

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HOW TO MANAGE COLLEAGUES WITH POST-COVID SYNDROME

Like any other long-term condition need to ensure follow basic principles:-

Occupational Health Guidance

- Ensure colleague has been referred to occupational health. Relevant questions must be asked on the referral, eg need to understand what the individual can/cannot do either temporarily or in the long term, is the individual likely or not likely to return to work in any capacity in the foreseeable future.
- Once aware, Occupational Health will automatically liaise with the Post-Covid Service and ensure they are aware of the individual and appropriate support is being provided.
- Occupational Health and Post-Covid Service will have regular contact
- Occupational Health will agree regular reviews with the individual and update manager/HR accordingly.

Possible Support

- **Rehabilitation (Prehab)** – This may be offered as a way of supporting the individual in ‘trying out’ a return to work. For example, this may include them coming into work for approximately an hour for a few weeks to do simple tasks.

This would need to be recommended by Occupational Health and the individual’s GP will need to indicate their support by stating on their ‘fit note’ their agreement for the individual to take part in a rehabilitation programme.

If this is recommended, the individual will still be shown as sickness absence on e-roster. Internal records of individual’s attendance will be agreed with the line manager.

- **Phased Return** – Again, this would be recommended by Occupational Health and an appropriate phased return will be agreed between all parties. A phased return will more than likely include changes to hours of work as well as duties. It is expected that the phased return will be longer than the normal four weeks and this may include a mixture of paid authorised leave (initial four weeks), annual leave or temporary reduction in hours.
- **Disability Leave Policy** – Colleagues may need to attend post-covid related medical appointments and it may not always be possible for these appointments to be outside their working hours and therefore taking disability leave will support them with this. Like other medical appointments, the individual should be encouraged to arrange appointments outside work hours where possible.
- **Redeployment** – May be explored as a way of supporting the individual in returning/remaining in work.
- **Reduced or Amended Duties** – Again this needs to be explored to enable the individual a possible return to work. The change in duties may be agreed on a temporary or permanent basis. If agreed temporary, these should be reviewed regularly with the aim of returning to normal duties.

Capability Procedure

- Continue to follow the capability procedure like any other long-term absence with the aim of supporting the individual to fully return to their substantive position and duties or, if need be, make reasonable adjustments or possibly seek redeployment.
- If it appears the individual may not be able to return in any capacity, with or without reasonable adjustments, a capability hearing will need to be arranged.

- Those colleagues who are members of the NHS Pension Scheme may be eligible to apply for Ill-Health Retirement. Occupational Health may advise this and the appropriate paperwork completed.
- At all times, medical advice should be sought.

Key Points to Remember

- At all times conversations must be compassionate and supportive
- Communication between all parties must be maintained; ie Colleague, Manager, HR, Occupational Health and Post-Covid Syndrome Service
- Pay situation is irrelevant for determining when to progress
- Must have up to date medical advice when determining next steps/outcomes
- Complete risk assessments and/or a WAP (Wellness Action Plan) as needed
- Any adjustments need to be reasonable in terms of the adjustment itself or timeframe
- Throughout both a rehabilitation programme and/or phased return, regular and reasonable progression would be expected.
- Must follow our normal capability procedure

Further Guidance

- <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/supporting-recovery-after-long-covid>
- <https://www.nhsemployers.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Sickness-management-FAQs-Jul-22.pdf>
- <https://www.nhsemployers.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Management-of-long-term-sickness-absence-july-2022.pdf>
- [C1672 Guidelines-for-supporting-our-NHS-people-affected-by-Long-COVID July-2022.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/media/1167211/c1672-guidelines-for-supporting-our-nhs-people-affected-by-long-covid-july-2022.pdf)