

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was conducted because the crucial role of the line manager in the return to work process has received little evidence based research attention to date. This research has significant and interesting findings that impact on how employers will be expected to manage the change from 'sick note' to 'fit note' (and the Fit For Work/ Working Healthy Services in Scotland). The research findings are summarised below. The implications of the research findings for line managers, for organisations and for policy makers are summarised on pages 35-37 of the main report. The behaviour based Competency Framework for Managers to Support Return to Work is reproduced on page 22 of the full report. Guidance is available in a separate short document (Manager support for return to work following long term sickness absence: Guidance) available on the BOHRF and CIPD websites

Line managers are important in the return to work process for a number of reasons:

- Line managers are often the first contact point when the employee is unwell and does not attend work;
- Line managers are responsible for the day-to-day management of the employee on their return;
- Line managers are the key to work adjustments and implementation of work redesign initiatives;
- Line managers may be the first person called upon by the employee when they need to meet HR/OH to discuss returning to work;
- The introduction of the 'Fit Note' places a greater responsibility on the line manager to support an early return to work.

The objectives of this study were:

1. Identify the specific competencies required by line managers to encourage and support the return to work of employees following a period of long term sickness absence due to stress, anxiety and depression, back pain, heart disease or cancer
2. Build a model of the competencies required by line managers to support an effective return to work
3. Test the validity of the Competency Framework for Managers to Support Return to Work, and through doing so, develop a Competency Measure for Managers to Support Return to Work
4. Develop practical guidance and tools for employers, Occupational Health/Human Resource professionals and line managers that specify the competencies required for effective rehabilitation