

TUC spells out how to get rehab right

Rehabilitation of sick or injured workers needs the right services available at the right time and an understanding of the particular job and needs of the affected worker, a new TUC guide says. The new TUC online guide comments on recent government and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommendations. It says the DWP pointers are on the whole helpful but fall short in certain key areas. It adds getting it right is crucial to addressing sickness absence – the cause of 172 million lost working days last year, with 34 million of these due to an injury or illness caused by work. TUC says as most workers receive health support from their GP, they miss out on the type of advice that could add a better recovery and a prompt return to work with suitable adjustments to their personal circumstances. “This may be either as things were before, at reduced duties or with adjustments to their work, working conditions or equipment,” the guide says. “The lack of access to proper support means that every year many thousands of workers are off work for much longer than necessary, come back to work without getting proper treatment, or simply leave their job all together.” TUC wants workers to have early access to vocational rehabilitation. But it warns that rushing workers back onto the job will sometimes be counterproductive because it “can lead to a relapse or a delay in recovery. In addition, if it is work itself that caused an illness in the first place (as is the case in many work related stress illnesses and musculoskeletal disorders like back pain and (RSI), then it is also important to remove the causes.” It adds that “the key to success is seeing the worker themselves as central to the process and ensuring that they feel they are in control of the process.”

- [Rehabilitation: A short guide to the evidence](#), TUC, June 2009