and be comfortable at work.



- Accessible work practices should make sure that no one is treated differently to another person.

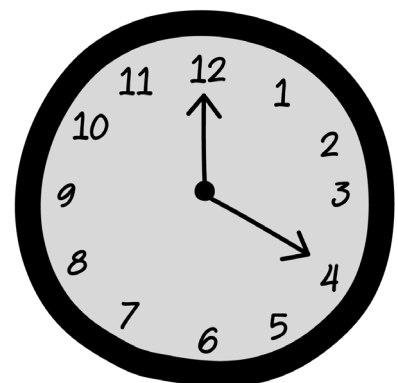


- Managers should make changes to workplace practices to support your health and wellbeing.



- Changes could also be allowing you to work flexible hours and giving you **disability leave**.

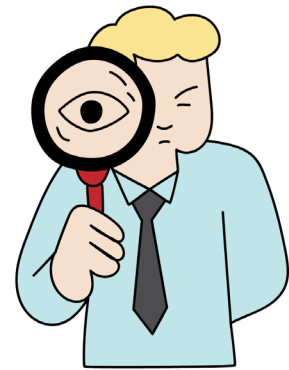
**Disability leave** is when you get time off to meet any needs you have, such as needing a medical check at the doctor.



- Managers should get back to your requests for changes to the workplace within 2 weeks.



- Managers should monitor and review workplace practices to make sure they continue to help you.



- Managers should arrange activities that support your health.



- Managers could send you on **stress management training**.

**Stress management training** can help you feel less worried and help you deal with any problems at work.



- Managers should tell you about **peer support** or staff disability networks that are available at work.

**Peer support** is when you get help from people who are doing similar work and who may also have a disability.

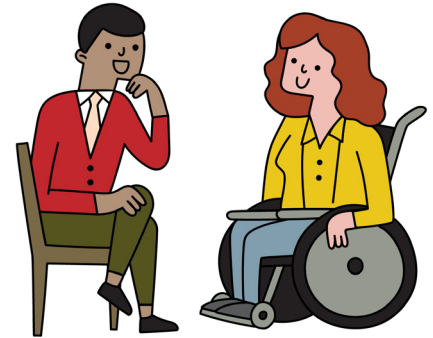


- Managers should make sure you know who to speak to at work if you need support.



- Managers should tell you about support you can get outside of work.

For example, charities that support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.



- Managers should arrange for **disability champions**.



- **Disability champions** support you to feel comfortable at work and make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

They also raise the need for any changes with managers.



- You can sign up to the **Access to Work** scheme.

**Access To Work** can help you get or stay in work with a health condition or disability.



Through Access To Work, you can apply for:

- A grant to help pay for practical support with work.
- Support with managing mental health at work.



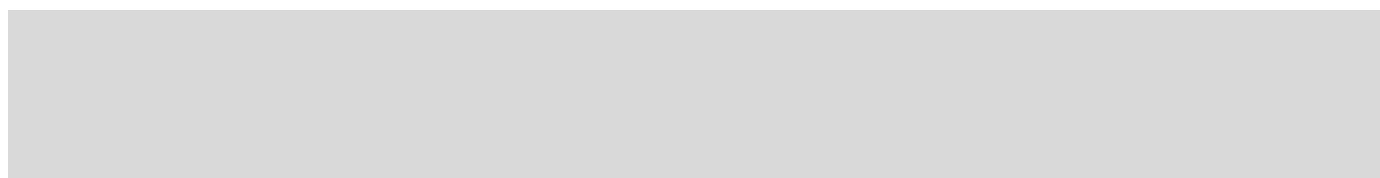


- Money to pay for you to get support to learn how to talk and present yourself at job interviews.



# Questions managers may ask

The conversation your manager will have with you may show more can be done to create an **inclusive workplace**.



The manager could ask:

1

Do you think workplace practices are fair for all workers? And, what can we do better?

2

Do you feel you are treated differently by people at work because you have a disability?

3

Are there any barriers that make it difficult for you to do your job?

For example, you may be hearing impaired and find it difficult to work in a noisy office.

**4**

Has anything about your job or the workplace changed, which means workplace practices need to change?

For example, your health condition has changed and you need to take more breaks so that you do not get tired.

**5**

Do you feel that you are included and respected at work?

If you do not feel included do you know where you can get help and support if you have a concern or problem at work?

**6**

Do you think we could do more to make sure work issues do not impact on your or other workers' health?

**7**

Can we set a date to review agreed changes?

# PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



## Easy read

Understanding the work barriers that impact  
on workers - Conversation 3



# Contents

What is this easy read guide about?	3
Conversation 3: understanding the work barriers that impact on workers	4
Questions managers may ask	12

# What is this easy read guide about?

This is part of a series of 6 easy read guides HSE has developed to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in the workplace.

Managers could find the 'questions managers may ask' section useful to start conversations with disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions.

This document will use the word 'disabled' to speak about disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean straight after they have been used.

## What is the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national **regulator** for workplace health and safety.

A **regulator** is an organisation that sets standards. HSE prevents work-related death, injury and ill health.

## Conversation 3: understanding the work barriers that impact on workers

This conversation tells you how your manager will work to remove any barriers that might make it difficult for you to do your job.

Here are some of the ways managers can remove work barriers:

- Managers can work to build trust so that you feel comfortable and do well in your job.



- If you are happy to, you can talk to your manager about your feelings or things you might find difficult.

For example, you might feel worried about hitting work targets.





- Managers can support you to do more at work rather than focus on the things you cannot do.



- Managers can have conversations with you to understand the different kinds of barriers that might affect you at work.

Barriers can be physical, organisational, attitudinal and social.



## **What are physical barriers?**

Physical barriers are things that block you because of the way they work or are built. Examples of physical barriers could be:

- A lack of disabled access into and around a building.



- **Video conferencing** without subtitles.

**Video conferencing** is where you can see and speak to people over the internet.



- IT that does not help you to read the text.



## What are organisational barriers?

Organisational barriers are work practices and rules that make it difficult for you to do your job.

Examples of organisational barriers could be:

- An example of an organisational barrier is a sickness policy that does not take into account that disabled people might need more days off work than a worker who is usually in good health.



## What are attitudinal barriers?

Attitudinal barriers are when people make an unfair judgement or exclude you because you have a disability or long-term health condition.

Examples of attitudinal barriers could be:

- When a disabled person does not get a promotion because co-workers think they cannot do the job.



## **What are social barriers?**

Social barriers are when you feel you are not part of a group.

Examples of social barriers could be:

- When you feel you are not part of a group.



- When people do not ask you to join for lunch because they think you may not be able to chat with other people.



## What managers can do to help you

- Managers can work with you to find ways to remove barriers to work.



- Managers can find solutions to the problems you are facing.



- Managers can support you when you start the job and throughout the time you work at the organisation.



- Managers can help you to get advice from **occupational health services at work.**

**Occupational health services** are teams, like nurses or counsellors, who can help you with any mental health or health problems.



- Managers can help you to get support if your problem cannot be solved at work.

For example, the manager could help you get support from the **Access to Work Scheme**.

**Access to Work** can help you get or stay in work with a health condition or disability.





# Questions managers may ask

The conversation your manager will have with you may show more can be done to create an **inclusive workplace**.

An **inclusive workplace** is a place where everyone can do their job well and feel safe.

The manager could ask:

1

Are there any barriers in the workplace that make your job more difficult? What can be done to reduce them?

2

How can **the team** help to reduce any barriers at work?

**The team** is the people you work with, such as your manager and co-workers.

**3**

Do you know how you can get support if you have a problem or barrier at work?

For example, do you know how employee assistance or occupational health can help you?

Are you able to access this support?

**4**

Do you think if you raised an issue it would be taken seriously?

What can be done at work to remove barriers and make you feel more included?

**5**

Can we set a date to review agreed changes?

# PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



## Easy read

### Making reasonable workplace adjustments - Conversation 4



# Contents

What is this easy read guide about?	3
Conversation 4: making reasonable workplace adjustments	4
Questions managers may ask	9

# What is this easy read guide about?

This is part of a series of 6 easy read guides HSE has developed to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in the workplace.

Managers could find the 'questions managers may ask' section useful to start conversations with disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions.

This document will use the word 'disabled' to speak about disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean straight after they have been used.

## What is the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national **regulator** for workplace health and safety.

A **regulator** is an organisation that sets standards. HSE prevents work-related death, injury and ill health.

# Conversation 4: making reasonable workplace adjustments

This conversation tells you how your manager will work to remove any barriers that might make it difficult for you to do your job.

Here are some of the ways managers can remove work barriers:

- Managers can talk to you about the type of workplace adjustments you need to do your job well. These are called reasonable adjustments.

For example changes could be made to your computer, you can be given assistive software or an adaptive keyboard, to help you do your job.



- So that managers are better able to support you, they may ask you to share information about your disability or health condition.



- By law managers have to make reasonable adjustments to make sure that services in the workplace are **accessible** to all workers.



**Accessible** means easy to access.

- If managers do not make reasonable adjustments you can make a claim at an **employment tribunal**.

An **employment tribunal** is a place, almost like a court, where a judge can decide if you are being properly supported at work.



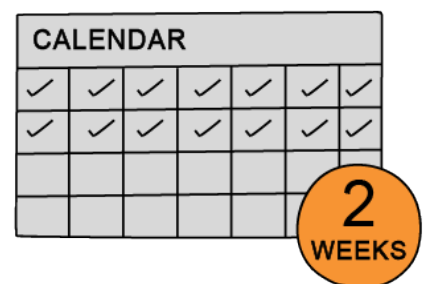
- Managers can learn from you and make sure you agree with the type of adjustments that are needed in the workplace.



- Managers should check you know how to use the adjustments.



- Manager should respond to your request for adjustments within 2 weeks.





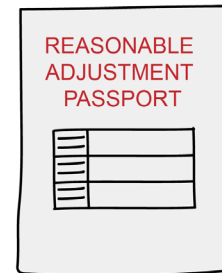
- Managers should make adjustments as quickly as possible. If an adjustment takes long to put in place then temporary arrangements can be made.

For example, disability leave or working in a different role while waiting for the adjustment to be put in place.



- Managers should write any adjustments in a reasonable adjustment passport.

This will make sure that the right adjustments are always in place.



- Managers should explain the reasons for the adjustments to other workers.

The manager can only share this information if you are okay with this.



- Co-workers can support you at work if they understand your disability.



- Managers should review the situation to see if the workplace adjustments are still needed.
- Managers should also check with you to see if any new adjustments are needed.



# Questions managers may ask

The conversation your manager will have with you may show more can be done to create an **inclusive workplace**.

An **inclusive workplace** is a place where everyone can do their job well and feel safe.

The manager could ask:

1

Do you have any workplace adjustments in place?

2

If you have adjustments, were you involved in deciding on the adjustments?

Are the adjustments working for you?

3

Are the adjustments written in a reasonable adjustments passport?

4

If you do not have adjustments in place, do you think you need any adjustments?

5

Do you know how to start the process of asking for an adjustment?

6

If you think the organisation has made an unfair decision on your request, do you know how to get help?

For example, you can get support from:

Trade unions, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).

7

Do you think managers could improve workplace adjustment practices to better support you and other workers?

8

Can we set a date to review agreed changes?

# PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



## Easy read

**Supporting you through sickness absence and  
return to work - Conversation 5**



# Contents

What is this easy read guide about?	3
Conversation 5: supporting you through sickness absence and return to work	4
Questions managers may ask	11

# What is this easy read guide about?

This is part of a series of 6 easy read guides HSE has developed to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions in the workplace.

Managers could find the 'questions managers may ask' section useful to start conversations with disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions.

This document will use the word 'disabled' to speak about disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean straight after they have been used.

## What is the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national **regulator** for workplace health and safety.

A **regulator** is an organisation that sets standards. HSE prevents work-related death, injury and ill health.



# Conversation 5: supporting you through sickness absence and return to work

This conversation tells you how your manager should talk to you about how you can be supported during your **sickness absence** and how they can help you to return to work.

In this easy read guide, **sickness absence** is when you are off work ill for a long time due to a disability or long-term health condition.

Here are some of the way managers can support you during your absence and return:

- Managers or a co-worker you trust could contact you while you are on sickness absence.



- The person contacting you should check on your wellbeing and let you know that you are valued at work.

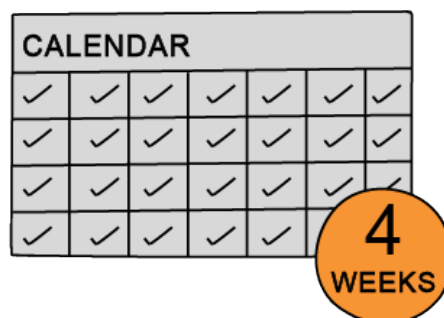


- The person contacting you should find out why you cannot attend work.

They will only contact you when it works for you. For example, when you are not at the doctor or hospital.

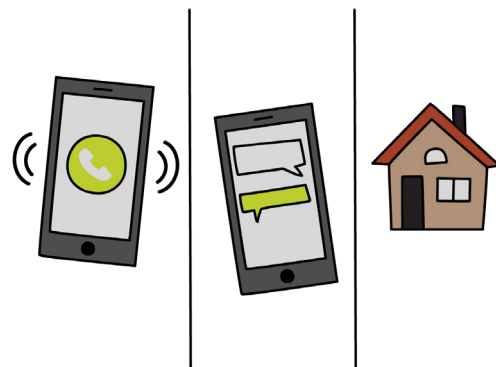


- The person contacting you could contact you in the first 4 weeks you are off work.

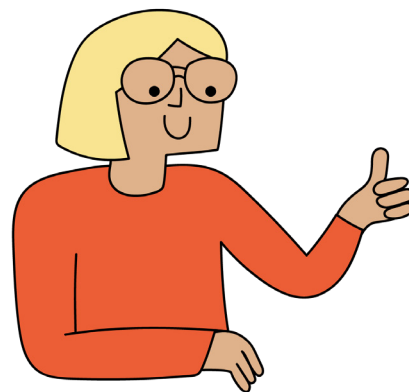


- The person contacting you will agree with you how often you want to be in contact.

They will also ask how you would like to be in contact. This could be through calls, text messages or home visits.



- Your manager will usually only contact you when they need to.



- Your manager can help you get access to **occupational health services** if you need them.

**Occupational health services** are services at work to help with your health.



## Occupational health services can help:

- Check whether you need any adjustments at work after being off ill.



- Support you to feel safe and comfortable when you return to work.



- Give you advice on good health. For example, eating fruit and vegetables.



- Recommend you to support and **rehabilitation** services.
- **Rehabilitation** services can help you feel well and strong after being ill.



### Return to work plan:

- Your manager may want to talk to you when you get back to work, this may be called a return to work interview.



- Managers should work with you to design a **return to work plan**.



- A **return to work plan** is a plan that supports you to do your job after being away from work because you were ill.



- Your return to work plan will include advice from occupational health services and healthcare providers. These may be a doctor or a nurse.



- Your return to work plan should include any adjustments needed after your illness.

The plan will take into account that you may still feel ill on some days after your return.



- Managers could allow you to slowly return to work.

You do not need to be back to your normal hours and levels of activity when you return.

CALENDAR						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
✓	—	✓	—	✓	—	—

# Questions managers may ask

The conversation your manager will have with you may show more can be done to make the **workplace inclusive**.

An **inclusive workplace** is a place where everyone can do their job well and feel safe.

The manager could ask:

1

Do you understand how sickness absence procedures work?

2

Do you know where to find sickness absence procedures?

3

Do you think our sickness absence procedures support you to return to work?



4

Are you getting enough support at work to help you manage your health?

5

How can we help you better manage your health at work?

For example, do you need different workplace adjustments or support groups?

6

Could we have done anything more to support you when you were off sick?

**The manager could ask about the support you need during your illness:**

7

How would you like to be contacted while you are on sickness absence?

**8**

Is there anything more we can do to help you during your absence?

For example, do you need support from occupational health services?

**9**

How can we help you when you return to work?

For example, you could return to work slowly as you start to feel better.

**10**

Do you need any adjustments when you return to work?

For example, you could lower your normal working hours.