

# Rehabilitation support for employees

## Carol's story



**Our in-house team of fully qualified rehabilitation experts are always on hand to support employees as they return to work.**

Here's the story of one employee who we helped to resume her full-time role following a stroke.

In the interests of anonymity, all names have been changed.

Carol, a 61-year-old project manager, had been absent from work for six months following a stroke, when she contacted her employer to let them know that she had a fit note from her GP that said she could return to work with amended duties. Carol's HR manager called us to ask our rehabilitation team to support Carol's planned return.

Our rehabilitation consultant got in contact with Carol to find out more about her situation and to see how we could help. Carol explained that she had some financial concerns because her company sick pay was expiring, and she was therefore intending to return to work full-time immediately. However, she had agreed with her employer that she would work from home initially to avoid her usual commute by public transport, as the stroke had left her with some mobility difficulties.

We discussed the benefits of a phased return to work but Carol didn't believe this would be an option for her financially. However, she asked whether any financial support was available under the terms of the policy for a phased return to work.

After detailed discussions between our case manager, Carol and her employer, we recommended a plan that would increase Carol's working hours week on week. A phased return which could be supported by her employer was designed with Carol, which was a relief to Carol as she was continuing to experience fatigue and reduced mobility.

When Carol started back at work we called her each week to make sure she was receiving the support she needed, to see how she was doing, and to talk about any concerns she had. We also emailed updates to Carol's employer and kept in contact with them throughout Carol's Return To Work, to ensure that they were managing Carol's workload as we had agreed and to offer any support the employer needed.

After a seven-week phased return, Carol was carrying out her full role and hours working from home. Carol's employer continued to support her progress and regularly reviewed the duration they could support Carol to work from home, but for everyone the main aim was to help Carol get her life back to normal.

## Helping you to support employees who have had a stroke

When an employee returns to work following a stroke, they may continue to experience a number of functional restrictions, which may improve and fully resolve or may require consideration for long-term adjustments.

Restrictions may be physical, cognitive or a combination of both. By openly communicating with your employee about any workplace adjustments they may require, you can consider what the business is able to reasonably accommodate.

If your employee has new physical limitations, we recommend carrying out an updated risk assessment and review of the evacuation plan. 'Access to work' may be able to help if the commute to work is now a concern or if specialist equipment is required – your employee will need to self-refer for an 'Access to work' assessment.

### Other points to consider are:



Is **working from home** an option?



Can you **allocate onsite parking**?



Would a **specific office location or floor** be more accessible?

You may also need to adjust the role itself. For example, if your employee has speech difficulties following their stroke, how much of the role requires verbal communication? Can this communication be managed in a different way? Does your employee feel more confident with verbal communication if this is face-to-face rather than by telephone?

On returning to work, your employee may find specific elements of their role to be more cognitively challenging or stressful than they had previously; setting aside time for regular communication between your employee and their manager will encourage discussion relating to progress and challenges, and provide an opportunity for open feedback.

Where possible you should put in place an action plan for any identified concerns, which may include completing a stress risk assessment.

If there are concerns regarding your employee's ability to undertake their role, an Occupational Health assessment can comment on fitness for work and advise on specific adjustments that may benefit your employee, as well as providing support to both you and your employee.

Driving Mobility, a charity supported by the Department of Transport, has assessment centres nationwide and can offer advice and information on driving and vehicle modifications.

**If you have a Zurich Group Income Protection policy, please give your dedicated claims case manager a call. They work closely with our rehabilitation services team and have immediate access to our specialists. Working with you and your employee, they will help to determine the best course of action and help with planning and supporting your employee back to work.**

## Useful resources

Here are some links to other useful sources of information on supporting employees who have suffered a stroke.

[www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

[www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

[www.drivingmobility.org.uk/](http://www.drivingmobility.org.uk/)

[www.hse.gov.uk/disability/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/disability/index.htm)

[www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/downloads.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/downloads.htm)

[www.stroke.org.uk/resources/complete-guide-work-and-stroke](http://www.stroke.org.uk/resources/complete-guide-work-and-stroke)

[www.stroke.org.uk/what-is-stroke/what-can-i-do-to-reduce-my-risk](http://www.stroke.org.uk/what-is-stroke/what-can-i-do-to-reduce-my-risk)

