

# *Early Support at Work – Checklist for Managers*

## **Purpose**

- Support work ability early
- Prevent long-term sick leaves
- Address issues respectfully and lawfully

**Tip!** This checklist can also be used in other long absences, where applicable, to support the employee's return to work (e.g., long parental leaves and childcare leaves).

## **1. Identify Early Warning Signs**

Regularly monitor **work-related changes**, such as:

- Repeated, short sick leaves (>14 days during a 6-month period) or long sick leave (>30 days)
- Declining performance, focus, or quality of work
- Changes in behaviour, cooperation, or motivation
- Signs of overload, stress, or difficulty coping with work
- Reduced teaching/research output
- Signs of overload related to teaching peaks, research pressure, or project work
- Repeated absence after weekends, intoxication or hangover at work

**Act early** – do not wait for the problem to escalate. It is the manager's obligation to intervene.

- Open, informal discussions, e.g., one-to-one discussions regularly and also after shorter absences might help to detect early warning signs and react proactively
- Psychological safety – ensure an atmosphere where employees feel safe to share their thoughts and concerns

## 2. Prepare for the Early Intervention Discussion

Before the discussion:

- Identify **concrete work-related observations**
- Book a **confidential, calm setting**
- Allow **enough time** for discussion
- Review Hanken's early support model

## 3. Conduct the Early Intervention Discussion

During the discussion:

- Explain why the discussion is held (concrete examples, observed changes at work)
- Be present, listen carefully to the employee's perspective, do not interrupt
- Take notes
- Discuss **work-related factors**, such as:
  - workload and tasks
  - work arrangements
  - skills and training needs
  - ergonomics and tools
  - work community or leadership factors

Focus on **work-related issues**, i.e., things that can be addressed in the workplace. The employee chooses what he or she wants to share about his/her medical condition or private life, do not pry. Avoid assumptions, every situation is unique. For support, contact HR with a low threshold.

## 4. Agree on Concrete Support Actions

Together with the employee:

- Identify **practical, work-related measures**
- Agree what will be done, by whom, and by when

- Document agreed actions in Mepco (*Early intervention discussion* -form, started and filled in by the manager)

### **Examples of measures:**

- Adjusted tasks, temporary workload changes
- Adjustments in working hours, flexible working hours
- Remote work
- Ergonomic improvements
- Training or skills support

**Contact HR** in advance if you plan changes in working hours, work tasks or remote work that will affect also the rest of the team.

## **5. Monitor and Follow-up**

- Agree on a **follow-up date**
- Review whether the actions are helping
- Adjust measures if needed

## **6. Involve Occupational Health Care When Needed**

Contact occupational health care through HR if:

- Work adjustments are not sufficient
- Health-related limitations affect work
- Absences are prolonged or recurring

If problems are severe, complicated or related to health a **tripartite negotiation (trepartssamtal)** can be arranged with:

- Employee
- Manager
- Occupational health professional
- HR

## **7. Support Return to Work**

After longer sick leaves:

- If the employee is on a long absence, remember to be in contact regularly
- Plan return to work with employee, HR and occupational health care
- Use partial work or modified duties if recommended
- Monitor and support ongoing work ability
- Check also “*Long-term absence due to illness – Support Material for Managers*”

### **Manager Reminder**

- ✓ It is the manager’s obligation to intervene, be proactive. Invite to informal discussions with low threshold.
- ✓ Be respectful and confidential
- ✓ Focus on work, not health details or private life issues
- ✓ Involve HR and occupational health care if needed
- ✓ Follow Hanken’s early support model and other support material