



MOORE THAN ARTHRITIS | PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Return-to-Work Planning Toolkit

Create a phased, safe and sustainable return plan.



WORKPLACE INCLUSION Practical, respectful and evidence-informed guidance for sustainable work.

Supporting People | Raising Awareness | Building Community | Living Beyond the Diagnosis

Stronger together. Beyond limits.

General workplace information - not individual medical or legal advice | Version 1.0 | August 2026



Return-to-Work Planning Toolkit

Create a phased, safe and sustainable return plan.

KEY MESSAGE Record hours, duties, workload, location, pay, support, review points and what happens if the plan needs to change.

Current function Use relevant health and work information.	Initial pattern Set realistic hours and location.	Duties Prioritise work and remove unsuitable backlog.
Support Confirm equipment, access and check-ins.	Pay and leave Record temporary arrangements.	Review and exit Define progress, extension and ongoing adjustments.

Scope This resource offers general workplace information. It cannot determine whether a person is legally disabled or what is reasonable in a specific case.



RECOGNISE THE BARRIERS

What can make workplace inclusion harder

Look beyond diagnosis labels to the interaction between the person, the role, the environment and workplace systems.

Calendar-only plan Hours are reduced but workload is not.	Ambiguous duties The employee does not know what to prioritise.	Unclear pay Expectation and policy differ.
No contingency A difficult day is treated as failure.	No owner Nobody can approve changes.	Hard stop The phase ends before sustainability is assessed.

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS Individual experience, role demands and effective support vary.



Actions that may reduce disadvantage

Use a person-centred discussion and competent advice where needed. Adjustments should be effective, proportionate and reviewable.

Build week by week State hours, duties and location.	Limit backlog Agree what is deferred or reassigned.	Confirm contact Set check-in frequency and person.
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Use success indicators Track safe function and recovery.	Plan variation Define who changes the plan and how.	Agree ongoing support Record adjustments beyond the phase.
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Confidentiality Agree what information may be shared, with whom and for what practical purpose. Health information requires particular protection.



From first conversation to review

A consistent process improves trust, accountability and the chance that support works in practice.

1. Hold the pre-return meeting
2. Complete the initial plan
3. Confirm practical and pay arrangements
4. Start with agreed limits
5. Review each stage
6. Close or convert to ongoing adjustments

Questions for the conversation

- What work outcome matters most?
- Which task, practice or environment creates the barrier?
- What has helped or made things harder before?
- Which options should be tried or assessed?
- Who will act, by when, and when will we review?

Keep it practical Record the decision, reason, action owner, target date, confidentiality agreement and review point.



Use this page to prepare or record action

Complete only the fields that are relevant. Keep personal health information secure and share it only through appropriate routes.

1. Week/stage dates:

2. Hours and location:

3. Priority duties:

4. Deferred/reassigned duties:

5. Pay, support and contacts:

6. Review outcome/next stage:

Action record Decision: _____ Owner: _____ Target date: _____

Review date: _____ Measure of success: _____



Use the right route for the issue

Workplace inclusion can involve equality law, employment rights, health and safety, data protection, HR policy and medical care. One conversation may not resolve every part.

Important Do not use a phased return to postpone consideration of ongoing reasonable adjustments or to expose someone to unmanaged workplace risk.

Appropriate next steps may include

- Review the adjustment or work plan with the employee and manager
- Use HR, occupational health, health and safety or Access to Work where appropriate
- Seek medical advice for new, severe or worsening health symptoms
- Use a union, Acas, Citizens Advice or independent legal advice for employment concerns
- Call 999 for a life-threatening emergency or use NHS 111 for urgent medical help that is not an emergency

Jurisdiction Equality Act 2010 information in this resource applies to England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland has separate disability-discrimination legislation and support routes.



Trusted workplace information

Use current primary guidance and obtain professional advice for the facts of an individual case.

- [1] **Acas - Phased returns.** Planning and reviewing a phased return. [Open source](#)
- [2] **GOV.UK - Fit note guidance for employers.** Using fit-note advice in work discussions. [Open source](#)
- [3] **Acas - Disability-related absence.** Managing absence and return fairly. [Open source](#)
- [4] **GOV.UK - Reasonable adjustments.** Duties and practical examples for disabled workers. [Open source](#)
- [5] **Acas - Occupational health assessments.** Consent, confidentiality and assessment. [Open source](#)
- [6] **HSE - Employers duties and adjustments.** Workplace safety and disability adjustments. [Open source](#)

Evidence checked: 21 August 2026. Review sooner if UK employment, equality, health or data-protection guidance changes.

Related Moore Than Arthritis workplace resources

- Talking to Your Employer About Arthritis
- Reasonable Adjustments in Practice
- Managing Pain, Fatigue and Flare-Ups at Work
- Line Manager Support Toolkit
- Workplace Accessibility Self-Assessment Toolkit

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Disclaimer This resource provides general educational information and is not medical, occupational-health, employment or legal advice. Moore Than Arthritis does not determine disability status, employment rights or the reasonableness of an adjustment. Obtain advice from an appropriately qualified professional about individual circumstances.

Stronger together. Beyond limits.