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Mediation Can Assist Worker Reintegration Following Long-Term Illness by Francis Portisford

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Returning to work following long-term sick leave can be a daunting experience. Not only do you have to quickly re-familiarise yourself with day-to-day tasks and company procedures but there is also the matter of workplace relationships to rebuild. There is a possibility that colleagues who have had responsibility for your workload during your absence could greet you with resentment. Companies specialising in mediation at work techniques offer services that both you and your employer can utilise in order to make your reintegration into the workplace as smooth as possible.

Large organisations that feature a Human Resources (HR) department often have policies and procedures in place to assist employees returning from sick leave but if they are not properly implemented, there is a danger that workers returning to full-time employment after a long illness could feel isolated and overwhelmed by taking on their full workload without support and guidance. It is important to raise any issues you have with your line manager or a member of HR.

Small or medium-sized enterprises (SME) may not have set procedures for returning workers. This does not mean you are not entitled to the same support as those employed by large corporations. If your employer does not have set policies for these circumstances, it is advisable to research both yours and their legal and professional obligations. If time constraints mean this is not possible, contact a workplace mediation consultant. They are available to offer their expertise and guidance either over the telephone or in person, if necessary.

If your return to work is part of your recuperation, you should ensure that you arrange a meeting with your employer to discuss, in confidence, any measures they need to implement in order to facilitate your recovery. This can include (but is not exclusive to) adjustment of working hours, modification of your working environment or allocating tasks to your colleagues.

While it is important that your colleagues accept your return professionally, it is not uncommon for long-term sickness in teams can have a detrimental effect on morale. Acknowledging the work done by others in your absence is an effective way to quell any resentment colleagues may be expressing, even unconsciously. Should this approach be unsuccessful, mediation consultants can advise you, your colleagues and your employer on ways in which to resolve any potential dispute that could arise. It is important not to attempt to resolve any problems through unofficial channels, as this could exacerbate the situation.

Returning to work following long-term sick leave can be a daunting prospect. By ensuring your employer has mediation and conflict management procedures in place, you can help ensure your reintegration into the working environment during this transitional period is smooth, and will help you avoid conflict with colleagues who resent having to take responsibility for your workload during your absence.

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Mediation at Work specialise in restoring healthy working relationships. They offer a range of services including a independent conflict resolution as well as advice and guidance on workplace mediation techniques and a conflict resolution training.

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