

A GUIDE TO YOUR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL

If you have been referred to the occupational health service, then you may want to know a little more about who we are, what we do and what is likely to happen next.

Who are we?

The OH Service provide an independent, confidential occupational health service to your organisation.

Occupational health is dedicated to helping people to keep well, and to help them to work to their potential in spite of health problems, as and when these do arise. These days we know that work is an important ingredient of staying well, and beneficial for people who are having to cope with illness, so helping people to remain in work isn't just good for your employer, it's good for you too.

The occupational health service is delivered by professionals from all kinds of backgrounds, so we can draw on the kind of skills and experience that are most appropriate for any given case. This list includes;

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Physiotherapists
- Psychologists and
- Occupational therapists

What happens when we receive a referral?

When we receive the referral from your employer, our clinical team will assess it to decide what is going to be the best way forward.

Because technology now makes it so much easier to have telephone or video-calls, this is usually the way that the team will assess people who have been referred. Our experience is that people who have been referred prefer this approach too: it is convenient, doesn't require them to travel, and means that we can arrange an assessment with the appropriate professional much more quickly. Sometimes however it will be helpful for us to see you in person, for example if any physical examination is needed, and on those occasions, we will offer an appointment for you at one of our clinics.

Occasionally we might want to request a report from your GP or treating specialist, but most of the time we won't: in occupational health, to give the best possible advice, we generally need to know what your experience of your illness has been like and how you feel about things, and the best way to find that out is by talking to you.

The assessment

The clinician will want to know how your illness is affecting you and your ability to do things, and what kind of help and support might be useful. We are very clear that helping you to work is our objective (as well as helping you to get better), so at the outset we will check that this is what you want too, so we can be sure that we are providing you with the right kind of help.

Traditional occupational health services haven't really asked the person to be very involved in their case however we do not feel this is the best way forward, because we are going to be able to do much more to help you, if you are helping us too. For example, we might ask you to measure your blood pressure or blood sugars over a period of time and to send us the readings, or you may have letters from your GP or treating specialist about your condition that it would be very helpful for us to see.

If you are currently taking any medication or accessing/undergoing any treatment of any kind, please have the details available for your assessment so you can share the information with the healthcare professional.

All information that you send us is kept securely and in medical confidence, to be used by our doctors, nurses and other clinicians only.

If you have been referred because of problems that you are experiencing in work or that have made you feel anxious, we will need to ask you for an overview of what you have been struggling with, but will not need an in depth understanding of every issue, as we are more concerned with how this impacted you, and how we might be able to help you to work with your employer towards a resolution.

Though your total appointment length may be 45 or 60 minutes, your assessment is likely to be up to 30 minutes, as the remaining appointment time is needed to complete the clinical notes and write a report. Please note, the phone may not ring at the exact appointment time, as the clinician may need to read your case file/referral first.

The assessment report

At the end of the assessment, we will talk to you about the kind of things that you, we, your GP and your employer could do that would help you to work. We will want to share these ideas with your employer and GP too, and will ask for your consent to include them in the assessment report.

The OH Service will treat the information you discuss with us as confidential, and we confirm it will not be shared with either your employer or GP without your consent.

In our reports, we won't mention health problems that aren't relevant to your work. We would also not include lots of detail about specific problems you are having in the workplace but will always try and focus on the way forward to resolve these. We will always tell you what we will be putting in the report so there will be 'no surprises', and when we have prepared a written report, you will be asked if you would like to see a copy of it before your employer or at the same time as them to check for factual inaccuracies. If you do want a copy, we will ask you to confirm your e mail address so we can send it to you via the portal.

Much of the time one assessment may be all that is needed because fortunately most health problems are only temporary. If your case is more complicated and we think that further review is going to be helpful, then we will also advise what the follow-up arrangements should be.

Additional information

Should you wish for it there are additional guidance notes on employee rights and consent, and data protection. Copies can be found on the portal or by contacting the team.