



Adept Occupational Health Ltd

Making a Referral to Occupational Health - Guidance for Managers

Common reasons for referring an employee to Occupational Health (OH) are:

- persistent and recurrent short term absence disrupting business needs
- long term sickness absence
- return to work advice
- concern about health and impact on ability to work (safety critical work, performance)
- concern that the employee's health is being adversely affected by their work
- investigation of a workplace injury or illness
- fitness to attend a management, disciplinary or investigatory meeting
- ill health retirement or capability assessment.

Role of the Occupational Health Service

Adept OH provide advice to assist managers in understanding the relationship between an employee's health and work.

The aim of the advice is:

- to help managers understand employee's fitness to fulfil expected duties and any limitations
- to identify work hazards that may affect health
- to identify health factors likely to affect performance, attendance or safety
- to signpost employees to relevant and helpful resources such as physiotherapy and staff welfare programmes
- to assist managers to identify workplace adjustments to consider
- to help employers and employees to make informed decisions if an employee is unable to return to their normal duties
- to assist managers to plan for the impact of absence or health restrictions
- to assist managers in following workplace policies, ethically and legally.

How to Make a Referral

The employee should be fully informed as to why they are being referred to OH and what questions the referrer is seeking OH to address during the consultation. The content of the referral form should be discussed and agreed with the individual prior to forwarding any documents to Adept OH.

The manager must confirm that the referral form has been discussed with the employee by completing the declaration at the bottom of the referral form. Management should make it clear to their employee about how the resulting OH report will be used and shared.

Employees are entitled to a copy of the referral form if they request it and at any time thereafter. The referring manager should be aware that whatever is written in the referral form can be viewed by the employee at any stage (for example in the event of a Subject Access Request, or should a case ever go to a Tribunal).



What Information Should a Manager Provide in a Referral

All sections of the referral form should be completed so that the employee can be contacted and their identity confirmed. Copies of job descriptions if these are task specific are useful. Whether or not the employee is currently absent and if so when the absence began, and the reason that has been given.

It is helpful to include an absence history, particularly where advice is required in relation to short-term absence. If any adjustments have already been made in relation to hours, duties etc. these should be detailed and how successful any adjustments have been.

In cases of work-related stress, what issues which have been raised and any measures the referrer and/or the employee have taken to address these (such as workplace counselling, reduction in hours/duties, stress risk assessment etc.). This is particularly relevant if there are unresolved issues within the employment relationship and if an employee is within or due to progress to disciplinary/capability procedures so that we are aware of the full circumstances of the referral.

OH Referral advice that may be required:

- Is there an underlying health problem affecting attendance or performance at work?
- If a health problem exists, could it be a disability in terms of Equality legislation?
- Whether at work or not, what is the employee's current state of fitness for work?
- Where the employee is off work, if possible, please indicate timescales of when the employee is likely to return to work?
- Are there any modifications or adjustments to work, which are likely to help promote a return to work or alleviate the health condition and facilitate workplace rehabilitation?
- Is there any additional medical treatment that might be recommended?
- Is there any likelihood that the work environment may be contributing to reduced performance or sickness absence?
- Will this person be able to contribute fully within their post either; when at work, upon and following return to work, or at any stage in the future?
- Is the employee fit to attend a management / disciplinary meeting?

The Occupational Health Assessment Process

Following receipt of the referral, Adept OH will triage the case as appropriate and offer a telephone assessment appointment to the employee. Most cases will be assessed by an occupational health adviser in the first instance but where it is deemed clinically appropriate, the case may be triaged to an alternative assessment. Where this is recommended, a bespoke quote will be provided to the client before the case is progressed.

Triage of cases is completed within 24 hours of referral receipt and an appointment is offered to take place within 10 days of the referral. An information sheet will be sent to the employee with the first appointment offer. Once confirmed, an OHA will undertake a clinical assessment of the employee.



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Information Management Will Receive in the OH Report

The OH report will focus on the effects of work on health and health on work. The report will include:

- an opinion about fitness to work
- a prediction about the likelihood of a return to work
- work factors likely to affect health
- health and safety recommendations where appropriate
- suitable adjustments to include possible restrictions at work
- advice on a phased return to work where appropriate.
- whether the Equality Act is likely to apply.

Any recommendations made will not be prescriptive but should enable a manager to determine what can and cannot be reasonably accommodated, in the context of the business, to help an employee in work or back to work.

With the employee's consent, a written OH report providing this advice is forwarded to the referring manager within 2-5 days after the assessment. Adept OH will seek consent from the individual to return the final OH report to the named referring manager and / or HR Business Partner. The employee is entitled to view the report before it is released.

Difficult/Complex Cases

Occupational health advice is for guidance purposes only and it is ultimately for managers to decide and determine what level of adjustments can be accommodated in relation to business and operational needs.

Where it is relevant, Adept OH has a duty to make managers aware of how employees feel about their work situation, particularly in cases of work-related stress. Perceptions and feelings are reported as such and not as fact.

The quality and clarity of advice provided by Adept OH is dependent on the quality of information provided and specific questions asked by managers.

Advice and support

If referring managers would like any advice on making a referral, including when to refer, the process of OH referrals and the content of the referral form, please do not hesitate to contact us.