

# Return to Practice



## Risk assessments on you and your staff

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# Return to Practice – Risk assessments on you and your staff

When you are returning to work after a period of closure i.e. following the Covid-19 pandemic, there are many areas of the business for you to take into account.

One the most important is to ensure that, if you are a practice owner, you have undertaken a risk assessment on all staff (including yourself) to be sure that they are ready and able to return to work.

Risk Assessments are relatively straightforward and to get the best out the process you need an honest discussion with your staff, and yourself, about each member of your team and what's best for them. Here are some ideas as to what to ask and how to react – but it's not an exhaustive list.

## **Remember you have a duty of care towards your staff's well-being**

<p><b>Are you, or any of your staff, in a category that should be shielded or cocooning?</b></p>	<p>If so then that should continue until the member of staff has completed the shielding or cocooning period as per their government letter or equivalent.</p>
<p><b>How do you and your staff feel about returning?</b></p>	<p>It's natural that you or your staff may be anxious about returning to work. Some people will think that the restrictions are being lifted too soon and would rather stay away.</p> <p>Forcing your staff to return in these circumstances</p>

	<p>will not make for a good working environment.</p> <p>Consider giving them more time or let them return gradually – it may in any case take you time to build up the number of appointments you have.</p>
<p><b>Have you or any of your staff tested positive for Covid-19?</b></p>	<p>More research is needed to be sure that if you have had Covid-19 you therefore have immunity. But this should be considered as part of the return to work discussion.</p> <p>You should also consider that in severe cases members of your team may need additional time to recover or seek rehab and therefore you may wish them to obtain a GP fit note to confirm they are able to return to work.</p>
<p><b>Are you or a member of your team in a higher risk group?</b></p>	<p>As we know Covid-19 seems to affect people with underlying health conditions more severely. If you or a member of your team already have a condition that might make the symptoms worse a longer time away may be appropriate.</p> <p>There is also growing evidence that people from a Black or Ethnic Minority group may be more at risk from Covid-19. If you or your staff are concerned you may want them to change their duties to be less</p>

	<p>at risk. For example could they under take remote consultations for the practice.</p> <p>Remember that an employer has a legal responsibility not to put staff knowingly at risk and great care needs to be taken to avoid breaking health and safety legislation.</p>
<p><b>Do you or any of your staff have caring responsibilities?</b></p>	<p>During these uncertain times it may be harder for you or your staff to arrange care for family members who need it. Schools may not be fully open, support for disabled family members and older people may be unavailable.</p> <p>Have a discussion with your staff about their needs and be as flexible as possible to allow them to meet caring responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Can you or staff continue to work at home?</b></p>	<p>Current government advice is that if you CAN work at home then you should continue to do so.</p> <p>Obviously being in a clinical environment makes home working more difficult but consider each member of staff individually. For example can receptionists do their duties remotely?</p>

<p><b>What about the journey to work?</b></p>	<p>You may be able to introduce suitable social distancing at work and provide full PPE. But what about the journey to work? What's the current advice about using Public Transport? Are you or your staff at risk using public transport?</p> <p>Current advice is to walk or cycle to work but this may not always be practical.</p> <p>If travelling by car is the only option do you have the spaces available?</p> <p>You may wish to stagger working times to avoid busy times or find other locations for staff to work in. In some circumstances this may make it impossible for your staff to return until the risk reduces further.</p>
<p><b>What about if you or your staff return to work but then show symptoms or a member of their household does?</b></p>	<p>Current government guidelines insist that the individual must return to self-isolation. You might want to then consider who they have been in contact with and deep clean the practice.</p>
<p><b>What about when your staff take breaks?</b></p>	<p>Like with the question of public transport do consider if you and your staff have a safe rest area. Remember people will want to eat and drink and</p>



	<p>remove PPE during their breaks – is there a suitable place they can go and feel safe – ask them how they feel about the space.</p>
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