



## **Return to Work (RTW) Interviews – Line Managers Support Notes**

### **13: Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

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## 1. Introduction & Purpose

At FirstCare we recognise that return to work meetings can be challenging for a manager, especially if they are new to the role or they have little experience with this type of meeting.

The purpose of these support notes is to assist and prepare you to have an effective return to work (RTW) meeting. The notes are aimed towards newly promoted managers, managers who do not complete frequent RTWs or for specific absence reasons.

## 2. Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The purpose of a Coronavirus (COVID-19) RTW is to establish the severity of the virus suffered, to establish fitness for work, and to discuss whether the employee took the appropriate action as recommended by Public Health England (PHE) and NHS UK.

### What is COVID-19?

Novel (meaning 'new') coronavirus or COVID-19 is a disease that can affect your lungs and airways. It is one of a family of viruses that cause disease in animals, several of which have 'jumped' to humans, notably SARS and MERS which have caused more than 1,500 deaths since 2002. There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19 and it's believed it will take several months to develop one.

### Symptoms

From what is known about COVID-19 so far, the symptoms are similar to a seasonal cold or flu, and in most cases, people have made a full recovery.

The elderly and those with underlying health conditions, however, are at much greater risk from COVID-19, and should consult NHS 111 immediately if they are affected by any of the following symptoms:

- A new dry cough and/or sore throat (i.e. which causes repeated coughing)
- High temperature (i.e. you are hot to the touch on your chest or back of your neck)
- Fatigue

### Prevention

The primary way to prevent getting the virus is to avoid close contact with anyone who has one and good hygiene. PHE and NHS UK recommendations include:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitiser after contact with other people
- 2 metres social distancing
- Self-isolation as recommended by the Government
- Keep all surfaces clean
- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and put used tissues in a bin as soon as possible
- Do not share towels or crockery

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

### 3. The Dynamic RTW Questions explained

	<b><i>The suggested RTW questions are:</i></b>	<b><i>Why should the manager ask this?</i></b>
1	How are you feeling?	This is a soft skills question which is asked because it shows empathy and concern for both their physical and mental health.
2	Did you have symptoms of the COVID-19 virus e.g. high temperature and new persistent cough?	This question establishes whether it is likely that they had the virus.
3	Did you have the COVID-19 test?	This would confirm the diagnosis.
4	What treatment or self-care have you undergone e.g. hospitalised, GP or self-care with over the counter medications?	This allows you to explore any medical advice and/or treatment that they received which will help you to identify the severity of the illness. Check that there are no ongoing side effects from any medication.
4.	Do you have any vulnerabilities such as an underlying medical condition?	This is asked so that you can discuss any underlying conditions that may have been exacerbated and may impact on their work. You can discuss measures to support them with this in the future.
5	What guidance did you follow e.g.PHE or NHS UK?	You should discuss what the advice was when the employee initially went off work and update them with what it is currently.
6	What action did you take; 7, 14 days or 12 weeks?	This is to ensure that your records are accurate.
7	Are you symptom free and fully recovered to return to work?	Please ask this question to ensure fitness for work. You can also ask if there is any support that the organisation can offer to help them back to work e.g. home working.
8	Is anyone in your household experiencing symptoms?	This question covers the issue of care of a dependant, and in addition is asked to ensure that the employee knows about the current government advice and if they need to continue to work at home or self-quarantine.
9	Do you have anyone over 70 years of age in your family who you are concerned about?	Ask this question as your employee may be worrying about a family member and you could offer them the opportunity to discuss it.
10	May I discuss the latest Government recommendations with you to explore how we can best support you, e.g. non-essential travel, working from home and other current measures to suppress this pandemic?	This is a good opportunity to discuss the virus and the measures to control it. It ensures that the employee is 100% aware of what the current guidelines are and what they should be doing.
11	Is there anything else you would like to discuss with me today?	This is the last question you need to ask; this is the employees' opportunity to discuss anything else that hasn't already come up. It allows them to express if there anything else on their mind, about either the absence or any other element of their work.

***Please note: this is an ever-changing situation and the questions may have to be adapted as appropriate, therefore at this stage we have tried to keep it generalised and give examples.***