

Workplace Health and Wellbeing guidance: Making an occupational health referral.



Minimising sickness absence is of benefit to both individuals and organisations. Work can have a positive effect on health, whereas staying away from the workplace can in the long term, be detrimental. Boosting morale and productivity by promoting the health of employees, is of clear business benefit too. So it is most important to have a clear and publicised approach to managing sickness absence, both short and long term.

Workplace Health and Wellbeing can assist in the management of sickness absence when health is affecting a person's ability to work, or where work is impacting on health. This information sheet is designed for line managers who wish to make a referral to Workplace Health and Wellbeing.

A referral to Workplace Health and wellbeing can provide employee and employer support in various ways. For example a referral will:-

- Identify any underlying health condition affecting attendance at work.
- Identify whether the work environment is contributing to sickness absence.
- Advise line managers on the expected time until return to work.
- Advise on appropriate modified duties and/ or a phased return to work plan.
- Assess the workplace prior to returning to work if required
- Advise managers on the possibility of temporary or permanent re-deployment (if such posts are available).
- Refer staff onto appropriate agencies (physiotherapy, counselling, support groups etc).
- Provide advice and support for the employee.
- Provide an opinion on whether the employee is likely to be disabled inline with the Equality Act.

When should Workplace Health and Wellbeing be contacted?

Ideally, we should be contacted as soon as possible if there are any causes for concern. We would recommend contact is made when one of the following apply-

- 3 periods of sickness in any 6 month period
- Any period of sickness lasting over 4 weeks
- If an individual has a GP certificate identifying work-related stress or musculoskeletal injury as the reason for sickness absence
- As an employer you are concerned about the health of a staff member

If there is an anticipated future absence, such as an operation and a long recovery period, contact can be made before the period of absence commences and plans put in place for review at an appropriate stage later in the recovery process.

How to make a referral for an employee?

To make a referral you will need to complete the following steps:-

1. Ensure your staff member is fully informed as to why you are asking them to attend for an occupational health assessment. Transparency on the reasons for the referral is most important for the referral to provide valuable outcomes. Where possible the employee should sign the occupational health consent form agreeing to the referral being made, and this should be returned with the referral form. Where it is not possible for the individual to complete the consent form, eg they are absent from the workplace, please gain their consent via the telephone and the Dr or Adviser will complete the form with the employee. Finally, please ensure the employee is issued

with our information leaflet 'What to expect' which includes our location map and travel directions

2. Complete our management referral and consent form. Along with any supporting documentation, such as a job description or sickness absence record, return documents via encrypted email, fax or post.
3. Upon receipt of the referral and completed consent form, we will triage the referral. Once a recommendation has been made by us as the the appropriate OH practitioner for an appointment we will contact the employee to confirm the appointment date and time. Subsequently, we will send a copy of the appointment confirmation letter to you via email for your records.
4. You can expect a written report following the assessment, sent via post within 5 working days or sooner if by email. There will be a delay if the Occupational Health clinician requires additional information from the individuals own GP or Medical Specialist. If such information is required, you will be informed that we have requested further medical information. The likely timescales for a report can be as much as 4-6 weeks. We will do all we can to keep you informed in this instance.

Please ensure your employee is aware of the date and time of their appointment. Missed appointments increase waiting times, where as cancellations do not. We'd encourage you to stay in touch with your employee where possible to ensure they attend.

To discuss our services any further, please contact us.

Workplace Health & Wellbeing Level 1, 20 Rouen Road, Norwich, NR1 1QQ
Main reception: 01603 287035 www.workplacehealthandwellbeing.co.uk