

Case Study 2

Material stores worker (manual work)



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The 63-year-old male employee was diagnosed with colon cancer and was absent from work for eight months. He had surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Following treatment, the employee suffered from fatigue, reduced energy and numbness in his fingers and toes.

Return-to-work process

When the employee was diagnosed, the occupational health team called to offer support, including mental health support. Contact was maintained periodically, mostly by phone calls by HR and occupational health teams. Retired and current employees visited him at home and stayed in touch by text. The employee visited the workplace briefly on a couple of occasions to see the occupational health team and his line manager.

One week prior to returning to work there was a multi-disciplinary team meeting, including the employee, occupational health nurse, line manager and HR team. The meeting covered the employee's treatment, how he was feeling in relation to tiredness, job tasks and his physical strength with respect to these tasks and lifting. The line manager focused on what the employee wanted and could do and how work tasks could be accommodated where necessary.

A plan for return to work was put in

place, which included a phased return with reduced hours, with the employee initially working mornings only. A break room and office were available to the employee so he could take breaks from his machine-based work.

No formal risk assessment was carried out. However, aspects of risk assessment were considered, including the following:

- the occupational health team monitored the employee's blood pressure and how he was coping physically during the RTW process.
- the line manager kept an eye on the employee within the workplace to ensure he didn't do too much too soon.
- the employee could take breaks when he chose to and was encouraged to do so by his line manager.
- the employee has experienced numb fingers and toes since cancer treatment which is monitored by the occupational health team. A chair was provided in the work area to allow the employee to rest his feet from standing.
- the employee's suitability for his previous job role was assessed. As a result, temporary changes were