



**Down's Syndrome
Association**

A Registered Charity No. 1061474

WorkFit support during COVID-19 pandemic



Return to work toolkit for employers



A Down's Syndrome Association publication

May 2020

We hope that you are all safe and well. We know that you will all be working incredibly hard, doing all you can to support your employees, colleagues and customers at this very difficult time.

We are grateful that some of you have been in touch to say that you will be asking your colleague who has Down's syndrome to return as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. We fully appreciate that this may not be for a while.

Similarly, some of our candidates have contacted us to say that they would like to go back to work once their workplace is open again.

We thought that this would be a good time, therefore, to provide some guidance, resources and links for you and them that we hope will be useful.

The safety of employees who have Down's syndrome and all their work colleagues is our priority.

We are keen that no-one returns to work unless **all** parties feel that suitable measures are in place and that the new procedures can be followed correctly.



Employees toolkit

We have created a toolkit for employees and their parents/carers and we have encouraged them to think about the following considerations:

- relevant information about their health/ advice from their medical team if appropriate
- understanding of hand hygiene, social distancing and protective equipment
- ability to avoid using public transport
- their understanding of the situation
- their mental health and wishes about returning to work etc.

We envisage that you will be able to supply information (when it is available) in relation to:

- measures and new procedures put in place in the workplace to keep employees safe
- level of support from buddies to ensure that the employee who has Down's syndrome can follow the guidelines (hand-washing, social distancing, any protective equipment and any other protocols he/she needs to follow)

With that information families, candidates and employers can assess the risk of attending work. Many families have concerns about mental health and well-being of their sons and daughters being affected if they are not able to attend work for some considerable time but of course the overall safety of everyone is the priority.

Planning

To help with your consideration of the situation we have provided some information and resources that may be useful.

The government has published guidance about the current phase of managing the pandemic and it includes some details on how to support people to get back to work.

It's called [Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#) and the current guidelines about attending the workplace state that 'all workers who cannot work from home should travel to work if their workplace is open'.

For candidates who work in Hospitality and some Catering roles this is unlikely to be possible for a while. The planned re-opening of retail outlets means that candidates in those areas can hopefully look forward to returning to work in the near future, as can those in other sectors when possible.

Some of our candidates are key workers or they are able to do some work from home so it's important that every employee is considered on an individual basis.

Annex B of the [Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#) outlines the different levels of vulnerability of our candidates. All people who have Down's syndrome are considered to be 'vulnerable' due to having a learning disability, however they may not be considered 'clinically vulnerable' (in that they may not have

any underlying health conditions) and so may be able to follow the guidelines issued for other employees who are returning to work.

Employees [who are shielding in line with public health guidance](#) (or need to stay home with someone who is shielding) can be furloughed if they are unable to work from home. The government have confirmed that shielding employees can be placed on furlough even if the employer has work for them to do.

[Industry specific guidance](#) about how to implement safety measures in your workplace have been made available.

Some employers are considering a gradual return for their employees who have Down's syndrome when they feel that the time is right and they have appropriate procedures in place.

Initially they may suggest that their employee who has Down's syndrome does one shift a week (possibly of a slightly shorter duration). This will allow them to see how they are able to adjust to the new procedures that have been introduced in the workplace.

Some employers are also planning to invite candidates into the workplace before they actually re-open in order to deliver some training about personal protective equipment (PPE), hygiene protocols etc. This will reassure the candidates and give them time for them to feel comfortable with the procedures before they have to deal with customer interactions.

For example, if the candidate works on a reception desk and the reception area has been re-configured to manage visitor flow and screens have been fitted to the desk it would be very helpful, if possible, to give the employee who has Down's syndrome some time to come in and see the new arrangements and get used to them before they actually return to work.

CIPD have also produced a [Return to Work Guide](#) and [General Workplace Safety Risk Assessment-\(example\)](#). As guidelines are frequently updated/amended please apply updated information when reviewing this content.

At WorkFit we will be happy to advise you about the category of vulnerability that your employee who has Down's syndrome is in and also talk through your particular situation if that would be helpful.'

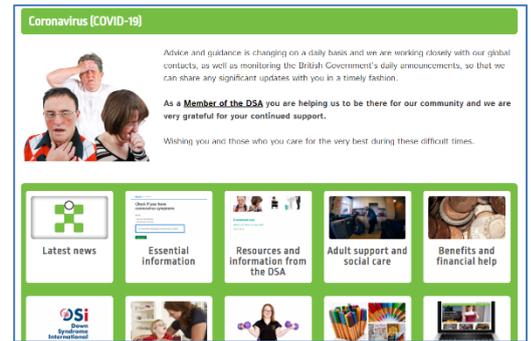
Please contact us by email at dsworkfit@downs-syndrome.org.uk. For anything urgent call our Employment Development Manager, Alison Thwaite, on 07973 612720.

Useful links

- [Our own coronavirus information hub.](#)
- [Easy read posters for your workplace.](#)
- [An accessible, free download from Books Beyond Words for your employee who has Down's syndrome that can be used to explain how to keep yourself and others safe.](#)
- [Free webinar resources for people who are new to working remotely.](#)

Advice for businesses

- [Information about Government support for business.](#)
- [Business financial support finder tool.](#)
- [Government advice for employers and businesses.](#)
- [Financial support for businesses.](#)
- [Financial support for education, early years and children's social care.](#)
- [Financial support for charities.](#)
- [Advice on claiming wage costs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(Furloughed workers\).](#)
- [Government advice for apprenticeship providers.](#)



The Down's Syndrome Association provides information and support on all aspects of living with Down's syndrome.

We also work to champion the rights of people with Down's syndrome, by campaigning for change and challenging discrimination.

A wide range of Down's Syndrome Association publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website.

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