

Employee Guide to Occupational Health

Your Manager has referred you to the Employee Health & Wellbeing Service. You may not be familiar with the role of the Employee Health & Wellbeing Service and this document will help to answer some of the questions you may have.

The Employee Health & Wellbeing Service

The Service consists of Occupational Health Advisers (qualified to degree level), Occupational Health Physicians (qualified in occupational medicine), Health Promotion Adviser, Occupational Health Technician, Resolution Coordinator and administration support.

What is Occupational Health (OH)?

Occupational Health (OH) is a specialist branch of healthcare concerned with the *effects of work upon health and also the effects of health upon work capacity*. OH can advise on issues such as fitness for work, sickness absence, disability, rehabilitation, ill-health retirement, travel health, health promotion, or indeed any health and work issue.

What is an OH Assessment?

An OH assessment provides independent, impartial advice to you and your employer about your health and fitness for work. The assessment may be performed by an Occupational Physician (a doctor qualified in occupational medicine). The Occupational Health Service offers advice but it is up to the individual employer and/or employee whether that advice is followed. An Occupational Health Practitioner cannot know for certain what the consequences of his/her advice will be but the range of likely consequences will be discussed with you before asking for your consent to send a report to a third party.

Why Do I need an OH Assessment?

Your HR Adviser or line manager will usually have referred you for the OH assessment. The benefit of attending the assessment is that it gives you the opportunity to discuss any health problems with the OH professional, and how these impact on your work. The OH professional can look at all the circumstances, and provide your employer and you with the advice about your health and fitness for work.

Do I have to attend an OH Assessment?

If you are unhappy about why you have been referred, or if you don't wish to attend, then you should discuss this further with your HR Adviser or line manager. Please advise as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment. If you do not attend your appointment or you withhold or withdraw consent, your employer may have to make decisions about your employment without the benefit of OH advice.

Now that I am attending an OH Assessment – what happens next?

Your consultation with the OH professional is likely to last around 30-60 minutes. The OH professional will ensure that you understand the purpose of the assessment and their role in providing independent, impartial advice. Your consent will be sought for the assessment to proceed and for a written OH report to be sent to your employer. If a medical examination is necessary, your permission to proceed with this will also be sought.

What information is passed to the employer?

The report to your employer will provide advice about your health in relation to work. This is likely to include advice about your fitness for work, how this might change in the future and any workplace adjustments that might help you. The report may include limited clinical (medical) information, but this will only be included where it is relevant. The report will not disclose unnecessary clinical detail regarding conditions that do not have a bearing upon your fitness for work. The aim is to assist you and your employer to manage any health problems that are impacting upon your capacity for work.

How are my confidential OH records maintained?

Your OH records are maintained to the same high standard of confidentiality as hospital or GP medical records, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998. Your OH record will not be disclosed to anyone else outside of the OH service without your consent.

Will there be any need for you to contact my GP or Hospital Specialist?

Occasionally the OH professional will seek (with your written consent) a medical report from your GP or hospital specialist. This is usually necessary if the OH professional requires further clinical information about your health, (e.g. information regarding your diagnosis, results of investigations, treatment, future plans etc) prior to advising you/your employer. The process is subject to the *Access to Medical Reports Act 1988*. This gives you certain rights (including a right to see your doctor's report, if you wish, before it is sent to us). Under some circumstances the OH professional may write to your GP, with your consent, giving information about the outcome of your OH assessment. This can be particularly helpful where there are clinical findings or work arrangements that the OH professional believes your GP should be informed of.

Giving my informed consent.**Occupational Health Advisor**

The report is normally formulated whilst you are in the appointment and the content discussed with you. The report will contain any relevant medical information and recommendations about current or future fitness for work, along with any questions which management have indicated they wish answering on the referral form.

Occupational Health Physician

You will be routinely asked if you want to see the OH Physician's report before it is sent to a third party/ your employer or whether you wish to receive a copy of the report at the same time it is sent to a third party/your employer. Conversely you may be willing to allow release of the report without you seeing it or receiving a copy. If you exercise your right to see the report before it is sent you can ask for *factual* details to be corrected. You can withhold or withdraw your consent at any time. If this is the case management will have to proceed using only their current knowledge and without any advice from Occupational Health.

If you are unsure about any of the above advice or any aspect of your assessment or provision of informed consent, please raise this either before or during your consultation.

Your Appointment

If you are unable to attend the appointment please inform the department at least 48 hours before the appointment (including telephone appointments). Failure to do so will mean your manager will be charged for the missed appointment (includes telephone appointments). Should you have any questions you are welcome to telephone the Unit on the number below prior to your appointment or raise them during your appointment.