Return to work after cancer – checklist
The checklist below has been informed by good practice identified within the research project. It aims to give a list of actions that can be considered when managing an employee’s return to work after cancer and inclusion of occupational safety considerations. For each section below, examples of good practice from the case studies have been presented.

**Checklist for employers**

**Risk assessment**

For the completion of a risk assessment it is recommended you:
- Take an individualised approach based on work tasks done, not job titles
- Include a multi-disciplinary team: HR, Occupational Health, Safety and the line manager
- Consider both physiological and psychological aspects of work
- Update required risk assessments including manual handling, DSE and other required assessments
- Review and amend the risk assessment when necessary

Examples of risk assessment considerations from the case studies:
- Working on a single floor of the workplace, due to physical changes
- Completion of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)
- Provision of disability parking
- Consideration of fatigue e.g. when planning hours and tasks to be completed
- Consideration of psychological and cognitive factors e.g. through adapting job tasks, content and timescales
- Prohibition of overtime during a phased return to work
- Consideration of lowered immune system due to treatment
- Consideration of ergonomics for lifting tasks
- Limiting the driving for work during the phased return-to-work period
- For standing jobs, provision of a chair to allow resting
- Allowing the employee to take breaks as and when they are needed
- Consideration of the employee’s role, e.g. for a manager returning, consideration of their role as manager and expectations of their staff

**Maintaining contact when away from the workplace**

When maintaining contact while the employee is away from the workplace, it is recommended there is:
- Formal two-way contact between the employee and members of a multi-disciplinary team including HR, Occupational Health and the line manager
- Informal contact between the employee and their manager and colleagues
- Formal and informal meetings with those involved in the return-to-work process
- Communication to keep the employee informed about workplace developments

Examples of contact from the case studies:
- Consistency in who contacts the employee
- If a new member joins the team involved in the return-to-work process they should make contact with the employee to introduce themselves
- Staff bulletin/newsletters being sent through the post
- The employee keeping their line manager informed about treatments and appointments (where relevant)
- An occupational health centre calling the employee and offering mental health support
- Where appropriate, visiting the employee to offer informal support

**Discussions about returning to work**

When having discussions about the return to work, it is recommended these include:
- Consideration of the employee’s physical and psychological needs
- Discussions about a phased return to work (where relevant)
- Involvement of a multi-disciplinary team: HR, Occupational Health, Line Manager

Examples from the case studies:
- Asking the employee how they feel, and when and if they would like to return to work
- Include any advice given by medical professionals
- Seeing a couple of colleagues before returning made it easier to return
- Discussions around locations and timings of on-going treatment and how these could be worked around in a phased return to work
Checklist for employers

- Keeping the date of starting a phased return to work flexible, as it may change due to treatment plans or how the employee is feeling
- In most cases the employee contacted their manager to begin discussions about returning

Planning the return to work
When planning the return to work, the following considerations are recommended:
- Implementation of an individualised return-to-work plan
- Ensuring that flexibility is possible in the return-to-work plan
- Involvement of a multi-disciplinary team in developing the plan (employee, line manager, HR, occupational safety and health)

Examples from the case studies:
- Informing the plan with advice from the occupational health team (where relevant)
- During an employee's time off sick or during the phased return, their plan to return to work is monitored by the occupational health and HR teams
- Documentation of the plan which would be reviewed by the employee before being sent to HR
- Individualised approach to the length of the phased return-to-work plan

Meetings
When meeting about the return to work it is recommended these:
- Take place regularly as review meetings (either informally or formally)
- Involve all the stakeholders in the return to work process (employee, line manager, HR, occupational safety and health)

Examples from the case studies:
- Return-to-work process reviewed every week or couple of weeks
- Discussion of workplace accommodations and supports in place or required
- Employees knowing whom they can contact informally or formally about issues they may be having, either in the short-term or long-term
- After each review meeting an update report is written and shared in the multi-disciplinary return-to-work team
- At review meetings it's useful for the employee to share any external appointments or advice they have received

Policies
It is recommended that workplaces:
- Have a workplace policy for cancer and all illnesses of a fluctuating nature
- Have a return-to-work policy in place applicable to cancer (for both return to work and continuing to work)

Examples from the case studies:
- An employee's line manager undertaking the management of how the policy was applied to the individual, ensuring an individualised approach

After return to work
After the return to work it is recommended that there is:
- Availability of information and advice for the employee
- A flexible approach in the longer-term

Examples from the case studies:
- Although returning to work full-time after a phased return, allowing employees to go back to the return-to-work team if they have any issues or concerns at any point
- Continued support from the workplace
- Discussions about potential long-term issues or concerns
- Allowing the employee to decide how many days they would like to return to working and fitting this with business needs
- Ensuring the employee is in control of their own return to work
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