



**BLUE LIGHT
TOGETHER**



**Returning to work
after leave toolkit**

Why is this toolkit important?



There are a whole host of reasons as to why a Blue Light worker or volunteer may need to take a leave of absence. It could be due to mental health, the loss of a loved one, the result of an injury, to have a baby, for a sabbatical, or for further training. Whatever the reason is, navigating the transition back to work after leave can be challenging.

Whether your returning to the frontline or facing the office again, the process requires planning, support and understanding. In this toolkit, we'll explore some strategies, tips and steps to help you navigate your return to work with resilience and confidence.





Understand the challenges

Blue Light roles bring unique challenges which can make the transition back to work more difficult. For example, you may experience higher stress levels or be exposed to traumatic incidents which could take an emotional toll on you. Being away from your usual responsibilities may also have caused you to lack confidence, worry, or feel isolated.

By recognising the potential challenges and acknowledging how you feel, you can plan ahead and prepare yourself, to reduce the sense of overwhelm.

Communicate openly with line manager beforehand



Communicating openly and honestly with your line manager before returning to work will not only help to familiarise yourself with what you have missed, but it also provides you with the opportunity to discuss any worries and concerns you have. You may also be able to discuss a plan of flexibility for your return to work, such as reduced hours or longer breaks.





Understand the challenges

Start by acknowledging how you feel and recognising the unique challenges that Blue Light roles bring. For example, you may experience higher stress levels or be exposed to traumatic incidents which could take an emotional toll on you. Being away from your usual responsibilities may also have caused you to lack confidence, worry, or feel isolated. Planning ahead and being prepared will help to reduce the sense of overwhelm.

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Accessing support

You are not alone. Needing to take time away from work is a normal aspect of life that so many people experience.

Try to connect with those that you know have been through similar transitions, or access some peer support networks for some empathy, encouragement and practical advice

If it's been a while since you spoke with your colleagues or team, reach out and see if they'd like to grab a coffee or catch up before you head back to work.





Manage Expectations

You may be hoping to return to work as though you were never away and for it to go right back to how it was before. But be realistic with what may have changed at work, and that you may have changed. You may find it tiring or struggle to perform a pre-leave level. Your colleagues may need to adjust to having you back too. Try not to strive for perfectionism and give yourself credit for any progress, no matter how small.

Small steps



It's normal to feel slightly overwhelmed, but don't rush yourself into anything that you don't feel ready for. Remember to put your mental health first by taking time for yourself, ensuring a work-life balance, and recognising the signs within yourself when it may be time to seek further support.

