

Better when you are present every day

Good work environment
promotes health

This guide is designed to help and motivate our member companies in their efforts to ensure inclusion and prevent absence. It can be useful for both employers and employees.

The main theme of the guide is absence due to illness. It contains practical advice based on the current regulations for the sick absence tracking. The guide focuses on prevention and follow up.

You notice when someone from the team is missing

The workplace is the most important arena for preventing and following up sick leaves, regardless of the employee being fully or just partly on a sick leave.

It is the individual worker's well-being, health and welfare that create the foundation for a good and productive working environment. Facilitating for the individual and making necessary adjustments at work contributes to that.

It is of great value to have a workplace one can attend, colleagues to meet with and regularity in one's everyday life. Together, we are able to create an including working life.

Skills do not grow on trees

Skills and experience are important for a company. When someone is away, his skills must be replaced. It takes time and effort to train new associates. Someone present, although on formal sick leave, represents a local "specialist" that may contribute more than somebody with a more general expertise may be able to.



Everybody is welcome - even if someone is sick

It is important that employees feel that they can come to the workplace, even if they cannot contribute 100%. Maybe one will get well sooner by being around good colleagues in an active environment.

Dialogue - immediately

If you feel unwell or exhausted, or you need to stay home for any other reason – contact your manager and explain the situation.

Presence is better than absence

It's important to make adjustments, so the employee can stay at work or get back as soon as possible.

During long-term absence, keep in touch

Invite the employee on sick leave to come for lunch or a cup of coffee.

Engage employee representatives

When needed, talk to your employee representative.

**Dialogue
- immediately**

**During long-term absence,
keep in touch**

**Engage employee
representatives**

**Presence is better
than absence**

**It is important
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even if they cannot
contribute 100%**

Company and union representatives' roles

Management and union representatives have defined roles. They have the responsibility for preventive work.

Absences in a company must be treated with focus on the individual needs of the employee. The union representative represents the interests of the employees. The employer is responsible for sick leave follow-up. We would like to encourage all (management, safety delegates, union representatives and colleagues at the workplace) to participate in this important work.

Competences among safety delegates, union representative and managers are essential

Safety delegates, union representatives and managers may need training to be able to deal with absences due to illness. It is important to deliver this training jointly to all parties for example when teaching how to perform “the important conversation”.

Routines during absence

Roles and tasks	Before absence prevention	Self-certification – 1-3 days 1-8 days IA company	Medical certificate – (1) 4-16 days Employer period	Medical certificate – Before 4 weeks Follow-up plan
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperates with union representatives and safety delegate – Prepares emergency plan for sick leave specific form – Workload augmentation for other employees – Intoxicants AKAN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify the time frame – Can the employee get back to work within short time period? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep in touch with the absent employee – Schedule time for meeting – A letter to the doctor - job description – Need for a substitute? – Relevant adaptations at the workplace or working from home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep in touch with absent employee – Prepare a follow-up plan that will be to sick leave certificate – Are there any tasks sick employee do?
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are feeling ill or exhausted, talk to your leader, explain the situation. – Are there adaptations available on how your job can be done? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform the employer as soon as possible – If you cannot go to work - talk about it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can a pending sick-leave be considered? – Clarify if partial sick leave is an option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about your work capability and the absence – Participate in the preparation of follow-up plan
Union representative and safety delegate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive message – Support the employer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider if you should contact the employee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call the employee – We hope we will see you soon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We hope we will see you soon
Colleagues	Care	Care	Care	Care
Documentation		Self-certification form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical sick leave certificate – Letter to the doctor with job description 	Follow-up plan

	<p>Medical certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Before 7 weeks <p>Dialogue meeting 1</p> <p>Follow-up plan</p>	<p>Medical certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Before 9 weeks <p>Update Follow-up plan</p>	<p>Medical certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Before 26 weeks <p>Dialogue meeting 2</p> <p>Follow-up plan</p>	<p>Medical certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Before 1 year <p>Dialogue meeting 3</p> <p>Follow-up plan</p>
<p>with the</p> <p>ee</p> <p>w-up</p> <p>e sent</p> <p>ertifier</p> <p>asks the</p> <p>could</p>	<p>Conversation about the absence, “the important conversation”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The follow-up plan is being updated and should be sent to the sick leave certifier – Company health service and sick leave certifier participate in the meeting 	<p>Make an assessment of the employees work capability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Send an updated follow-up plan to NAV 	<p>Send an updated follow-up plan to NAV a week before dialogue meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participate in the dialogue meeting arranged by NAV 	<p>Consider if the third dialogue meeting is needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Update follow-up plan
<p>r</p> <p>y</p> <p>ce</p> <p>he</p> <p>the</p>	<p>Dialogue about development and expected length of the absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extended medical certificate for absences longer than 8 weeks 		<p>Participate in the dialogue meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contribute to finding solutions that enables you to get quickly back to work 	<p>Consider if the third dialogue meeting is needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Remember that sickness benefit is paid for 52 weeks
<p>ill see</p>	<p>Participate in the dialogue meeting</p>	<p>Participate in the preparation of the follow-up plan</p>	<p>Participate in the dialogue meeting</p>	<p>Contact the absent employee</p>
	<p>Care</p>	<p>Care</p>	<p>Care</p>	<p>Care</p>
	<p>Updated follow-up</p>	<p>Updated follow-up</p>	<p>Updated follow-up</p>	



Talk about absenteeism: “The important conversation”

An open dialogue between employer and employee may prevent or shorten the duration of sick leave. It is compulsory to discuss follow-up plans before 4 and 7 weeks of absence.

Who must participate in this conversation?

- The employee on sick leave
- The manager

Who may participate in this conversation?

- HR
- Union representative/ Safety delegate
- Company Health Service
- Sick leave certifier/ GP
- NAV Contact person



**Both parties should
prepare for this
important talk. Listen
to each other.**

Topics to be highlighted and discussed

1. Well-being at work

- What works well?
- Are there any issues?
- Tasks, working time, cooperation

2. Have any measures or actions been implemented already?

- What kind of measures?
- What worked well and what didn't?

3. Are there any areas that should and can be changed?

- Tasks, work content
- Organization of work, working time and tempo
- Feedback from manager
- Cooperation with others
- Information routines
- Social environment, attitude, culture
- Technical tools and utilities
- Skills

4. Additional factors

Use of alcohol and other substances has an effect on working environment and may lead to absences. Having addictions problems in a family is an issue that causes absences. AKAN (www.akan.no) provides good advices on these topics.

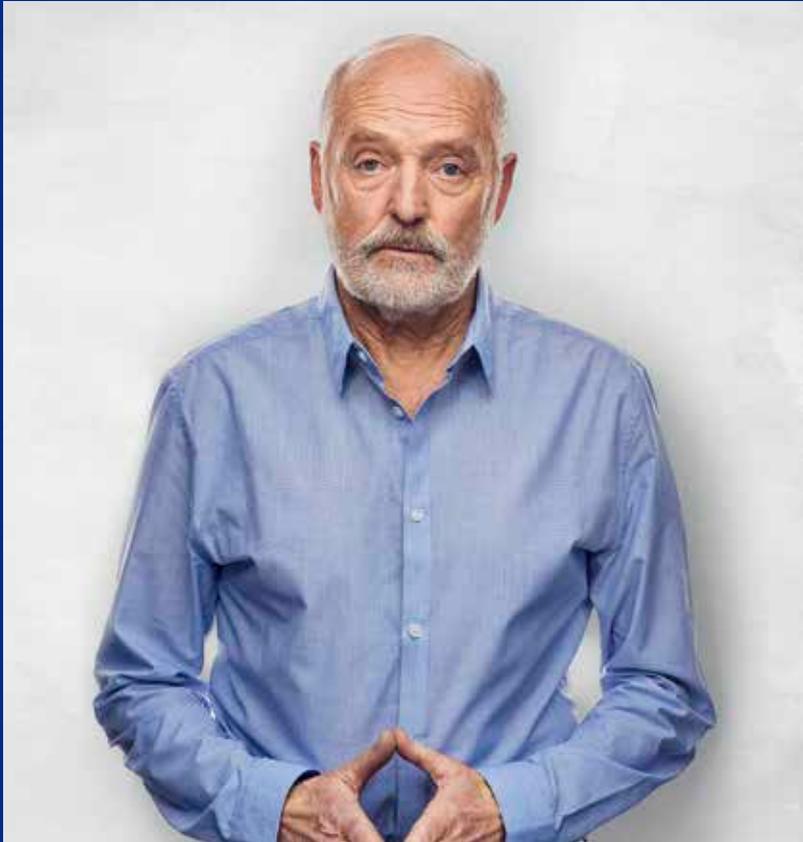
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How to conduct the conversation

The conversation should take place without disturbances. Choose a “neutral” location. Turn off the telephone and close the door – this conversation is confidential. During the conversation, stick to facts and be objective and specific. Both parties should prepare for this important talk. Listen to each other.

After the conversation:

The manager should write a report or fill out the follow up plan, when necessary. Sum up and be sure that you have achieved a common understanding of what you were talking about, and what you agreed upon. If the employee does not get sufficient follow up from his own doctor or NAV; contact company health service. The same applies if there is a considerable delay for specialist appointment, x-ray, etc. Prepare an action plan including deadlines and responsibilities.



**Be sure that you have achieved
a common understanding of
what you agreed upon.**

Preventive actions - good advice for employers

Action plan for absences

- Stay ahead! How can you solve work tasks when someone is missing?
- Will you hire a temporary worker?
- Are there any tasks that can wait?
- Who will take care of the work of the one who is missing?
- Think it through before the absence happens.

Have a good overview on all tasks

It is useful to have a list of different tasks and operations performed in the company. Both the regular, daily tasks as well as tasks that may be suitable for employees with reduced work capability. Thus, you will be prepared to give information about company's tasks to the doctor who certifies sick leaves.

Increased workload on other employees

When someone gets sick, the other employees often need to do this person's job. If someone is sick and absent often, it may have negative consequences on the work environment. That is why it may be smart to think through how to avoid heavier workload on the team when someone gets sick. Should we adjust the tasks? It might prevent future absences!



What is Inclusive Working Life?

“Inclusive Working Life”, commonly abbreviated as IA in Norway, originates from the Memorandum of Understanding on a more Inclusive Working Life signed to attempt to reverse a trend whereby increasing numbers of people were dropping out of working life and living on long-term social security benefits. The goal is to ensure that workplaces can accommodate everyone who can and wants to work.

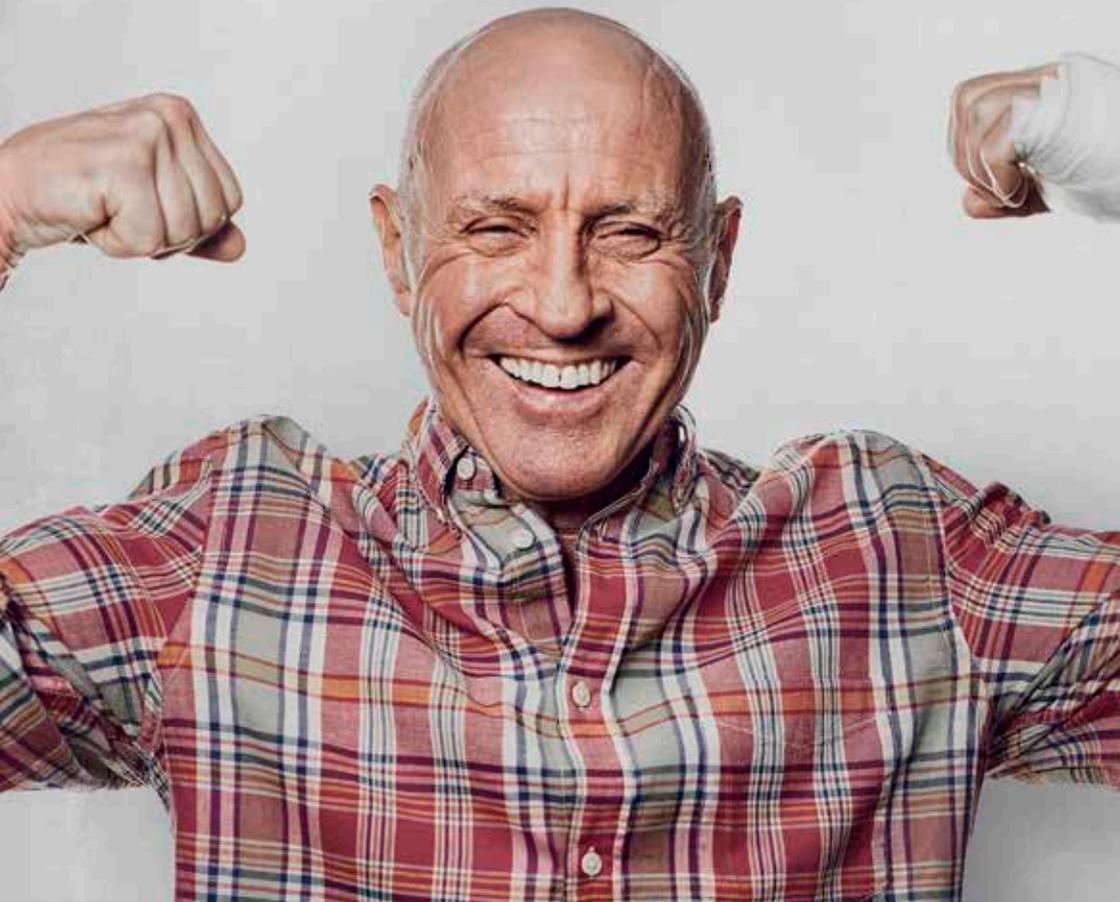
The purpose of the Inclusive Working Life (IA) scheme is to:

- improve the working environment and increase return to work
- prevent and reduce absence due to illness
- prevent exclusion and withdrawal from working life.

Collaboration with NAV

Any company can become an IA enterprise by entering into a collaborative agreement with NAV. The agreement must be signed by the company’s management and employee representative(s), as well as the head of the Working Life Centre.

Both the company and NAV must appoint a named contact person who has special responsibility for the



The goal of Inclusive Working Life is to ensure that workplaces can accommodate everyone who can and wants to work.

Inclusive Working Life efforts in the company. Your company's contact person at the NAV Working Life Centre provides advice and guidance on Inclusive Working Life issues and makes sure that financial instruments are triggered quickly and efficiently in individual cases.

NAV's IA instruments

To support the Inclusive Working Life efforts in the workplace, IA enterprises have access to special instruments from NAV. We have already mentioned the fixed contact person, who helps IA companies work in a more purposeful and result-oriented manner on making their workplace more inclusive.

In addition, we also offer:

- extended use of self-certification, i.e. the right to use self-certification for up to eight calendar days per period of sickness absence, with a total upper limit of 24 days per 12-month period
- the opportunity to apply for a special grant to compensate for some of the expenses and efforts in the preventive environmental, health and safety work.

The aim should always be to prevent or reduce sick leave or prevent exclusion from working life. In addition, NAV also has a number of other relevant measures. Read more on www.nav.no or contact your local Working Life Centre.

Company name

Date

Address

Telephone number

GP name

Medical office

Address

Our focus is to prevent and make adjustments at the workplace and being able to offer alternative work. We have many different work tasks. Many of our employees have heavy, physical work. For those, doing their regular job (as long as their health issues are not minor) can be very difficult. Based on that, the company has prepared a list of alternative tasks, according to § 4-6 of the Working Environment Act Particularly concerning adaptation for employees with reduced capacity for work.

Examples of adjusted working tasks:

- Following up the trainees
- Lighter physical work, as for example HSE rounds, easier cleaning, etc
- Assist the workplace with planning, to do lists, ordering the materials and equipment
- Possibility to enhance one's competences by participating in internal and external courses
- Internet based training programs
- Studying professional literature, HSE manuals and regulations

We would like to ask you to consider those alternatives by choosing a partial sick leave. We would also like you to consider a pending sick leave. If you have any question, do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

Signature

Company name

Example of a letter from the company to
the sick leave certifying doctor

Useful links

www.nav.no

www.arbeidstilsynet.no

www.idebanken.org

www.inkluderende.no

www.regjeringen.no

www.akan.no

www.nho.no

www.nho.no