

Helping kiritaki return to work

For ICPMSK providers

 Read time: 4 mins

Returning to work is a key outcome for an employed kiritaki and a sustainable Return to Work plan must be developed for any kiritaki who is unable to work due to their injury and supplied to ACC. This guide provides further information to support development of a return to work plan for the kiritaki that aligns with our requirements and prioritises their pre-injury role

Pre-injury role prioritisation

Return to work plans for the kiritaki should be developed with their pre-injury role in mind and should prioritise the following outcomes in the order below:

- Returning to pre-injury role with their pre-injury employer
- Being able to safely complete their pre-injury role, even if this is no longer available to them
- Returning to alternative work types where they will not be able to safely return to their pre-injury work due to their physical incapacity* (Obtain Employment pathway – this will be covered in another guidance document)

As part of the interdisciplinary team (IDT), you must continuously evaluate whether they are currently unable to return to their pre-injury role and if this is due to their injury. If they're unable to return to work due to reasons other than their injury, you must notify us immediately (see Operational Guidelines 14.17 Non-injury related health).

*Incapacity for pre-injury employment is normally considered in relation to Section 103 of the Accident Compensation Act 2001, which states that ACC must determine whether the kiritaki is unable, because of their injury, to engage in the employment they had at the time of their injury

Client Management

Enabling recovery at work

A successful return to pre-injury employment relies on early and ongoing engagement with the employer.

You have an integral role in establishing communication with the employer. This helps to identify and manage any risks to the kiritaki and their employment accordingly. This could include:

- The nature of the injury - the impact on the physical and cognitive functioning of the kiritaki and their ability to carry out their pre-injury role
- The impact of an extended absence on their workplace
- The degree of knowledge the employer has of the recovery timeframes
- Effectiveness of communication between the kiritaki and employer whilst they are off work
- The relationship the kiritaki and employer had both before and after the accident

[Operational Guidelines 14.8 Medical clearance for pre-injury role for more information](#)

Identifying and mitigating these risks is an essential part of return to work planning. Key considerations should include asking the below questions:

- Whilst the kiritaki can't complete all their pre-injury tasks, what other suitable duties can they be cleared for rather than having a 'fully unfit' status? See ACC's guidelines for issuing medical certificates [here](#).
- If the employer can't have the kiritaki completing their pre-injury duties as they recover, what alternative duties are available to keep the kiritaki in the workplace? This has the benefits of keeping the kiritaki engaged in the workplace and contributing to the business whilst also potentially cross-skilling them and adding value to both the employer and the kiritaki.
- If there are no suitable duties at all, can the kiritaki continue to attend team meetings or training to keep them engaged?
- If the employer is needing to cover the usual duties the kiritaki performs with another employee, would they be willing to consider having the kiritaki back on a work trial (i.e. the employer does not need to pay the kiritaki for any work and ACC continues to pay the kiritaki their full weekly compensation entitlement) for a short period until they are back to full fitness?

Work can play an active role in rehabilitation after an injury. A safe and timely return to work can improve physical and mental wellbeing and lead to shorter recovery times.



Client Management

Working toward fitness for pre-injury role

Where a kiritaki loses or resigns from their employment, you don't need to consider the obtain employment pathway if you remain confident the kiritaki will regain fitness for their pre-injury duties through ICPMSK.

It's important to gain a good understanding of the tasks and functional demands of the pre-injury job at the beginning of their recovery, ideally in consultation with their employer. This will produce a list of the demands the kiritaki will need to be medically cleared for, so that they meet the functional requirements to be fit for their pre-injury employment.

The rehabilitation can be adjusted for the kiritaki to explore how those functional requirements can be met. For example, incorporating exercises that mimic duties the kiritaki had done in their pre-injury job.

How to provide medical clearance

If the kiritaki is able to return to their pre-injury role, medical clearance to return to work should be issued on an ACC18 medical certificate by an ICPMSK specialist if they have one.

If the kiritaki is not seeing a specialist, other clinicians in their IDT (e.g. their Physiotherapist) should provide clinical rationale and request this clearance from their GP.

In some cases, if the GP for the kiritaki is not confident to provide clearance based on the clinical rationale, you may need to put in a request for an independent assessment (Section 103 Assessment). To do this, the ICP Navigator should email ACC's ICP Team and let them know why you're not able to get medical clearance. We will arrange a case conference with the ICP Navigator and kiritaki to discuss next steps including the assessment and possible outcomes.

Note - Section 105

In rare cases, a kiritaki who was not employed at the time of their accident can also be eligible for vocational rehabilitation. This includes kiritaki who were under the age of 18 at the time of their accident and kiritaki who were between employment when they were injured. We will advise if and when alternative routes should be pursued for these kiritaki.

