



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH GUIDANCE MATERIAL

[This document is intended for the sole purpose of providing guidance for Case Management Referrals]

*Should you seek clarification on any section of this document please contact the Occupational Health Team on
0161 930 2477*

Occupational Health (OH) is a service that strives to protect both the employee and the employer.

The OH Nurse/Doctor considers the effects of your employees' work on their health. He/She also considers an individual's health, ability and fitness to perform a particular job. Its purpose is to protect each employee and to ensure that the proposed work does not in any way damage or compromise their health.

Some of the things that the OH Nurse/Doctor does during a consultation, in addition to their clinical remit and producing a report, are:

- ✓ *Gather missing information or information not given to HR*
- ✓ *Build trust with the employee so that they are open to share ALL their concerns, treatments or other issues*
- ✓ *Triage (decide the best order of support or treatment)*
- ✓ *Advise the employee on treatment options*
- ✓ *Advise the employee on other support available*
- ✓ *Use a biopsychosocial model to get to the best outcome (i.e. considering clinical factors, psychological factors and environmental/social factors)*
- ✓ *Dispel myths about returning to work*
- ✓ *Negotiate a favorable Return to Work at an early stage*
- ✓ *Negotiate a favorable Return to Work even if there are still symptoms and it is safe for the employee to return*

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is paramount to our service and must be maintained at all times. All our doctors and nurses are medically qualified and specialize in OH, to ensure that employees are assessed and advised appropriately. The clinician may obtain additional information during a consultation which may be confidential, and therefore will not be written in the report. However the information obtained will help them make an informed recommendation and contribute to their report.

HR/Line managers are also expected to handle each referral and report with the strictest of confidentiality.

When would you require medical reports from external doctors or specialists?

The OH Health Nurse/Doctor may request medical reports if there is ambiguity during the consultation or if the employee is a poor historian and is unable to clearly tell them about their medical concerns and treatment. They may also request these in complex mental health cases. Please note that some medical reports can be of low value and also difficult to access due to time constraints and resources in the NHS.

Instead of simply requesting medical reports, the OH Nurse/Doctor can choose to write to an employee's doctor or specialist (with their consent) and ask specific questions to help inform their report and find the best possible outcome for both the employer and employee.

When would a face to face consultation be recommended?

The OH Nurse/Doctor may request a face to face consultation in the following cases:

- ✓ *In complex mental health cases and where there is ambiguity during the telephone consultation*
- ✓ *If a Return to Work date cannot be agreed after a number of telephone consultations*
- ✓ *There is ambiguity or inconsistencies in telephone consultations*
- ✓ *Complex medical conditions – especially where clarity/confirmation is needed*
- ✓ *Ill-health retirement*
- ✓ *Functional Capability (to determine physical capability)*
- ✓ *Capability*

What happens after a face to face consultation is approved?

Once the face to face consultation is approved, the OH Nurse/Doctor will write a referral to include specific questions and a copy of their report. They will communicate directly with the clinician they are referring to and ensure that they have all the necessary information to make an informed decision. This will include all additional information they have gathered through the telephone consultation. The doctor should now have sufficient information during the face to face consultation to produce a comprehensive and informed report, in the interest of both the employee and employer.

What happens if referred for counselling or CBT?

If counselling or CBT is recommended by the OH Nurse/Doctor and approved by the employer, Wellness International Ltd. will find a therapist close to the employee and arrange 6 face to face sessions, as a minimum. This will be completely confidential between the therapist and employee. No clinical feedback or report will be given to Wellness International Ltd. or the employer. Wellness International Ltd. will monitor the number of meetings and attendance. Should more than the initial 6 sessions be required Wellness International Ltd. will seek approval from HR to continue.

What should be included in the referral and the importance of the specific questions?

It is essential that key information is provided in the referral, the quality of this information is vital to the effectiveness of the referral process and the OH report. Without adequate background information the OH clinician may be unable to fully assess a problem and respond to the questions asked. Managers should provide a summary outline of key factors of the job, particularly aspects that may impact the health condition of the individual – a job description should always be provided.

The answers to your specific questions will give you the information required to manage the employee appropriately. It could also give you a medico-legal perspective (a medical case with legal implications).

Examples of some of the questions you may ask depending on your referral:

- *Is the employee fit for work?*
- *When is the employee likely to become fit for work?*
- *What can be done to assist an early return to work?*
- *Is a graduated return to work programme appropriate?*
- *What sort of modifications or adjustments may be required?*
- *Are the modifications or adjustments likely to be short term or permanent?*
- *Is there an underlying medical reason for recurrent short term absence?*
- *Is any underlying health problem likely to improve and, if so, in what time scales?*
- *Are further absences likely and at what level?*
- *Is the illness caused or made worse by work activity?*
- *Can any steps be taken to reduce the risk of further health problems in the workplace?*
- *Is reduced work performance likely to be due to health problems?*
- *Is their health problem likely to meet the criteria for disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010?*
- *Is the employee fit to attend an investigatory or disciplinary process?*
- *Does the employee meet ill health retirement criteria?*

Does the employee have to consent to the referral?

Yes. It is important that the employee gives consent to the referral. If a referral form is received without consent, Wellness International Ltd. will not be able to proceed with the referral.

Should the employee be aware of the content of the referral?

Yes. The content of the referral should be discussed and agreed with the employee so that there are no surprises when they speak to the OH clinician. It is important to note that at the beginning of a consultation, the referral content would be read out to the employee and they would be asked if they agree and are happy to continue.

When would I receive a copy of the OH report?

The employee is asked for 'informed' consent to release the report.

He/She is given the option to:

1. *Not receive a copy of the report*
2. *Have a copy of the report emailed or posted at the same time the report is sent to the employer*
3. *See a copy of the report before it is released to the employer*

In cases where the employee asks to see the report before it is sent to HR, they have 2 working days to respond via email or 5 days to respond via post with any questions, comments or concerns. If they do not respond in the time frame given, the report is released.

Should an employee wish to amend a report before it is released then they have the right to suggest amendments regarding "facts" but not the clinician's opinion. They will discuss these with the OH Nurse/Doctor and a final report is agreed through the same process.

If they do not consent to release of the report, Wellness International Ltd will not be able to give a copy of the report to the employer.

An employee can withhold their consent at any stage of the process. If this is the case then we would advise that the employer makes their best endeavour to persuade the employee to proceed. Failing this, the employee should be clearly informed that Management will have to proceed using only their current knowledge and without any expert medical opinion. This should be clearly documented.

What additional information can HR provide?

Any information that HR has to support the background information will be helpful to the consultation. These can include fit notes, previous OH or medical reports (the employee needs to give HR consent to share these) and any HR reports that are relevant to the case.

What is a multidisciplinary approach?

Wellness International Ltd. uses a patient-centric approach and depending on the case may have various clinicians review the case to ensure that the best outcome is obtained for the employee and employer. For example, in cases where there are musculoskeletal concerns, we may ask for a consultation with the OH Physiotherapist first who would provide a functional assessment which would then be used to inform the OH Doctor/Nurses' report. This is all considered as part of one referral.

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act 2010 ensures that people with health issues and disabilities are treated fairly in the workplace. It obliges employers to consider reasonable adjustments when recruiting and when considering work arrangements, hours and the working environment etc. in order to accommodate disabilities.

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantially adverse and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. In the workplace such activities are taken to include things like using a telephone or computer, interacting with colleagues, following instructions, driving and carrying everyday objects (ACAS).