

Keeping in touch during absence

Employers and employees should agree on how to stay in touch during absence and how much contact is reasonable.

There are some types of absence where keeping in touch is not usually needed. For example, if an employee is on holiday. However, the employee might still ask their employer to update them about certain things while they're off.

There are other types of absence where an employee might want regular contact. For example, to know what's going on at work while they're on maternity leave.

When talking about keeping in touch, the employer and employee should agree:

- how often the contact should be – this will depend on the employee's individual circumstances
- how to contact each other, for example by email, phone or face-to-face meetings
- who the employee will be in contact with – this might be their line manager, another manager or an HR manager

Keeping in contact is a good chance to check on the employee's wellbeing and see if they need any support.

Depending on the circumstances, any meetings might be called 'welfare meetings'.

If someone's off because of a mental health problem

An employer should keep in regular contact with an employee who is off sick because of a mental health problem. Employees often benefit from keeping in touch.

However, employers should make sure their employee agrees to the contact and that it's not overwhelming.

Keeping employees updated while they're off work

Employers should update employees who are off work for any reason about:

- promotion or other job opportunities
- redundancies
- reorganisations that could affect their job

By law, an employer must tell employees about those things if they're off work because of:

- maternity leave or anything related to pregnancy
- adoption leave
- ordinary or shared parental leave
- paternity leave
- parental bereavement leave
- time off for dependants
- jury service

- study leave or time off for training

An employer could be discriminating against an employee if they're off work and miss something important.

For example, an employee is off sick due to a disability and misses an opportunity to apply for a promotion. This could be disability discrimination.

[Find out more about discrimination at work](#)

Get more advice and support

Find more advice on:

- [keeping in touch during maternity leave](#)
- [when an employee is on shared parental leave](#)
- [supporting an employee after a death](#)