

COVID-19

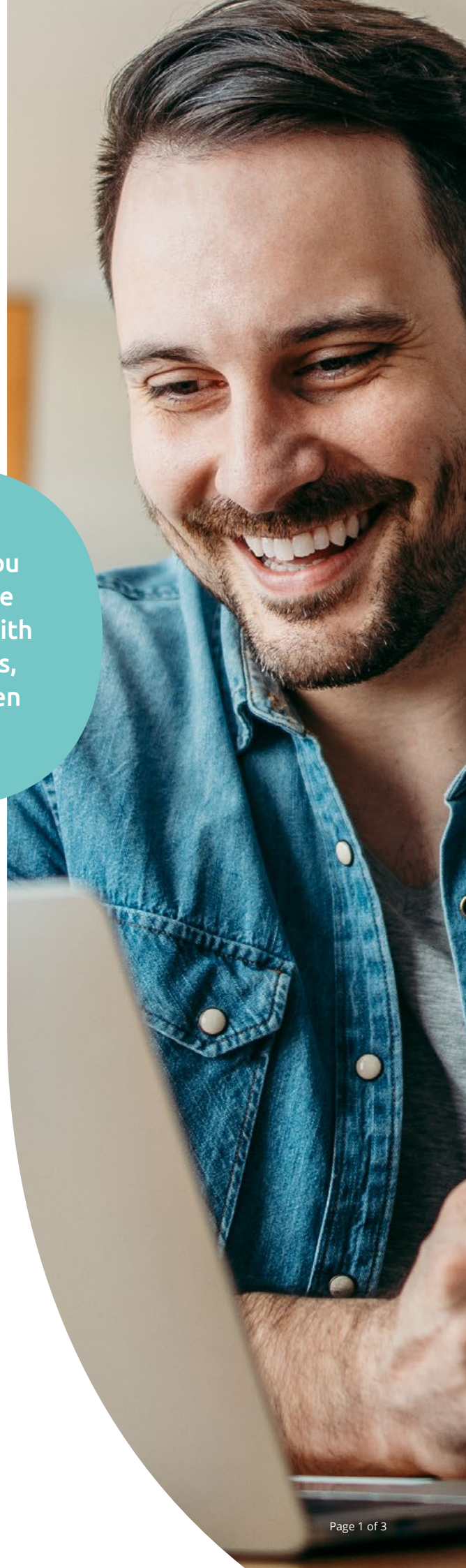
Returning to work



As the lockdown measures begin to be lifted, you will need to consider how you can best support employees making the transition back into work. You may be dealing with employees who have been furloughed for weeks, those who have been working from home or even a mixture of both.

Here's how you can help smooth your employees' path back to work.

- ✓ **Arrange a return to work meeting** in a neutral location or the workplace with your employees, and include HR and management where possible. Visiting the office or workplace for a meeting can help them reacquaint themselves with their commute and provide beneficial exposure to the working environment – while abiding by any social distancing measures or other necessary government requirements.
- ✓ **Incorporating travel and full working days can require an adjustment period.** Allowing your staff to gradually transition back into full-time hours and duties is likely to be a help – particularly for those people that have been furloughed.
- ✓ **Remember that some employees may need refresher training** on certain aspects of their role, particularly if a procedure was still new or the person hadn't been in their role for long when the lockdown began.
- ✓ **As workplaces reopen, allow time for colleagues to come together and re-establish their connection.** Give them time to talk about their experiences, their return and adjust to the new ways of working.



- ✓ **Schedule weekly team meetings** and encourage your teams to share their learning and re-address any goals they may have had before lockdown. Be creative about maintaining these interactions while being mindful of any social distancing requirements.
- ✓ **Set up 1-to-1 sessions** with people to gauge how they're feeling and how the transition can be made easier for them. Be conscious of any signs of stress and encourage them to raise any concerns.
- ✓ **Some people may still be working from home** if they are self-isolating, shielding or if employees are rotating their time in the workplace. Ensure they can still access meetings if they're unable to attend those that are face-to face and ensure you have more regular 1-to-1 contact with them.
- ✓ **Consider staff that have long-term physical or mental health conditions.** Take time to talk to them about how they managed their condition while they were away from work, any coping mechanisms they found beneficial and how these could be incorporated into work. If working from home was particularly useful, think about if a day or two of home working can be included as part of their usual role. Put a wellness action plan in place and schedule monthly wellbeing meetings.
- ✓ **Ensure all employees are aware of the support services and benefits** available to them to manage any mental health issues, stress, bereavement or financial concerns.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING



- ✓ Everyone's emotional response to the pandemic is different and every one of these responses is valid. If you notice an increase in anxiety or a drop in someone's mood, talk this through with someone you trust. Seek professional support if needed.
- ✓ Put boundaries in place as people return to work to ensure they maintain their work/life balance.
- ✓ On returning to work, consider how you can encourage people to maintain or embed beneficial habits or routines that began during the lockdown.
- ✓ Ensure people take regular breaks to maintain concentration and energy levels. The 'Be focused' app or a break placed and scheduled as an event – or 'snoozed' – on Outlook can be used as a reminder.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING



- ✓ Review ergonomics in the work environment to ensure the best possible workstation set-up.
- ✓ Exercise has become a valued part of each day for many people. Think about how this can be maintained once employees return to work.
- ✓ For those working in an office, take frequent breaks from a seated position. Use the 40:20 rule – 40 minutes sitting, 10 minutes standing plus 10 minutes moving and/or stretching (see resources).



RESOURCES



Transitioning back to work:

- ✓ **Unum's online stress emodules**, including risk factors and how to recognise signs of stress – <https://e-modules.unum.co.uk/stress-awareness>
- ✓ **Unum's online sickness absence emodules**, including how to have conversations about workplace issues and supporting an employee's return to work <https://www.unum.co.uk/workplace-wellbeing#interactive-modules>

Health and wellbeing

- ✓ **Help@hand** (for Unum's Group Income Protection customers only)
- ✓ **Unum Lifeworks Employee Assistance Programme:**

Tel: **0800 048 2702**
<https://unumuk.lifeworks.com/employee-assistance>
User ID: **unum**
Password: **lifeworks**

- ✓ **MIND** <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- ✓ **Every Mind Matters** <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- ✓ **Wellness action plan** <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/guide-to-waps-employees/>

Physical wellbeing

- ✓ **Ergonomic desk set-up** <http://onlinepositiveimagesuk.com/unum/images/UP3342.pdf>
- ✓ **Exercises for desk workers** <http://online.positiveimagesuk.com/unum/images/UP3341.pdf>

If you need help or would like more information, please call our Rehab helpline on **01306 646 001**

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