



A Registrars Guide for Returning to Training

Your toolbox for returning to public health practice after time out of training

This is a guide for public health registrars who are returning to work after a period of absence. It is recognised that there are a variety of reasons someone may have been off work. This will impact individuals differently and the needs of public health registrars returning to work are likely to be varied. Support options also vary by region and country. For example, NHS England offers [SuppoRTT](#) – a programme to help doctors in training and public health registrars return to work after time away.

For that reason, this offers a general toolkit to be used as reference, but is not comprehensive for every situation. We have included helpful resources, services and guides which better cover specific scenarios.

Know Your Rights

Reasonable adjustments

2010 Equality Act (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England)

Reasonable adjustments^[1] for disabled employees defined as: a person with a physical or a mental impairment which has a substantial, long term (12 months +), adverse effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Reasonable adjustments can include a flexible working pattern, or time to attend appointments or providing equipment to help you do your job or changing the work environment to help you do your job. The cost of these changes should not be incurred by the employee.

Flexible Working Act 2023 (England, Wales and Scotland)

Any employee has the statutory right to make a flexible working request from the first day of their employment, and you can make up to two requests a year. You should receive a decision within two months, and your employer is required to consult with you if they intend to reject your request. Flexible working requests can include (for example) part time working, flexible or different start and finish hours, hybrid or remote working or compressed hours.

In **Northern Ireland** you can request flexible working once per year, after 26 weeks of continuous employment.

Family and caring related

Parental and carer's Leave

Parental leave entitles an employee with more than 12 months continuous service 18 weeks of leave per child, in order to provide a caring role. This is usually taken in one week blocks. In **England, Wales and Northern Ireland** employees are entitled to 18 weeks unpaid leave up to the 18th birthday of their child, per child, with a maximum of 4 weeks that can be taken within a year per child. In **Scotland** employees are entitled to 14 weeks unpaid leave and 4 weeks paid leave for ever child up until the child's 14th birthday.^[2]

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 (England, Wales and Scotland)

Employees are entitled to one week's flexible unpaid leave per year if caring for someone with a long-term care need^[3]. This starts from the first day of employment.

The Carer's Leave Act, 2001 (Northern Ireland)

Allows you to take unpaid leave to provide full-time care for someone who needs it. You can take a minimum of 13 weeks and up to a maximum of 104 weeks. You are also entitled to a reasonable amount of time off for emergency care of dependents if you have been employed for at least one year.

Workplace Safety Law

Expectant and new mothers should have a risk assessment on returning to work, if they have given birth in the last 6 months or if they are breastfeeding, regardless of when their infant was born^[4].

Breastfeeding

Best practice dictates that breastfeeding is discussed on return to work and reasonable adjustments are made to help aid breastfeeding where possible. In accordance with the Workplace Safety Law, all breastfeeding mothers should be risk assessed on returning to work. There is a legal obligation to provide a space for breastfeeding mothers to rest in. Many employers will go further and have a designated breastfeeding area, including a fridge to store expressed milk in. There is no legal obligation to additional break time for breastfeeding or expressing.

Bereavement

Bereavement leave

In England: For immediate family members (some discretion involved): 1 week paid leave and an additional week unpaid leave. Any other relative: one days paid leave

to attend funeral. Additional unpaid leave or annual leave can be taken at manager's discretion.

Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales bereavement leave can be at the managers discretion, but one week of paid leave for a close family member and one day for extended family is typical.

Baby loss (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)

When a baby is still born after the 24th week of pregnancy, the mother will be entitled to the usual maternity leave and pay entitlements and parents can take two weeks of paid leave.

NHS staff in **England** who experience a miscarriage can now access up to 10 days additional paid leave⁵¹. **In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland**, when an Employee has a miscarriage before the 25th week of pregnancy usual sickness absence provisions can be used.

What to consider at each stage of your time out of training

As a starting point, here is a short list of key considerations when planning your return to work. We then go into more detail for what might be helpful before leave, during leave, and on your return.

Suggested minimum checklist for registrars and supervisors when planning returning to work:

1. Risk assessment for everyone who has been out of training for a prolonged period to assess any additional needs.
2. A pre meeting with supervisor to discuss additional support which may be required:
 - a. Any occupational health needs
 - b. Breastfeeding needs (if relevant), considering local policies and workplace spaces.
 - c. Any reasonable adjustments. More information can be found in [this best practice guide](#) from the Faculty of Public Health.
 - d. Work pattern and load, and ARCP planning
 - e. Additional supervision needs
 - f. Additional support available (consider local options such as mentoring or training)
 - g. Logistic arrangements - accessing systems etc
 - h. Hybrid and flexible working considerations. You may find [this FPH Hybrid Working Guide](#) helpful.
 - i. Consideration of 'what to do if you aren't getting the support you need'.

Consideration of what issues may arise on your return to work and how these can be mitigated.

Before your time out of training (if it is possible to plan)

- Meet with your ES/TPD to plan your leave in advance, ideally at least 3 months before taking time out of training.
- Discuss a plan for support you may need during your leave, such as Keeping in Touch (KIT) days, and when you think you might like to meet to during your time out of training.
- Discuss how you will be contactable (an email that doesn't change as you may lose access to your current placement), and for what reasons.
- Plan how your next ARCP will work.
- Understand relevant local processes, any necessary paperwork you need to complete and what support is available to you.
- Discuss pay considerations and policies.#

Before returning to work

- If you have been off for health-related reasons, ensure you have **discussed your return with your practitioner** to help identify any additional support you may require on your return.
- **Early meeting with your Educational Supervisor (ES) and/ or Training Programme Director (TPD)** depending on your region. This is your opportunity to lay out your plans to return to work, what your expectations and requirements are. Things you may wish to discuss include: reasonable adjustments, what placement will you be returning to, where will your base be, what are their expectations of you in the first few weeks, what your expectations are including whether Keeping in Touch days and phased return would be useful – a plan. Many find it helpful to stay in same placement on return, although this will depend on your circumstances (and local arrangements about health protection refreshers on your return).
Communication with team about return and any support requirements. ARCP / KA10 / Placement discussions

BMA questions you might want to consider for your meeting with your supervisor:

1. Are you confident about your skill levels?
2. Do you feel that any additional training or supervision would be beneficial?
3. Have there been any changes to service management and delivery such as new standard operating procedures, organisational changes, approaches to projects, NICE guidance or management of conditions?
4. Have new practices or equipment been implemented during your absence?
5. Will you require refresher training, or adaptations to the workplace, as a result?

- Complete a **risk assessment** if required, and consider HR meeting for additional support or requirements.
- **Occupational health:** make an early appointment with occupational health to discuss any reasonable adjustments required for your return to work.
- Ensure **logistics are in place** – IT user names, ID badges, payroll and that HR are aware of your return.

Transition time

- **Parental and adoption leave:** KIT days: You can take up to 10 KIT days during your leave. These can be used for normal working activities, conferences or training days. Your pay will be topped up for each KIT day to cover the difference between statutory maternity pay (if you are receiving it at that point) and your usual pay. While you are in a period of accrued annual leave, you can “shadow” for up to 10 days, then taking back the annual leave you used after you return. KIT days are voluntary – it is your choice to take them or not.
- All trainees can apply for **less than full time training** (LTFT) once in post. Each area has it's own process but fundamentally follow the principles of:
 - In Scotland health boards need a minimum of three months notice. In all regions it is sensible to give as much advance notice as possible to avoid issues with payroll.
 - Discuss with TPD or ES
 - Complete the application form(s)
 - Your request can be refused (although unlikely in public health) – if this occurs, discuss with your TPD.
- **Flexible working**^[1]: you can request a new pattern of working to accommodate your new situation. This may be condensed hours, or different start / finish times. You can make up to two requests a year. You find help making a request [here](#).
- **Phased return:** A phased return is when the number of hours worked over a set period is limited, where the intensity gradually increases over time, until you are back at your normal working pattern. This is different to using your annual leave to help you manage your return to work, for example taking a day a week for a period following return from parental leave. Phased returns can be discussed with your TPD, ES, OH departments. There is no obligation from the employer to agree to a phased return but evidence^[2] shows they benefit employee and employer. During this time you may wish to consider:
 - shadowing consultants to re-familiarise yourself with demands and workloads.

- o Altered duties; where your workload is reduced to accommodate your return at a reduced pace.
- **Occupational health (OH)** services can provide a good support for both physical and mental health needs on returning to work. On returning to work, OH can undertake an assessment to see what adjustments within the work environment may be required to accommodate you. Most OH services also offer counselling and psychological therapies for workers along with peer support programmes. They are likely to also offer access to online materials and apps that aid good mental health.

After returning to work

- **Increased supervision:** You may benefit from a period of increased supervision once you have returned to work. The recommended supervision time generally is 1 hour a week. This is likely to change depending on stage of training and project progression. You may wish to increase this during the first few weeks to months of returning to work, and this can be discussed with both your Educational and placement supervisors and your Training Programme Director where appropriate.
- **Buddying schemes and mentors:** Once you are back in post you may wish to connect with a named mentor or buddy that you can turn to for additional advice and support and who may help you with advocacy. This maybe a person who has experienced a similar absence from the work place and knows how to navigate particular challenges should they arise.
- **Coaching:** You may find a period of coaching valuable when returning to work. Access to coaching is variable across the different localities, so discuss with your ES/TPD if you think this may be valuable.
- **Counselling:** see occupational health section. In addition you may wish to access counselling external to the occupational health route. This can be done through your GP or through third sector organisations such as Practitioner Health^[1]
- **ARCP / KA10:** After you have returned to work, it is a good idea to think about ARCP early. Arrange to meet with your supervisor to discuss requirements, expectations and make a plan.

Where else can I find help?

Some areas have also developed their own, more specific toolkits, such as the following resource from the West Midlands.

[WM PH registrars - Returning to work](#)

Registrars in different regions may find it helpful to develop their own resource or add to this toolkit, to make it more specific to local support available.

Return to work and employment support

[SuppoRTT - digital and online resources | NHS England | Workforce, training and education](#)

[ACAS: advice for employees and employers in the UK](#)

[BMA: Returning to clinical practice after absence](#)

[Work - Citizens Advice](#)

[Consider contacting \(or joining\) your union. The BMA for Medics and Unite is recommended by Agenda for Change registrar reps for non-medics.](#)

Disability support

[Work and disability - Social care and support guide - NHS](#)

[Embedding the Workforce Disability Standard \(NHS Employers\)](#)

[Home | Disability charity Scope UK](#)

[WorkRights | Disability Law Service](#)

[BMA disability rights](#)

Carer's support

[Supporting staff with caring responsibilities \(NHS Employers\)](#)

[Carers UK](#)

[Support and benefits for carers - Social care and support guide - NHS](#)

[Help For Carers | Comprehensive Support from Carers Trust](#)

Family support

[BMA Parental rights](#)

[Time off work for parents | Acas](#)

[Returning to work and your rights as a working parent](#)

[Financial Support - First4Adoption](#)

[Time off and pay for adoptive parents - Know Your Rights booklet | TUC](#)

[Professionals - Adoption Support | Adoption England](#)

[Adoptive Parents - Support | Adoption England](#)

[National Adoption Service - Adoption in your business - Employer toolkit \(adoptcymru.com\)](#)

[Advice for Parents & Carers - Working Families](#)

[Employers - Working Families](#)

[Supporting Families Programme guidance 2022 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Home - Pregnant Then Screwed, Advice line: 0161 222 9879

[Pregnancy and parenting at work](#)

[Pregnancy and birth - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Breastfeeding and going back to work - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Protecting pregnant workers and new mothers - HSE](#)

[New and expectant mothers at work: Your health and safety](#)

[Your Rights - Pregnant Then Screwed](#)

[Check your maternity and parental rights - Citizens Advice](#)

[Home - Maternity Action](#)

[Migrant Women's Rights Service - Maternity Action](#)

[Breastfeeding at work \(rcm.org.uk\)](#)

[BMA Pregnancy Rights](#)

Pregnancy and Baby loss

[Microsoft Word - RCPCH Pregnancy Loss and fertility issues in the workplace policy](#)

[Miscarriage and the workplace](#)

[A miscarriage policy](#)

[Sands | Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.](#)

[Tommy's](#)

[Returning to work after baby loss](#)

Bereavement support

[Bereavement in the workplace](#)

[Supporting someone after a death - Time off work for bereavement - Acas](#)

[Grief in the workplace: Practical advice from a bereavement counsellor](#)

Mental health Support

[Where to get urgent help for mental health - NHS](#)

[Information and support \(Mind\)](#)

[Mental health in the workplace | NHS Employers](#)

[Work-related stress - NHS](#)

^[1] [Reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or health conditions - GOV.UK](#)

^[2] [Time off work | Advice guides | Royal College of Nursing](#)

^[3] [The Carer's Leave Act 2023 | Carers UK](#)

^[4] <https://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/employer/workplace-safety-law.htm>

^[5] [Microsoft Word - RCPCH Pregnancy Loss and fertility issues in the workplace policy](#)

^[6] [Tips for making a flexible working request - Pregnant Then Screwed](#)

^[7] Krause, N., Dasinger, L.K. & Neuhauser, F. Modified Work and Return to Work: A Review of the Literature. *J Occup Rehabil* 8, 113–139 (1998). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023015622987>

^[8] [Practitioner Health](#)

