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# Returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 lockdown - toolkits

## Returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 lockdown - toolkits

Managing return to work in the new normal with COVID-19 needs social as well as possibly medical action. Work is good for us and we need to get back to good, safe jobs - comfortable when we are well and supportive when we are not. Managers can provide workplace support, with referral to occupational health (OH) professionals when necessary. OH professionals support the well-being of workers, preventing ill-health, providing independent advice to organisations, facilitating steps to reduce sickness absence, and controlling infection risks.

The SOM toolkits puts that into action – the toolkit produced in partnership with [Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk/) (<https://www.acas.org.uk/>), [Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk/) (<https://www.mind.org.uk/>), [BITC](https://www.bitc.org.uk/) (<https://www.bitc.org.uk/>) and [CIPD](https://www.cipd.co.uk/) (<https://www.cipd.co.uk/>), the guide for health professionals, and the toolkit for sustaining work-relevant mental health can be downloaded below:

[Returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 lockdown](https://www.som.org.uk/Returning_to_the_workplace_COVID-19_toolkit_FINAL.pdf) ([https://www.som.org.uk/Returning\\_to\\_the\\_workplace\\_COVID-19\\_toolkit\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.som.org.uk/Returning_to_the_workplace_COVID-19_toolkit_FINAL.pdf))

[COVID-19 Return to work guide - For health professionals advising patients and employers](https://www.som.org.uk/SOM_RTW_guide_health_professionals_COVID-19_FINAL.pdf) ([https://www.som.org.uk/SOM\\_RTW\\_guide\\_health\\_professionals\\_COVID-19\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.som.org.uk/SOM_RTW_guide_health_professionals_COVID-19_FINAL.pdf))

[Sustaining Work-Relevant Mental Health Post COVID-19 Toolkit](https://www.som.org.uk/Sustaining_work_relevant_mental_health_post_COVID-19_toolkit.pdf) ([https://www.som.org.uk/Sustaining\\_work\\_relevant\\_mental\\_health\\_post\\_COVID-19\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.som.org.uk/Sustaining_work_relevant_mental_health_post_COVID-19_toolkit.pdf))

You can listen to our Return to work toolkit podcast [here](https://youtu.be/5uJW-QYKDiQ) (<https://youtu.be/5uJW-QYKDiQ>)

Remember, though, that line managers are often the first contact on return to work. Here are simple steps to identify and support those in need of help (and do take a look at a Small and Medium Enterprise focused risk assessment tool [here](https://www.som.org.uk/SME_focused_risk_assessment_tool_FINAL_10.06.20.pdf) ([SME focused risk assessment tool FINAL 10.06.20.pdf](https://www.som.org.uk/SME_focused_risk_assessment_tool_FINAL_10.06.20.pdf)). We also have a brief guide: Helping keep the high street safe in the pandemic [here](https://www.som.org.uk/Helping_keep_the_high_street_safe_in_the_pandemic_June_2020_FINAL.pdf) ([Helping keep the high street safe in the pandemic June 2020 FINAL.pdf](https://www.som.org.uk/Helping_keep_the_high_street_safe_in_the_pandemic_June_2020_FINAL.pdf)):

1. Early contact that is positive and caring
2. Use conversation starters to establish rapport and discuss problems
3. Identify specific obstacles to return to work e.g. personal, health, workplace
4. Agree a return to work plan to overcome specific obstacles - who needs to do what, when?
5. If obstacles are too complex, refer to occupational health (OH) for help
Conversation starters for line managers or OH include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has life been?</li> <li>• Are you OK about coming back?</li> <li>• Do you feel safe coming back?</li> <li>• How we can make your job better?</li> <li>• Do you know who to talk with if any problems crop up?</li> </ul>
If someone has existing common health problems, questions could include: Do you feel up to doing your usual job with your health problem? What parts of your job will you find difficult because of your health problem? What can we change to help overcome the difficulties?

Example of situation and risk judgement taken from 'Returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 lockdown'

## ANNEX 2. EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONS AND RISK JUDGEMENTS

### Scenario 1

An office administrator in a financial organisation closed to the public, working in a role that cannot be effectively carried out at home. The staff member does need to travel to work by public transport and flexible start times can be accommodated. Other staff members will also attend work, but numbers have been restricted to always allow social distancing. All staff have had regular communication about hygiene and home isolation rules (if they or a household member are symptomatic) and there is an increased cleaning schedule at work for high touch surfaces. All staff have been issued with hand sanitiser and do not hot desk. Cleaning sprays are readily available and use is encouraged.

### Explanation

There are no non-staff people presenting to the workplace making the risk from factor 1 very low. There is no need to use PPE (factor 6), also very low risk. Although other factors are not very low, they are controlled and do not present more than standard risk.

### Overall risk level:

The highest risk is Standard for any factors so this is the Overall Risk level.

### Who can work?

Those with Increased risk vulnerability (Orange) or Standard (Green) risk could work in this workplace with these control measures in place but not those who have High (Red) risk.

Framework for workplace COVID-19 risk		Based on risk after control measures are implemented			
Risk ID	Risk factors	Low *	Standard	Medium	High
1	Patient/Service user/Public facing				
2	Ability to maintain social distancing at work >2m				
3	Number of different people sharing the workplace				
4	Travel to and from work				
5	Workplace entry and exit				
6	Availability and use of PPE				
7	Ability to maintain hand hygiene				
8	Workplace environment cleanliness control				
9	Ability to avoid symptomatic people				

\*a very low risk environment is likely to be home working or isolated, non-shared office working.

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