



## Returning to work

### **brainstrust information sheet**

Know Hows are published by *brainstrust* to help people living with a brain tumour to understand current topics. They are produced with input from relevant scientific and clinical experts and are written in a way that should help you to understand often complicated topics.

If you have an idea for a Know How, then please let us know.

If you have any queries, don't forget you can talk to one of our support specialists on **01983 292 405** or email **hello@brainstrust.org.uk**.

### **Why do we need this Know How?**

Following a brain tumour diagnosis, whether you are a patient or caregiver, you may be considering a return to work. This may be an existing job or a new one.

Returning to work can be a big step in recovery. It can bring a sense of normality, stability, routine and social contact. But we also know that returning to work can be very daunting. This is due to a variety of reasons:

1. You aren't sure what people will know about your condition
2. You are worried you aren't up to the job.
3. You are worried you won't be able to control your emotions.
4. You feel like a change in job.
5. You may still be suffering from side effects.

### **Evidence**

In 2018 a Macmillan survey showed that 85% of people living with cancer who were employed at the time of diagnosis felt it was important for them to continue work after being diagnosed

with cancer. Responses included those who answered 'very important' (68%) and 'fairly important' (17%).

Source: [www.macmillan.org.uk/\\_images/working-through-cancer\\_tcm9-341781.pdf](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/_images/working-through-cancer_tcm9-341781.pdf).

### **What are my rights?**

In England, Scotland and Wales, anyone who has been identified as having a disability is protected by the Equality Act 2010. In Northern Ireland, you are protected by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term affect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. A cancer diagnosis means you are automatically protected by the Act.

You can find out more about the Equality Act 2010 here: [www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/the-equality-act-2010-and-un-convention](http://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/the-equality-act-2010-and-un-convention).

## What does this mean?

This means that your employer must make any reasonable adjustments needed to allow you to return to work. For example, they might allow you to change your working hours or use your sick leave allowance for hospital appointments.

You can find more information about 'reasonable adjustments' here: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work/taking-action/asking-your-employer-for-changes-to-help-if-youre-disabled/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/discrimination-at-work/taking-action/asking-your-employer-for-changes-to-help-if-youre-disabled/).

## What can I do to prepare to return to work?

- Speak to your employer about keeping in touch days and attending meetings or training sessions when appropriate. Agree the days ahead of time with your manager.
- Plan your return by choosing a suitable start date and discussing the hours that you will work with your manager. Ask if you can gradually build up your hours once you feel able to.
- Ask for your return to be communicated to your colleagues in advance so that people aren't surprised when you walk through the door.
- Give people guidance about what to say, if anything, about your diagnosis. This helps your work colleagues and means that you can 'own' the conversation.

## What can I do when I start back at work?

- Schedule in time to get a handover from the person that has been covering your role and arrange to meet with your manager as well as your co-workers.
- Rather than setting yourself the task of reading every email that has been sent in your absence, focus on asking your manager about anything important that you should know and reading the most recent communications.

- Your priorities at work may have changed since being away. Set a meeting with your manager after a couple of weeks to set and agree new goals.
- It's OK to ask for help. Use your first period back at work to do so. People will understand and often be happy to support you.
- Expect setbacks and don't be hard on yourself.

## What are the practicalities I should think about?

- If you are a caregiver, have a plan in place about what to do for emergency cover. If possible, arrange for someone else to provide this in the first period to ease your transition back.
- Organise things at home to simplify chores- for example, having help where possible, buying easy means and having realistic expectations of yourself (e.g. not needing to have the house look perfect).
- Take your time. Try to take a gradual approach to returning to work and make sure you factor in time to look after yourself.

## Ask yourself

- What specifically are you struggling with?
- What would help you to prepare?
- How could you make it easier?
- Who's in your team?
- What's your skill set?
- What's changed for you?
- What are your next steps?

## Contact

Talk to *brainstrust*. We can help. You can call, write, type, text. Email for help and support:

**hello@brainstrust.org.uk.**

Telephone: **01983 292 405.**

## Other helpful links

[www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/work-and-cancer](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/work-and-cancer).

[www.maggies.org/cancer-support/managing-practically/work-and-cancer/](http://www.maggies.org/cancer-support/managing-practically/work-and-cancer/).

[www.workingwithcancer.co.uk/](http://www.workingwithcancer.co.uk/).

## Sources:

Office for Disability Issues (2011) Equality Act 2010 Guidance. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/570382/Equality\\_Act\\_2010-disability\\_definition.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf). [Accessed April 2022].

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