



Supporting Lisa back to work

Employee's story:

A painful joint condition flare up meant that Lisa* was left unable to walk and had to stay home from work. Fit for Work helped her to fully understand her recovery process and speak to her employer about making workplace adjustments so that she could return to work successfully.



Name: Lisa

Age: 56

Job role: Production Administrator

Lisa*, a 56-year-old Production Administrator at a trailer manufacturing plant in South Yorkshire, found herself unable to work due to a painful pre-existing joint condition. She has osteoarthritis in her knees, which was flaring up, causing a lot of stiffness and pain. The flare-up was exacerbated by an injury to her right knee, which left her unable to walk. "The production plant where I work is very big – we have over 500 employees and the plant itself is enormous. When I found myself unable to walk, it meant that there was no way I could carry on working, which was obviously really stressful."

Lisa was referred to Fit for Work via her GP. "I originally went to A&E because the pain was so bad, but they just told me I needed to rest up. I had been off work for two weeks because of my illness so I went to my GP. He told me that he didn't think I would be capable of going back to work yet. I was worried but he suggested that I speak to Fit for Work as he knew I would be in safe hands with them."

Lisa's assessment was completed the same day as her referral from her GP. "The people at Fit for Work were really friendly, and they fully understood my condition and the problems it was causing me. I was really stressed out about missing work, but I was also worried that if I forced myself back to the plant too quickly it could make my arthritis worse."

"The Fit for Work case manager was very realistic and sensible – she told me that my recovery would be a long process and wouldn't happen overnight. I could tell she understood the rehabilitation process properly, which gave me great peace of mind."

Fit for Work helped Lisa to create a Return to Work Plan, which was then shared with her employer. "My manager was really supportive, and agreed to complete ergonomic and risk assessments in our workplace, which was a suggestion made in my Return to Work Plan. The plan helped to guide me through the process of getting

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GP's story:
Dr Mohammad Sohail Khan, Lisa's* GP, knew that Fit for Work would be a great support to help her on her way back to work.

"Lisa* was in a lot of pain due to the flare up of her osteoarthritis, but she was very keen to get back to work, which you don't always see in patients who are long-term sick. I thought she would be a good case for Fit for Work because they could liaise with both Lisa and her employer and work out the barriers stopping her from getting back to work."

Dr Khan filled out the referral form online and Lisa was then contacted by someone from Fit for Work.

Employer story:
Andy Picker, Operations Manager at Lisa's* firm, spoke to Fit for Work to ensure that Lisa would be safe at work once she returned.

"After Lisa* had spoken to Fit for Work, they contacted me directly and we had a discussion about the best way to help her come back to work. We're a big company so we have lots of protocols in place for things like this, but having a health professional from Fit for Work speak to me about Lisa's specific situation was really helpful.

"Because of her condition, Lisa uses a stick to get around now. Fit for Work suggested

"Seeing as Lisa is now back at work, the service has worked exactly as it should. A lot of the time, when patients have been off work for a significant period of time, they don't want to return to work or they have some anxiety about returning. They often worry about how their employers will treat them when they do eventually go back to work. I knew that Fit for Work would be working directly with Lisa's employer, as well as Lisa herself, so I felt confident that she would be supported properly."

Dr Khan has recommended the service to other GPs at his practice. "I've told my colleagues about the service and will be referring patients in the future. The fact that Fit for Work works directly with patients and their employers means that everyone – the patient, the employer, and me, the GP – is saved time; and the care the patient receives is more joined-up."

that we do a risk assessment of things like our fire evacuation policy, and re-evaluate so that we knew she would be safe if anything like a fire did happen. The service was great – as a company, we really care about our team members, but I've dealt with a lot of companies in the past who don't have the same level of care as we do. I can see Fit for Work being extra helpful for companies like that because it helps to bridge that gap.

"Lisa is definitely really happy to be back at work – she's a very keen and passionate member of our team. She actually wanted to come back full-time straight away, but on the advice of Fit for Work I suggested that she work shorter shifts, so we're trying that first. If that goes well, we'll review it and see if she can come back full-time. The most important thing is to make sure she is doing okay and rehabilitate her back to work slowly."



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*name has been changed

Further information including guidance and FAQs for patients on Fit for Work is also available at gov.uk



England and Wales
www.fitforwork.org

Scotland
www.fitforworkscotland.scot

England and Wales
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