



Communication Scenario

Trainee: Thank you for coming. We are here to discuss Ms Jones's situation, her sickness absence and possible return to work. Occupational Health can advise on her health condition and the impact of that condition on her ability to work.

Manager: I notice in your report doctor, that you mention an underlying medical condition. Now obviously from my point of view it would be helpful if I could know the diagnosis... Could you tell me any more about it?

Trainee: I can't give you any medical information due to medical confidentiality but what we can discuss is the impact of her condition on her performance and on her tasks and we can discuss that in more detail.

Manager: You also mention the disability provisions of the Equality Act. Now personally I don't know what that means for me. Could you explain a bit more?

Trainee: Yes certainly. There are a number of conditions that within the Equality Act could be considered a disability. Then, if that's the situation the employer is required to consider reasonable adjustments to support that individual at work. Clearly you will need to look at service provision and how you can reasonably accommodate that individual... but as I say you are required to look at reasonable adjustments.

Manager: Ms Jones has been off work for over 6 months now and over the last 2 or 3 years she has had several other episodes of significant illness and absence. Now as a department we are finding this very difficult to cover and it's starting to have an impact on other staff members. Are you able to give me an idea how long she might be off work and when she might return?

Trainee: Ms Jones has shown a significant improvement in her condition over the past few weeks. I am confident that she will be able to return to her full substantive duties. However, I anticipate that she's going to need another 6 weeks at least before she gets to that point. By the nature of her condition it is recurrent, but future exacerbations may not necessarily require her to be absent from work.

Manager: That's very helpful. Thank you. I also notice in your report you mention other work-related issues. Could you explain a bit more what you mean by that?

Trainee: Ms Jones did report that there was an interpersonal difficulty with one of her colleagues. I would suggest that if that was looked into and addressed, that would have a big impact on the prognosis for a successful return to work.

Manager: OK. Will we get any more information, or...

Trainee: What I suggest we can do is have a full case conference with Ms Jones herself and also an HR representative; and I suggest that would be the best way to go forward from here.

Manager: Thank you

Trainee: Thank you