

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS: COMPLETING THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT REFERRAL FORM

Purpose of Occupational Health (OH) referral:

- To generate solutions where health affects work or work affects health
- To give employees an opportunity to raise health issues and how they are impacting on work
- To seek independent professional advice on health issues to support management action
- To assist with short term sickness absences where management action alone has not improved attendance
- To assist with the management of long term absenteeism

It is not...

- To explore the legitimacy of absences
- To solely “comply with the University’s policy and procedure on managing absences”
- A punitive or disciplinary process
- A treatment service – We do not duplicate services provided by GP or other specialties and **we are unable to influence NHS waiting lists**

When to refer an employee:

- Frequent short term absences
- Concerns about their health at work (e.g. change in performance, behaviour or attendance)
- Concerns about the effect of work on health
- Mental health/stress issues if absent for more than 2 weeks
- Longer term absences (more than 4 weeks)
- Functional assessment to establish fitness to perform specific tasks and duties in their current role

What to put in referral:

To get specific and relevant advice, you need to ask specific and relevant questions. Consider what action you may need to take and what information you will require and ask questions that will generate that information. If in doubt contact Occupational Health or your HR Link. You may want to meet with an OH Practitioner prior to referring an individual to discuss concerns or advice you require. This will be a Case Management meeting.

Background information to include:

- Nature of duties including any hazards, (i.e. copies of risk assessments)
- Relevant employment details – length of service, nature of working environment, working hours, any capability, disciplinary or industrial injury issues
- Details of absences. Please do not send photocopies of fit notes. It would be more helpful if you send brief summaries of relevant and current information
- Main concerns and reason for referral: To include what measures and adjustments have been discussed and/or tried to help the individual in the workplace. The more information you give us the better able we are to give you a balanced opinion of the situation
- If medical retirement is being contemplated as a possible action this must be made clear in the referral so that a firm prognosis can be provided

What to ask.... Some suggestions to consider:

- Is there an underlying health problem that affects attendance/performance/fitness to work?
- Is the employee medically fit for the post? If not, when are they likely to be medically fit for the post?
- When is the employee likely to return to work?
- Is the employee likely to provide a regular and effective service?
- What reasonable adjustments are required to be considered to keep the employee at work/assist the employee back to work?

- Is the employee likely to come under the remit of the Equality Act 2010, formerly the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. (Please note, that ultimately the final decision about the Equality Act 2010 eligibility is a legal one, not a medical one)

Procedure

Request for OH Assessment:

All referrals to OH must be submitted on an OH Management Referral Form, which can be found on the OH website.

Manager and employee to discuss the reason for a referral.

It is important that both employee and referring manager understand the purpose of the referral taking into account the above points. There is a common misconception that employees are only referred when there is doubt about the legitimacy of their absences or when they are going to be disciplined or taken down the route of capability. Unfortunately this can limit the usefulness of the service as individuals are understandably suspicious and less prepared to be open. It is therefore vital that employees understand that OH is there for their benefit as well as for their employer.

Manager to complete, sign and send the referral to OH.

It is important to bear in mind that any correspondence received by OH about an employee becomes part of their OH file and that the employee will be shown the referral. The employee has a legal right of access to these records under the Data Protection Act 1998. It is the referring manager's responsibility to give a copy of the referral form to both the employee and HR.

OH to advise employee and manager and HR Link of date and time of appointment:

The appointment will be held at one of the University of Essex campuses (Colchester, Southend, Loughton), or at Writtle College, or at the most convenient location.

Consultation:

During the consultation the contents of the referral will be discussed and an assessment of their health issues and the impact this has on their work will be undertaken. Please note that clinical and personal details will remain confidential unless consent is given.

The Occupational Health Report

This will be sent following consultation. The content of the Occupational Health Report is discussed with the employee at the consultation. There may be a delay in sending this as the employee has the right to see the report before it is sent to the manager. It is their right to do so (GMC guidance on Confidentiality: Sept 09) and if they request this you will be informed in writing of any delay. If the employee does not give consent for the Occupational Health Report to be released, they will be informed that their manager will only be able to act on the information already available to them and you will be informed, in writing. You will then be required to take the necessary action based on the information already available.

Correspondence:

All Occupational Health Report letters will be sent by e-mail as a password-protected attachment. The password will be sent in a separate e mail on confirmation of receipt. This will also be shared with the employee. Where e mail addresses are not available hard copies will be sent by post.

GP/Specialist reports:

Where it is necessary to obtain further medical information, we may apply for a medical report from the employee's own GP or specialist. This may delay full answers to your questions in the Occupational Health Report. Once the report has been received by OH it will be interpreted and the report will be sent to you explaining the findings.

Answers to your specific questions:

If we are unable to fully answer your questions at the first session, it may be necessary for us to make a further appointment. Where it becomes apparent that we cannot progress a case after two appointments, we will endeavour to contact you to discuss further.

If you have any further questions, please contact Occupational Health on 01206 872399