

Supporting Colleagues returning to the Workplace after Shielding

Remember that we have all had our individual challenges throughout the pandemic.
Some of our shielding colleagues may have had to manage:

- ✚ Being very frightened for the health of themselves or their family.
- ✚ Coping with little time out of the house.
- ✚ Feelings of guilt for not being physically in work with colleagues.

- ✚ Working at home whilst managing the needs of family members e.g. children and homeschooling / caring responsibilities.
- ✚ Missing the contact with colleagues, patients and team working.

Some ideas of how to help welcome colleagues back to the workplace:

What might be helpful



- Welcome them back. Let them know you are pleased to see them.
- Ask colleagues about their experiences of shielding and feelings about being back at work.
- Remember that most colleagues have been working hard at home where they can and have been missing being at work.
- Remember that coming back to the workplace into a hospital after shielding at home for 4 months will require a huge adjustment.
- **Do adhere to PPE and Social Distancing rules – your colleague is at increased risk from COVID-19.**
- Think about whether there are ways to ‘ease’ your colleagues back into work. e.g. could they start with tasks that require less people contact?
- **Talk with colleagues about what might help them to feel comfortable in the work setting.**
- Acknowledge that any anxiety they have is warranted due to their increased physical risk.

What might not help



- ‘Jokes’ about having been on holiday / ‘on a jolly’.
- Expecting colleagues to be able to just ‘slot back in’ – unless this is what they want.
- **Don’t ask colleagues about their reasons for shielding, unless they want to talk about it.**
- Don’t suggest that colleagues go to busy public spaces to get used to people – they are still being advised to take every possible precaution. Shielding is due to real physical risk, not anxiety.
- **Not following PPE / social distancing guidelines.**

For national guidance on coronavirus visit
<https://www.staffgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/guidance/>

If you feel your colleague may need some extra support, visit
<https://nhsforthvalley.com/covid/staff-information/staff-support-and-wellbeing/>
or www.promis.scot