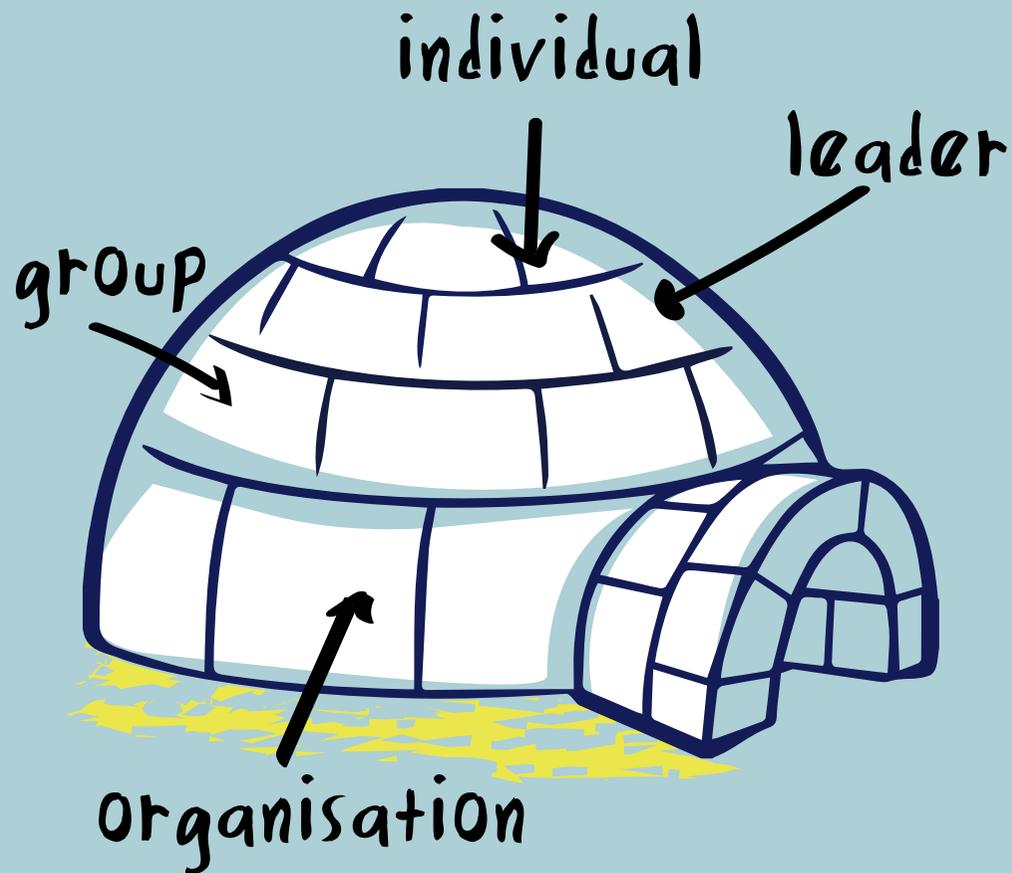


Guide for Employees

What can you do to make sure you thrive on your return to work

your IGLOO

for returning to work following
mental ill-health



Employee guide

What can you do to make sure you thrive on your return to work

Returning to work after a period of absence can bring mixed feelings. Often people are looking forward to returning to a sense of normality, but are also apprehensive about how they will manage work and whether they will be able to maintain their health when back at work. These concerns are normal. In fact did you know that 1 in 6 people experience mental ill health and 1 in 3 'fit notes' signed by doctors are for mental ill-health?

This guide is designed to help you during the first few months of your return to work. It draws from the latest evidence to outline what works, and what does not, when it comes to getting back to work safely, and productively.

You can't do it all by yourself. When we are unwell we need help from others. Colleagues, friends and family, line managers and others can help you build your **IGLOO**. Remember, with a range of people to support you, you are much more likely to stay in and be productive at work.

What is stress, anxiety and depression?

Mental health is complicated. Everyone's experience of mental health is slightly different. It is sometimes difficult to tell whether someone is experiencing stress, anxiety or depression. A really important sign is a change in the person's behaviour – are they behaving differently? Here are some of the common signs and signals – you may find it helpful to share this information at work if you find it difficult to describe how your mental health impacts you:

- Behavioural signs – struggling with workload, low levels of concentration and focus, difficulty in organising, low productivity, negative attitude, changes in motivation.
- Emotional signs – feeling anxious or irritable, mood changes, changes in how you interact with colleagues, too much emotion, feeling isolated or socially withdrawn.
- Physical signs – tiredness, having sleepless nights, increased drinking and/or smoking, not feeling hungry, headaches.



For more details on signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression, and the possible impact on work – visit [Every Mind Matters](#)

Understanding your IGL00

We all need other people to help us stay happy and healthy. Everyone has their own set of resources inside and outside of work. We call this your **IGL00**. Your **IGL00** is made up of different resources that help you:

individual resources – like confidence, self-care

group resources – help from colleagues, friends and family

leader resources – help from your line manager, GPs or service provider

Organisational resources – help provided by your organisation, volunteer groups or charities

Your IGL00 for returning to work following mental ill-health includes:

At home the following actions help returning employees	Resources	At work, the following help returning employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritising self-care ● Establishing clear boundaries between work and leisure 	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating structure in the working day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding from others ● Receiving non-judgmental support 	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receiving feedback on tasks from colleagues ● Getting help when doing challenging tasks ● Being treated as you did before not as someone with mental ill-health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having a consistent point of contact ● Facilitating of links to external services and treatment 	Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agreeing what information about the absence and return is communicated to colleagues ● Continuing to provide support and work adjustments ● Being available but not intrusive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessing work-focused counselling 	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing flexible working practices and leave policies ● Providing work-focused counselling ● Demonstrating care through support ● Establishing a culture where mental health is not stigmatised

How strong is your IGLOo?

Use the checklist here to test the strength of your **IGLOo** and help you to build a strong **IGLOo**.

1. Look at the checklist. Read the statements in the 'Do I...' column. Think about whether you would answer 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes'. Mark your answer in the column.
2. Use the checklist here to test the strength of your **IGLOo**. If you answer yes to these questions, you have a strong **IGLOo**. If you answer 'sometimes' or 'no' think about whether this would be helpful to you.
3. What else do you need/need to do? If you answer 'sometimes' or 'no' what needs to happen to make this part of your **IGLOo** stronger? It may be something you need to do, you need someone else to do, or you need to ask for.
4. How do you make this happen? Think about what you can do to make this happen. If you need someone else to do something, how can you ask them to do it? Need help and advice? Ask friends and family, colleagues, your line manager, GP, Human Resources, Occupational Health, charities/ support groups, union reps

Remember...

Returning to work is not always easy, but having support can make a huge difference. If you are finding it difficult, ask a trusted colleague or friend to help you work through the questions and identify some concrete actions that you, or they, can take to help you build your **IGLOo**.

Resources	Location	Do I...?	Do I... Yes, No, Sometimes	I need to... <i>If you answered "sometimes" or "no", what else would be helpful?</i>	I can make this happen by... <i>Need help and advice? Ask friends and family, colleagues, your line manager, GP, Human Resources, Occupational Health, charity/support groups, union reps;</i>
Individual	Work	Create structure in my working day? E.g. divide up tasks in to smaller components, diarise meetings.			
	Home	Prioritise self-care by leaving work on time and scheduling in exercise, appointments, cooking etc?			
Group		Work	Maintain clear boundaries between work and leisure/home?		
	Get feedback on the work I am doing from my colleagues?				
	Get help with challenging tasks when I am struggling to complete them?				
	Get treated in the same way as before, not someone different or who is experiencing mental ill-health				
	Home	If there was any conflict before your absence, has this been addressed or have processes changed since you have returned?			
		Feel understood and listened to by my family and friends?			
Leader	Work	Receive non-judgemental support from family and friends?			
		Discuss with my line manager what information is communicated to colleagues so that I feel in control of what is said about me?			
		Receive continued support and work adjustments from my line manager, even beyond the first month?			
	Home	Find it easy to speak or meet with my line manager? Are they available but not intrusive?			
		Have a consistent point of GP or clinical/therapeutic contact?			
		Have access to other external services, treatment or support groups via my GP?			
Organisation	Work	Have access to flexible working to help me balance my work and health?			
		Have access to work adjustments to help me balance my work and health?			
		Have access to work-focused counselling or coaching support through my employer?			
	Home	Have access to work-focused counselling from the NHS or other charitable service			

Where to go for further information

Mental health

Every Mind Matters

Mind

Mental Health Foundation

Time to talk

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

www.mind.org.uk

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

take-time-to-talk.com

Professional bodies

CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)

www.cipd.co.uk

IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health)

www.iosh.co.uk

HSE (Health and Safety Executive)

www.hse.gov.uk

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1461

DRC (Disability Rights Commission)

www.drc.org.uk

SOM (Society of Occupational Medicine)

www.som.org.uk

Managing mental health at work:

ACAS Managing staff absence guide

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4199

ACAS Mental health at work guidance

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1900

Mental Health at Work

www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk

Access to Work

www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview

Biographies

Professor Karina Nielsen is Director of the Institute of Work Psychology, University of Sheffield. Her research focuses on the design, implementation and evaluation of organizational interventions in the field of organizational health.



Dr Joanna Yarker is Director of Affinity Health at Work, a workplace wellbeing consultancy. Her work uses evidence based approaches to improve health and wellbeing at work for employees, teams, managers and organisations.



About these Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed by a research team from Sheffield University, in partnership with Affinity Health at Work. The research was funded by the Productivity Insights Network, a multidisciplinary network funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Supported by a diverse steering group of subject matter experts, practitioners, policy makers, employers and employees who have returned following mental ill-health, the research team followed 38 employees who had returned to work following a period of absence, and 20 line managers who had managed a returning employee. Using thematic analysis, the team identified the resources that employees reported helped them stay and be productive at work. Once the interviews had been analysed the steering group supported the design of the guidelines presented here.



The University Of Sheffield.



productivity insights network

