

Healthy Working Life – research and mystery shopping

December 2025

Summary

Early findings show that information about support to stay in work or return to work in Kirklees is difficult to locate. Relevant details are often scattered across multiple websites, poorly signposted, or not publicly available at all. This creates confusion and increases the risk that people miss out on early support.

Our findings show that only 22% of contacts were signposted to HWL schemes. While 67% were signposted somewhere, these referrals were not always appropriate or helpful – for example, several enquiries were redirected to GPs or the JobCentre, neither of which provided the information needed.

Some strengths were identified. A number of frontline staff offered quick, helpful and accurate guidance, and once found, online information was usually clear. However, the lack of a single, obvious starting point means that people must navigate multiple platforms to piece information together. This could be particularly challenging for those with limited digital confidence.

A consistent theme across all services was low awareness of HWL programmes. Signposting often bypassed HWL entirely, suggesting that frontline staff across health, community, employment and education services do not feel equipped or informed about what is available locally. The quality of advice frequently depended on which staff member happened to take the call or manage the desk, leading to unequal experiences.

Digital reliance also created barriers. Many services directed people online even after being told that the person struggled with technology. Phone systems were often difficult to navigate, and some environments felt intimidating for people with anxiety or low confidence.

Overall, while good support exists in Kirkles, it remains hard to find, inconsistently promoted and unevenly accessed. Without clearer routes in, people risk missing early or preventative help that could support them to stay in work, return to work or manage long-term health conditions more effectively.