IGLOo: Sickness absence and sustainable return to work pilot study

Participant Information Sheet for Manager/Employer (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 managers and their employees during their long-term sick leave and in their return to work.

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. Talk to others about the study before making a decision if you wish.

What is the purpose of study?
The purpose of the return to work pilot study is to provide managers with a newly developed long-term sick leave and return to work management toolkit that is based on **best practice**.

Many people go on long-term sick leave for 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. Research shows that poor mental wellbeing is linked to longer lengths of sickness absence. However, a number of studies show that employees who experience regular contact with their manager and feel supported whilst on sick leave can feel positive about their work, are more likely to feel ready to return to work and to also return to work earlier than they expected. Furthermore, they are also likely to have a more positive work experience once they are back at work.

Our return to work pilot study provides those responsible for managing an employee (such as line managers) on long term sick leave (defined as being on day 15 or more of sick leave) an online toolkit they can access from a website. The online toolkit provides new and clear guidance and step-by-step information on how to support employees during their initial sick leave through to returning to work. The employee who is on sick leave will be asked to use a similar online toolkit that provides them with guidance in how to access support as well as how to support themselves whilst on sick leave and when returning to work.

Our research wants to see how practical it is for managers to use the online toolkit and to follow the steps. We also want to see how useful the toolkit is in supporting managers and their employees.

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 are invited to take part in the return to work pilot study because one of your employees is on day 15 or more of their sick leave and you have been identified by your workplace as someone who will be managing their sickness absence and return to work. Your employee will have received a similar information sheet and an invitation to participate in the study.

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 your employee is still on sick leave or has returned to work. You may opt out at any time.

Do I have to take part?

No, you don't. You are under no obligation to take part in this study, even if your employee is taking part. If, after reading this information sheet and asking any additional questions, you do not feel comfortable taking part, you 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 don't want to. If you decide not to take part, it will not affect your role in supporting your employee whilst they are on long-term sick leave.

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 return to the survey to complete the consent form, click this link or scan the QR code at the end of this sheet. Alternatively, if you would like to speak to a member of the research team about the research you can contact: a.sinclair@lboro.ac.uk. A hard copy of the consent form can also be sent if you prefer.

After consenting, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. A hard copy of the questionnaire can be sent to you if you prefer. This questionnaire will take no longer than **10 minutes** to complete and includes brief questions about your experience with mental health, managing sickness absence and return to work and some basic information such as your age, ethnicity, education, and job role. 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 consent form and questionnaire, you will be set up with a personal user ID and sent a separate email with a link to the online IGLOo toolkit.

The questionnaire will be repeated at 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after the initial assessment. It will ask you some brief questions around your return to work management of the employee on sick leave and should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. If you complete all five surveys, you will have the opportunity to be entered into a prize 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 a short 3 minute video on managing long-term sick leave and return to work. The video will provide guidance and tips on, for example, what to say to your employee when you contact them based on evidence for best practice.

You will also be given access 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 outlines the procedures to support your employee's initial absence from work
- Step 2 provides you with the tools to manage the employee on sick leave
- Step 3 outlines the actions to take when preparing for your employee to return to work
- Step 4 provides you with guidance on how to manage your employee's first few months being back at work
- Step 5 gives information and guidance on how to support your employee to stay healthy and productive at work

- Step 5 outlines how you can support your employee to make small changes at work to help them manage their work and health in the long term

In each step, you will be provided with practical checklists for recording the actions you've taken and a communication guide which you might find helpful in managing your employee's sick leave and return to work. You will have the opportunity to develop your own action plans and discover how making small changes could help support your employee's health and wellbeing. For research purposes, we will use Google analytics to track how you use the toolkit.

There is no set timeline for when to complete each step in the toolkit as it will depend on your employee and their health; some people will be ready to start thinking about returning to work before others. Please refer to the flow diagram at the end of this document for the different stages of involvement in the project.

Your opinions on the return to work study matter

You will be invited to share your thoughts about the study soon after your employee has 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 the study and the toolkit you were provided with. 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 taking part in the last data that we have collected 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, and education. This information will be used to gauge demographic differences among staff who take part in the study.
- Contact details will be collected and used to keep in contact with you throughout the duration of the study.

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.

Copyright

The copyright for any materials generated as part of this project will be held by RDaSH NHS Foundation Trust and Loughborough University.

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)

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

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)

Scan the QR code below to be taken to the online consent form and questionnaire.

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Flow diagram for participation