

# Information for Managers who have staff returning from shielding



## Introduction

At the end of March, Scottish Government issued guidance which required some staff to start shielding. This meant you asked them to stay at home for their own safety and, where possible, you enabled them to work from home.

With the current level of COVID-19 in the population, the requirement to shield has been paused and you are able to support them to come back into the workplace.

We know that for some staff this will be a worrying time and they will require reassurance that the organisation is a safe place to be.

## Before their return to work

During the last few months you will have been in regular contact with your shielding staff and keeping them up to date with what's happening in your team/ department.

As this period of time has not been sick leave and there is no need to consider a phased return, you should recognise the extended period of time when the member of staff has not been in the workplace.

In advance of them coming back, you will need to contact them to do the following:

- Complete an updated Occupational Health risk assessment and identify any adjustments that need to be made, if any. This should be considered alongside the workplace assessment you may have carried out within your department. If you have not yet completed a workplace assessment, you should do this as a matter of priority. In some instances, this may mean temporary adjustments to their role or redeployment to another work area.
- Discuss their COVID vulnerability age and what this means in terms of risk. In some instances, this may mean temporary adjustments to their role or a temporary redeployment to another work area.
- Record any agreed actions in the risk assessment and follow up as required, i.e. further information through Occupational Health or the staff member's General Practitioner.
- Talk about and agree rotas and working patterns and provide an update on any changes to work practices/ location that have occurred.
- Agree a plan for any adjustments that need to be considered to assist with their supported return to work.
- Discuss how they are planning to use their annual leave, particularly if they have not used any during the shielding period and if this will support with their return to work.

## **Areas to consider during these discussions**

Although no phased return is required, shielding staff have not been in their normal working environment for over four months, so take this into account when rostering them for work.

Adjustments may need to be considered, for example:

- Do not schedule them for on call as soon as they are back
- Do not expect them to hit the ground running at pre-COVID levels – this is particularly important for clinical staff who will not have undertaken their role for an extended period of time and will need to be orientated back into the team.

You should also recognise that they may find coming back to their usual work pattern physically and mentally challenging. If they have leave to use, consider whether they can use some of it to shorten their working week for a short period.

## **Coming back to the organisation**

It may be an anxious time for some staff returning to work after such a prolonged absence period.

On their first day back you will need to ensure that arrangements are in place for them to be welcomed back into the team. If you are not there to welcome them back on their first day, you should identify someone who can welcome them and induct them back into the team.

It is important to ensure that health and safety measures, such as physical distancing or any other changes that have taken place in their absence, are fully explained. This will help to provide some reassurance that their workplace is safe whilst ensuring they are fully aware of the procedures they need to follow.

It may also be a good opportunity to have them complete any outstanding training on the first week of their return to help with their transition back into the department.

If you need any further guidance or advice to help support with employees return to work, please contact the following for further assistance in the first instance:

- Occupational Health
- Human Resources
- Prevention and Control of Infection