

Workplace health: long-term sickness absence and capability to work

Information for the public

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Supporting people's health at work and managing sickness absence

Creating healthy and supportive workplaces helps to keep people in work and reduces sick leave. But the longer someone is off sick, the more difficult it is for them to go back to work. Being out of work for a long time can mean people lose skills and confidence as well as income. It can also affect their health and wellbeing. Many people do not return to work after a long period of sickness absence. Health problems that stop people from being able to work cost employers £9 billion a year and have a huge cost for people themselves.

We want this guideline to help employers improve how they manage sickness absence and support their staff back into work by making sure:

- organisations have clear and fair policies on managing sickness absence which are understood by their staff
- managers know how to promote a culture that values staff health and wellbeing
- when a member of staff is on sick leave their employer stays in touch with them to provide advice and support
- employers work closely with people to plan their return to work and the help they will need, for example how their role or workplace could be adapted to meet their needs
- people who receive benefits and have a health condition or disability are offered a programme of support to help them return to work.

Where can I find out more?

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [BackCare](#), 0208 977 5474
- [Citizens Advice](#), 03444 111 444
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#), 0808 808 00 00
- [Mind](#), 0300 123 3393
- [Pain concern](#), 0300 123 0789
- [Versus Arthritis](#), 0800 5200 520

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have professional and lived experience of promoting workplace health. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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