IGLOo: Sickness absence and sustainable return to work pilot study

Participant Information Sheet for Employee (Intervention Group)

Your employer is taking part in a return to work pilot study called **IGLOo: sickness absence and sustainable return to work** which is designed to support employees during their long-term sick leave and in their return to work following best practice.

You are invited to take part in this pilot study because you have been identified by your workplace as someone who has recently gone on sick leave.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Before you decide whether to take part, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Feel free to talk to others about the study before making a decision if you wish, including your GP or medical doctor and anyone at your workplace.

What is the purpose of study?
The purpose of the return to work pilot study is to provide employees on long-term sick leave (defined as being on day 15 or more of sick leave) with a newly developed toolkit that supports employees' wellbeing whilst on sick leave and when returning to work.

Many people go on long-term sick leave for lots of different reasons including back pain, poor mental health and conditions that might need treatment or recovery time. Sometimes, those on long-term sick leave might experience poor mental wellbeing even if that is not the reason for their sick leave. A number of studies show that employees who are supported and kept in regular contact whilst on long-term sick leave feel more positive about their wellbeing and their work. They are also more likely to feel ready to return to work and to return to work earlier than they expected. Further they are likely to have a more positive work experience once they are back at work.

Our return-to-work pilot study provides employees who are on sick leave with an online toolkit they can access from a website. The toolkit can also be made available in hard copies, please let the researchers know if you would prefer this. The toolkit provides new guidance and step-by-step support for you from initial sick leave through to returning to work. Your

manager or employer will be asked to use a similar online toolkit that provides them with step-by-step guidance in how to support you whilst on sick leave and when returning to

work. After returning to work, you will be provided with practical tools and videos on how to make work more comfortable for you.

Our research wants to see how practical it is for employees to use the online toolkits and to follow the steps. We also want to see whether the toolkits and practical tools are effective in the wellbeing of someone is on long-term sick leave and after they return to work.

Who is doing the study and why?
This study is being led by researchers at Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber (RDaSH) NHS Foundation Trust, in collaboration with researchers from Loughborough, Sheffield and Leicester Universities and Affinity Health at Work. It aims to support employers across Yorkshire and Humber to improve the future of workplace mental health and wellbeing.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to participate as we think you may be eligible to take part. You are eligible if you…….

- are aged 18 years or over.
- are currently on long-term sick leave (i.e. you are on day 15 or more of your sick leave)
- are on sick leave for any reason (except for the reasons outlined below)

You are not eligible if you are on sick leave….

- Because of a psychotic episode such as schizophrenia, or with substance abuse or dementia
- Whilst you are under formal investigation for misconduct or in the formal process of disciplinary action
- Because of being diagnosed with cancer and have been signed off for at least six months
- Because of having a neurological condition (e.g. multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's)

The study is designed to support people with common mental health conditions, so people with more complex needs (such as the above) would require referral to specialist services.

How long do I have to take part for?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to participate for 12 months whether or not you are still on sick leave or have returned to work. You may opt out at any time without having to provide us with a reason, and with no adverse consequences to yourself or your treatment if you choose to withdraw.

Do I have to take part?

No, you don't. You are under no obligation to take part in this study. If, after reading this information sheet and asking any additional questions, you do not feel comfortable taking part, you do not have to. Your line manager/colleague responsible for managing your return to work will also be invited to take part in this study. If your line manager/colleague responsible for managing your return to work decides to take part, you still do not have to.

What will happen if I choose not to take part?

Your employer understands that you have the right to refuse to participate in this study. You are under no pressure from your employer or the research team to participate if you do not want to. If you decide not to take part, it will not affect your employment status and you will still receive the usual support your organisation offers to their employees on long term sick leave. Your manager will not know if you are taking part in the study or not.

What will I be asked to do if I decide to take part?

If you would like to take part after reading this information sheet, please contact a member of the research team directly: a.sinclair@lboro.ac.uk or complete your contact details in the link here (or scan the QR code on the last page) so that a member of the research team can contact you. The research team will give you the opportunity to ask any questions you might have. If you agree to participate, the research team will send you a link to an online consent form to sign and an online questionnaire. A hard copy of the consent form and questionnaire can also be sent if you prefer.

The questionnaire takes about **15 minutes** to complete and includes a series of brief questions about your sick leave, your confidence and readiness in returning to work, your mental wellbeing, job satisfaction, day-to-day work activities, workplace communication, and quality of life. The questionnaire will also enquire about some basic information such as your age, ethnicity, education, type of job and what, if any, health services or treatment you are using for mental wellbeing reasons. It is worth noting that some of these questions may be sensitive to some individuals. We would like to remind you that the questionnaires are for research purposes only and will be pseudonymised using a unique participant ID.

Nobody outside of the direct research team will be able to identify you and no identifiable information will be shared with your employer.

After the team has received the signed consent form and baseline questionnaire, you will be set up with a personal user ID and sent a separate email or text with a link to the IGLOo toolkit.

The questionnaires will be repeated at 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after the initial assessment; you will be sent an email with an online link. Each questionnaire will take you about 15 minutes to complete. If you complete all five surveys, you will have the opportunity to be entered into a draw to win a £50 voucher. Your personal user ID will need to be entered into all follow-up questionnaires so that responses can be linked.

What will I get from participating in the return to work intervention?
After completing the initial questionnaire, you will receive an online link to the return to work toolkit. You can either download the whole toolkit onto your computer, download parts of it or use it online. The toolkit is split into six main steps and each step is supported by a 3 minute video:

- Step 1 will give you information and guidance to support your initial absence from work
- Step 2 provides you with the tools to manage your wellbeing while away from work
- Step 3 will give you information and guidance on preparing to return to work
- Step 4 provides you with guidance on how to manage the first few months being back at work
- Step 5 helps you prioritise keeping healthy and productive at work
- Step 6 outlines how you can make small changes at work for better wellbeing

Where you start in the toolkit will depend on your personal circumstances and how long you have been off work. There is guidance in the toolkit to help you decide. There is no set timeline for when to complete each step as it will depend on each individual and their health; some people will be ready to start thinking about returning to work before others.

In each step, you will learn practical skills which you might find helpful in managing your own sick leave and return to work. You will have the opportunity to develop your own action plans and discover how making small, realistic changes could help your health and wellbeing. For research purposes, we will use Google analytics to track how you use the toolkit. This information will not be available to anyone other than the research team.

Alongside the toolkit, you will have access to three telephone workplace coaching sessions offered by the research team. These sessions will last around 30 minutes each and will coach you in the use of the toolkit and either help you prepare to return to work, or if you have returned to work, help you adjust back to work. They will be arranged to take place approximately 1 month, 2 months and 3 months after you start to use the toolkit.

During your sick leave you will also be contacted monthly by someone independent from your organisation for a wellbeing check which will only take a few minutes of your time. You will also be able to contact them when needed either via text message or email. Please refer to the flow diagram at the end of this document for the different stages of involvement in the project.

If your line manager chooses to participate in the study, they will also get a toolkit with similar guidance and resources provided to you, as well as training on how to support you during your sick leave and return to work.

Your opinions on the return to work study matter

You will be invited to share your thoughts about the study soon after you have returned to work, and again at the end of the study (at 12 months). This will be an interview-style discussion and each discussion will last around 45 minutes. The interviews will ask you about your experiences of the study, the toolkit you were provided with and the coaching sessions. You will receive a £10 voucher for each interview you take part in.

The interviews will be audio recorded and the recordings will only be heard by the research team. Direct quotes may be used in scientific publications, presentations or posters, but will remain anonymous (i.e. no personal names or organisation names will be given).

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time and are free to withdraw your answers without giving a reason. If you have provided any data and would like to withdraw it from the study, you may do so at any point up to one week after the last time we collected data from you (i.e. online survey or interview). After then, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

How will I be made aware of the results of the study?

On completion of the full research study (March 2025), your organisation will receive a report summarising what we found from our study. Any data you provide will be anonymous and summarised together with data from other employees taking part in this study so that you

cannot be identified. A copy of the report will also be sent to you. The results will also be presented in appropriate scientific journals and conferences. You can obtain copies of these publications from the research team.

Information on Data Protection Privacy

RDaSH NHS Foundation Trust will be using information/data from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that the Trust is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

How will we use information about you?

We will need to use information from you for this research project. This information will include:

- Personal information - your age, gender, ethnicity, education, your average annual earnings, as well as information on medical diagnosis of any health conditions, prescribed medication use and other current therapeutic treatments for mental illness. This information will be used to gauge demographic differences among employees who take part in the study.
- The reason why you are on sick leave will be collected to enable the research team to assess whether you are eligible to participate in the study. This will also enable us to assess if any specific findings are common amongst individuals with similar characteristics.
- Contact details will be collected and used to keep contact with you throughout the duration of the study. Your phone number will be needed for the researcher to text you your personal ID, provide you with telephone coaching sessions calls and to send monthly texts to check whether you are still on sick leave. Your home address will also be needed if you would like a hard copy of the toolkit.

People will use this information to do the research or to check your records to make sure that the research is being done properly. People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. Your data will have a code number instead. We will keep all information about you safe and secure. Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that you took part in the study.

What are your choices about how your information is used?

- You can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason, but we will keep information about you that we already have.
- We need to manage your records in specific ways for the research to be reliable. This means that we won't be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you.
- If you agree to take part in this study, you will have the option to take part in future research using your data saved from this study in RDaSH NHS Trust's secure network drive.

Where can you find out more about how your information is used?

You can find out more about how we use your information

- at www.hra.nhs.uk/information-about-patients/
- in the HRA's Patient Data and Research leaflet: www.hra.nhs.uk/patientdataandresearch
- by visiting: https://www.rdash.nhs.uk/about-us/grounded-research/research-governance-gdpr/
- by asking one of the research team
- by sending an email to: rdash.groundedresearch@nhs.net
- by ringing us on 03000 212456
- by contacting our Data Protection Officer: https://www.rdash.nhs.uk/support-and-advice/information-governance/

How long will my personal data be retained?

We will keep identifiable personal information about you until the study has finished. This will be 31st March 2025. We will keep anonymised information about you for 10 years after the study has finished. This will be encrypted (password protected) and we will store sensitive research data in RDaSH NHS Trust's secure network drive that has restricted access only available to designated members of the research team.

What about interview data?

All devices used for recording the interviews will be encrypted. The interviews will be transcribed by Way with Words, an approved supplier for Loughborough University with a confidentiality agreement in place. The file names for the recordings will be anonymised by using the code for each participant (in place of their name) before they are shared with the transcription company. Written notes or recordings on devices will be destroyed/deleted after they have been uploaded onto the researcher's work computer and will be deleted altogether after the study ends on 31st March 2025.

I have some more questions; who should I contact?
You may contact the lead researcher:
Dr Fehmidah Munir, School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU. Email: f.munir@lboro.ac.uk

Who else is part of the research team?
Professor Karina Nielsen (University of Sheffield)
Professor Jeremy Dawson (University of Sheffield)
Dr Jaime Delgadillo (Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust)
Professor Umesh Kadam (University of Leicester)
Mrs Lizzie Degerdon (Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust)
Dr Victoria Laker (Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust)
Sarah Keeble (Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust)
Alice Sinclair (Loughborough University)

Who do I contact if I need support with my mental wellbeing?
If you need support with your mental health, you can contact:

- Mind charity- https://www.mind.org.uk/
  Mind provides immediate online support for those who are experiencing poor mental health.
- Find support through the NHS website: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/
- Speak to your GP or nurse about it.

Scan the QR code below to complete your contact details so a member of the research team can contact you.

IRAS ID 313499 - Sustainable return to work: A pilot cluster randomised controlled trial of a multicomponent workplace 'IGLOO' intervention compared with usual return-to-work support.
V6.1 20/09/22

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Flow diagram of participation