



## Personnel Security Guidance to support Line Managers in return to workplace discussions

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This guidance supports [CPNI's Ease of Lockdown Guidance](#) which advises organisations on the need for effective communications in order to support the welfare of staff, embed security messages and thereby limit the potential for work force disaffection that can lead to counterproductive behaviour in the workplace.

Line Managers have a key part to play in ensuring that lines of communication between the organisation and the workforce are open. CPNI recommends that Line Managers have a structured process for holding a 'return to the workplace' conversation with staff that will support the organisation's personnel security regime.

Research undertaken in early 2020 by Professor Rosalind Searle at the University of Glasgow <sup>1</sup>concludes that periods of crisis such as the ongoing COVID19 pandemic could put a strain on the trust that exists between employer and employee.

During a crisis an employee may feel:

- more vulnerable,
- a sense of uncertainty about the future,
- isolated from the organisation.

This combination of emotions and feelings may lead to an employee questioning how supportive the organisation has been during this period, with the potential to diminish any trust they may have in their management/employers; resulting in a growing sense of disaffection. CPNI research<sup>2</sup> has clearly identified that disaffection is a common theme running through cases of employees engaging in counter-productive behaviour or insider activity.

To mitigate this, employers/management should give employees:

- a clear indication of the direction the organisation is taking - moving away from an unstable position to one of safety and consistency;
- an opportunity to express their feelings and emotions;
- the chance to contribute in how any change in the organisation is being delivered e.g. through staff consultation.

As organisations look to bring staff back into the workplace one of the key areas to help with this transition is a "return to workplace" conversation. Organisations should provide line managers with advice and guidance on conducting a return to the workplace conversation. This should include:

- Why a return to work conversation is important;

- What line managers should cover in that conversation;
- How to ensure that security messages are delivered clearly.

Organisations may wish to consider a 'Back To Work Pack' for all staff. This pack containing messages and resource\* from Senior Management, HR, Wellbeing and Security should provide consistent and un-biased information to support line managers in their discussions with their team members. **CPNI strongly recommends organisation's clearly communicate to the workforce any changes to HR Policies as a result of COVID-19.**

*\* Examples of resources included in the 'Back to Work Pack' may include;*

- *COVID-19 specific Health & Safety Workplace Information;*
- *Wellbeing/Occupational Health detail and contact information;*
- *HR related Information (including pay/appraisal/leave);*
- *Messages to remind staff to report changes in personal circumstances;*
- *Organisational Reporting Mechanisms e.g. wallet cards;*
- *Staff 'motivators' e.g. free refreshments voucher.*

Below is an example of the type of communication that line managers could receive to support them in their return to work discussions with team members:

#### **Comms from Organisation's HR Department to Line Managers/Supervisors**

"As we slowly emerge out of lockdown Organisation XX have been busy working hard to ensure that as you and your staff return to the workplace, we have all the measures outlined by Public Health England in place to safeguard everybody's health and wellbeing.

As a line manager/supervisor you play a key role in welcoming back your team members to the workplace. Holding a return to work conversation provides an opportunity for you to understand each of your team member's COVID-19 experiences, assess their needs and support their transition back into the workplace. This guidance document will help support you through the process"

**Note** - *It's imperative that the information an organisation communicates to its workforce is grounded on truth and only reflects what safety and security measures have been implemented within your organisation.*

## Practical advice for Line Managers/Supervisors when holding a return to work conversation with their team members.

### Key Points

- This two-way conversation should be treated as a 'Welcome Back' for your team member and not an interrogation;
- It provides you with a great opportunity to update your team member on key organisational information they need to be aware of, so they can remain safe and secure in the workplace;
- Listen to the information your team member is sharing with you and demonstrate empathy. Don't be invasive or judgemental;
- Be aware of unconscious bias\*;
- Be ready to offer and signpost to the support available to your team member;
- Whilst you want to support your team member back into the workplace it's important not to over promise. Being evasive or dishonest rather than being clear and transparent about what realistically can be achieved to support their transition to the workplace (even if this may be less than what your team member wants to see) is vital to maintain organisational trust;
- Ensure you take a standardised approach with all your team members when conducting return to work conversations to ensure fair and equal treatment;
- This is a formal conversation but conducted in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere and a summary of what was discussed should be formally recorded;
- You should follow your organisation's HR policies, processes and reporting mechanisms (details at the bottom of the guidance) should you have concerns about a member of your team which you feel need to be escalated which may have an impact on the safety and security of Organisation XX

#### \*Unconscious Bias

Unconscious Bias are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply engrained within our beliefs, universal, and have the ability to affect our behaviour. While this unconscious bias may seem innocent, problems can arise when unconscious biases make their way into workplaces. Some examples of biases that could affect workplaces are noted below.

**Affinity bias** - the tendency to 'warm up' to people who are like yourself

**Halo effect** - the tendency to think that everything about a person is good simply because you like them

**Perception bias** - the tendency to believe one thing about a group of people based on stereotypes and assumptions, making it impossible to be objective about individuals

**Confirmation bias** - the tendency to seek to confirm your pre-existing ideas and assumptions about a group of people

**Group think** - the tendency to try too hard to fit into an existing culture, mimicking others and holding back thoughts or opinions, resulting in the loss of identity and lost creativity and innovation.

## STAGE 1 PLANNING

- Know the return date for each of your team members;
- Once you are aware of this date, schedule a return to work conversation with every team member;
- To ensure staff are not alarmed, explain the purpose of the meeting (to support all team members in their reintroduction into the workplace).
- Identify (and book) a suitable area to hold the return to work conversation;
- Prepare the approach you plan to take when for the return to work discussion.
- If necessary, seek advice from HR on organisational policies and procedures that might apply in exceptional circumstances

## STAGE 2 HOLDING THE RETURN TO WORK

- Your team members are highly likely to be feeling anxious about returning to the workplace, so welcome them back!
- Most importantly, ask how they are;
- This is your opportunity to understand about their COVID-19 experiences (fact finding). Ask open questions – get your team members talking! (*See Annex A for examples of good/bad questioning*)
- Actively listen to the information your team member is sharing with you, don't interrupt them and provide verbal encouragement;
- Be prepared to offer support – this may include reassuring messaging relating to implementation of COVID-19 workplace changes to safeguard their health, signposting them to your organisation's wellbeing team or temporarily making adjustments to their duties to support them in their transition back to work whilst ensuring security at your site is not compromised.
- Be prepared to handle difficult conversations with staff returning to the workplace (*see Annex C*);
- It's recommended you make notes to ensure you don't forget any important points (let your team member know what you are doing and make sure they know that the information they are sharing with you will be handled appropriately). For example you may want to log information relating to – signs (verbal and non-verbal) of feeling very anxious about returning to the workplace, bereavement, relationship difficulties, financial challenges, indicators of organisational disaffection, significant changes to their appearance or any other strong views expressed during the conversation (ref Annex D – 'It's okay to say').
- The conversation is a great opportunity for you to inform your team member about key organisational information they need to be aware of so they can remain safe and secure in the workplace. You should also use this time to reinforce security messages – such as your organisational reporting procedures. Reminding all staff that 'It's Okay to Say' and they too have a responsibility to look after their colleagues who all have had different experiences of COVID-19 and therefore may need additional support is vital. (*See Annex B for examples*).
- Before concluding the discussion, provide your team member with the opportunity to raise anything that may not have been covered during the conversation.
- To conclude, summarise action points (referrals or workplace alterations), if required schedule a follow up conversation and lastly, thank them for their time

## STAGE 3 FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

- Ensure you securely store the notes made from your return to work conversation.
- Following the conversation think about whether there is any significant information which should be shared confidentially with your HR and Security Team. For example, a member of staff showing strong organisation disaffection, financial issues or who may be showing clear signs of anxiety.
- Agreed actions to support your team members should be followed through.
- Set up a follow up conversation date with your team member to check on their progress as part of their transition back into the workplace.

## Annex A

### Good Conversation Openers

"Hi *name*. It's good to have you back"

"Great to see you back in the workplace again *name*"

"Good Afternoon *name*. Come and sit down. You will see I've set the chairs slightly apart to ensure we adhere to the current social distancing guidelines for our wellbeing"

#### Good Examples of Conversation / Questions

The past few months have certainly been a challenging time one way or another for us all. Tell me about your COVID-19 experiences....

It's a long time since we were last in the workplace. Tell me how you feel about returning to work

Which particular aspect concerns you about returning to work?

How do you feel about a reorientation process to bring you back up to speed and support getting you back to your security duties?

Tell me how I can help you settle back into the workplace?

You will see that we've introduced a lot of measures to ensure we safeguard everyone's health and wellbeing whilst in the workplace. For example, we have hand sanitisers at each of the access control points to allow you to access the area safely whilst ensuring the area remains secure

This is a good opportunity for you to raise any concerns or questions you may have as we start to get back to normal operations. Is there anything else that we haven't covered today that you would like to raise confidentially with me?"

#### Poor Examples of Conversation / Questions

So, you've been off work for the past three months what were you doing all that time?

Whilst on furlough were you engaging in criminal activity of any kind?

During your absence, have you jeopardised the safety and security of our operations in any way that management need to be made aware of?

It's been a long time since you conducted your security duties. Do you need any refresher training, so you don't go making any silly mistakes?

Did you need anything to get you straight back up to the productivity rates you left on a few months ago?

I've covered everything I had to go through with you and we are just on our time. Assuming there isn't anything else you can get ready for your shift now. Ok?

I'm sure you are familiar with the social distancing measures we have implemented across the site, so I take it you're comfortable with all these measures now & I don't need to run through the obvious changes with you?

## Annex B

Examples of measures an Organisation may have implemented that the Team Leader / Supervisor can deliver during the return to work discussion to reassure and inform the worker that they are returning to a safe and secure environment. It's also a perfect opportunity to reinforce your reporting mechanisms by encouraging your workforce to speak up if they see something that isn't right.

### Examples of COVID-19 Workplace Actions



<p><b>If it doesn't feel right we'd like to know about it.</b></p> <p><small>Please contact the security control room if you see someone or something suspicious.</small></p> <p><b>Together, we've got it covered.</b></p>	<p><b>Trust your instincts. We do.</b></p> <p><small>If something doesn't seem right, we'd like to know about it. Let security know if you notice anyone.</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loitering in or around restricted areas</li> <li>• taking an interest in CCTV cameras</li> <li>• closely watching staff movements</li> <li>• appearing highly agitated or nervous.</li> </ul> <p><small>We can all do our bit to help keep this area safe.</small></p> <p><b>Together, we've got it covered.</b></p>

## It's OK to say

**If you think you've seen something unusual or unexpected, say something to:**

**Trust your instincts.**

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## Annex C

### Handling challenging return to work conversations

Line Managers should be prepared to handle robust challenge by their team members who have concerns regarding their return to the workplace. There are likely to be a number of scenarios that organisations should anticipate and be ready to support Line Managers in their discussions with team members. For example:

- Personnel with additional or unexpected caring responsibilities;
- Personnel that may feel they should be safeguarding for health reasons;
- Personnel who feel disadvantaged by a phased return of the workforce, for example some returning before others;
- Personnel who feel unsafe using public transport/travel to get to the workplace;
- Personnel who may feel the workplace won't be a safe environment;
- Personnel who have become disaffected with their employer;
- Personnel who have simply enjoyed a non-working lifestyle and want to avoid returning.

Some general tips/advice to support line managers during difficult conversations;

- Firstly remember - You are not a HR specialist. The HR Resource material in your Organisation's 'Return to Work' Pack is likely to help you understand what the policies/processes for different scenarios are. Try to familiarise yourself with these policies so you can consistently present the organisation's policies.
- Reassure your team member by talking through the COVID-19 precautions that have been implemented across the organisation to help keep them safe. If, due to the nature of your business, social distancing is not possible, ensure you communicate what alternative precautions are in place (such as PPE, working in smaller groups) to your team member.
- Inform your team member about the mechanisms in place to challenge and report poor behaviours – whether this be related to COVID-19 safety measures not being adhered to or observing poor security behaviours.
- Promote your Organisation's resources to support people's health and well-being generally, including those through an employee assistance programme.
- For personnel who may be concerned about using public transport consider whether adjustments to the workers start/finish time would avoid the busiest times on public transport;
- Whilst there may be sensitive discussion points your team member raises regarding changes to workers terms and conditions, and you may wish to empathise with your team member, it's important not to verbally convey your personal feelings which could mis-lead them or contradict organisational policies.
- Don't over-promise something that cannot be implemented.
- There may be occasions during the conversation where the message you have delivered needs to be repeated. For example, information on reassuring your team member about the COVID-19 Health & safety precautions in place.
- Remind your team member that they are key to the success of the business and not having them back will impact on the businesses' ability to survive.

- If your team member refuses to return to work/perform duties this should be escalated to HR to lead and manage the situation.
- If there are medical reasons why the worker needs to shield and therefore is unable to return to work, follow your Organisation's processes. This may be requesting visibility of a letter they will have received from their GP or referral to your own Occ Health adviser.

There may be instances when a challenging situation between Line Manager and team member which cannot be resolved. In these cases, the meeting should be paused, the Line Manager should write up details of the discussion and seek guidance from HR colleagues on how to proceed.



## Annex D

### 'It's okay to Say'

Every organisation will have mechanisms in place to encourage reporting – whether it be a Health & Safety or security concern that workers may observe.

During a return to work conversation with your team you may pick up on concerns relating to a team member which your instinct is telling you doesn't feel right. This behaviour could be a sign of welfare and wellbeing issues or it could indicate something more concerning, such as a security threat or insider activity.

Noticing unusual or unexpected behaviour and recognising that it may represent some cause for concern unfortunately does not necessarily lead itself to staff reporting.

As a line manager you have a **duty of care** to support your team member by intervening.

Ensure you take personal responsibility by following your organisation's reporting processes. Consider which of your organisation's reporting mechanisms is the most appropriate to use for the situation.

It's important to remember that there is no definitive list of concerning behaviours that you should look out for amongst your team members – **We urge you to trust your instincts**. If something doesn't feel right it probably isn't.

## **Additional CPNI Resources**

Ease of Lockdown Guidance

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/c0/98/Ease%20of%20Lockdown%20Guidance%20FINAL-2.pdf>

Preserving Organisational Trust during disruption such as a pandemic

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/1b/30/Organisation%20Trust%20factsheet%20v.3-pdf.pdf>

CPNI's Line Managers Campaign

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/line-managers-campaign>

Security Behaviour Change Campaign – It's Okay to Say

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/its-ok-to-say-education-programme>

Employee Vigilance

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/employee-vigilance>

COVID-19 Workplace Actions

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/covid-19-workplace-actions-0>

## **Non CPNI Resources**

Working Safely during Coronavirus

<https://www.acas.org.uk/working-safely-coronavirus/returning-to-the-workplace>

CIPD Return to Work Guidance

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/news-articles/people-first-return-work>

## **Links**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/1b/30/Organisation%20Trust%20factsheet%20v.3-pdf.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/13/31/Guidance%20to%20Insider%20Threat%20during%20a%20Pandemic-PW.pdf>

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