



University of Essex



Completing an Occupational Health Referral Form

Guidance for Managers

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What is the purpose of Occupational Health (OH) referral?

- To generate solutions where health affects work or work affects health
- To give employees an opportunity to raise health issues and how they are impacting on work
- To seek independent professional advice on health issues to support management action
- To assist with short term sickness absences where management action alone has not improved attendance
- To assist with the management of long-term absenteeism
- To gain a confidential assessment from a qualified clinician and advice on support and strategies to aid treatment and recovery

It is not...

- To explore the legitimacy of absences
- A punitive or disciplinary process
- A treatment service – We do not duplicate services provided by GP or other specialties and **we are unable to influence NHS waiting lists**

When to refer an employee

- Frequent short-term absences
- Concerns about their mental or physical health at work (e.g. change in performance, behaviour or attendance)
- Concerns about the effect of work on health
- Longer term absences (more than 4 weeks)
- Functional assessment to establish fitness to perform specific tasks and duties in their current role
- When exhibiting signs of, or being diagnosed with, an [Occupational Disease](#)

What to put in the referral

Background information:

- Relevant employment details – length of service, nature of working environment, working hours, any capability, disciplinary or industrial injury issues.
- Nature of duties including any hazards, (i.e. copies of risk assessments, job description).
- Details of absences, if relevant. Please do not send photocopies of fit notes. It would be more helpful if you send brief summaries of relevant and current information.

Main concerns and reason for referral:

- What measures and adjustments have been discussed and/or tried to help the individual in the workplace. The more information you give us the better able we are to give you a balanced opinion of the situation.
- If ill-health retirement is being contemplated as a possible action this must be made clear in the referral so that a firm prognosis can be provided.

Referral questions - what to ask

To get specific and relevant advice, you need to ask specific and relevant questions. Consider what action you may need to take and what information you will require and ask questions that will generate that information. If in doubt, contact Occupational Health or your Employee Relations Adviser for advice. You may want to meet with an OH Adviser prior to referring an individual to discuss concerns or advice you require. This will be a Case Management meeting.

Data protection law mandates that personal data collected should be relevant and limited to what is necessary for the intended purpose. In order to avoid breaching this, the employer should only gather information they genuinely need from this individual referral and avoid asking for unnecessary or excessive information. For example, it is not necessary for managers to request detailed information on the employee's diagnosis or medication, however if during the referral it is relevant and there is a rationale for the OH Adviser to comment on this in the report, consent will be requested from the employee to include this.

You will find that OH Advisers will be focused on commenting on the impact of a health condition on an individual's function in and out of work rather than details about the condition itself. We will redirect non-health related questions or questions that are being asked of the employee where they could be asked directly.

Some suggestions to consider

We recommend that only relevant questions are asked, as asking all the examples below on every referral is not usually necessary.

1. Is the employee medically fit for the post?
2. If absent from work when is the employee likely to be fit to return to work?
3. Is there an underlying health problem that affects attendance/performance/fitness to work?
4. Is there any impact of X's health condition on their ability to undertake the role?
(Optional) which includes:
 - Shift work
 - Driving
 - Long periods of computer work

- Line management
 - Manual handling
 - Long periods standing/walking
 - Lecturing
5. Are there any permanent and if temporary restrictions to X carrying out their full duties? If these restrictions are temporary, please state time frames if possible and time for a review.
 6. Are there any work-related factors reported to be impacting on the health of the employee at this time or creating a barrier to return to work?
 7. Are there any reasonable adjustments recommended to support the employee to remain at work or return to work if currently on sickness leave?
 8. Is there any individual support that can be recommended for the employee to assist in recovery/maintaining health and wellbeing?
 9. Are there any relevant University Policies, guidance documents or recommended risk assessments for management and the employee to consider referring to at this time?
 10. Is X likely to provide a regular and effective service?
 11. Are there specific support resources that X would find helpful in supporting their recovery and return to work/maintaining their health and wellbeing?
 12. Is The Equality Act 2010 likely to apply in this case?

Note – The OH response statement to this question will be as below and will advise if the Act is likely or not likely to apply:

“An individual is classified as ‘disabled’ under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

In my clinical opinion, based on the Occupational Health assessment and information provided to me at the time, X does/does not have a long term impairment that has a substantial impact on xx activities of daily living.

Although this is ultimately a legal determination and not based on medical facts alone, my advice as an occupational health clinician is that the disability provisions of The Equality Act 2010 are unlikely/likely to apply at this time.”

13. This could be used as a stand-alone question for management or ER Advisers:

X has reported to me that they would like to request an Occupational Health referral to discuss their health/personal concerns at this time. I do not have any specific questions other than requesting OH arrange to see the individual to offer support.

If there are any recommendations required in relation to their work or support at work, I would be happy to receive a report if the employee consents to this.

Procedure for Requesting an OH Assessment:

All referrals to OH must be submitted on an OH Management Referral Form, which can be found on the [Staff Directory](#).

1. Manager and employee discuss the reason for a referral.

It is important that both employee and referrer understand the purpose of the referral, taking into account the above points. It is vital to ensure that the employee understands that an OH referral is being made to ensure they can continue or return to work safely while protecting their physical and mental wellbeing.

2. Manager to complete, sign and send the referral to OH.

It is important to bear in mind that any correspondence received by OH about an employee becomes part of their OH file and that the employee will be shown the referral. The employee has a legal right of access to these records under the Data Protection Act 1998. It is the referring manager's responsibility to give a copy of the referral form to both the employee and Employee Relations.

3. Referral is triaged by OH and an appointment is booked.

Appointments are offered via telephone, Zoom or face to face. If face to face, the appointment will be held at one of the University of Essex campuses. Email notifications of appointments will be sent to the employee, referrer, and Employee Relations as appropriate. These are sent through our OH system, which uses a no-reply email address: UniEssexOccHealth@Cority.com.

4. Assessment

During the appointment, the contents of the referral will be discussed, and an assessment of the employee's health issues and the impact this has on their work will be undertaken. Please note that clinical and personal details will remain confidential unless consent is given.

5. Occupational Health Report

This will be sent following the assessment. The content of the report is discussed with the employee at the consultation. There may be a delay in sending this as the employee has the right to see the report before it is sent to the manager. It is their right to do so and if they request this you will be informed in writing of any delay. If the employee does not give consent for the report to be released, they will be informed that their manager will only be able to act on the information already available to them and you will be informed in writing. You will then be required to take the necessary action based on the information already available.

All Occupational Health reports will be sent by e-mail as a password-protected attachment. The password will be sent in a separate e-mail. This will also be shared with the employee. Where requested, hard copies will be sent by post.

6. GP/Specialist reports

Where it is necessary to obtain further medical information, we may apply for a medical report from the employee's own GP or specialist. This may delay full answers to your questions in the Occupational Health Report. Once the report has been received by OH it will be interpreted, and the report will be sent to you explaining the findings.

7. Answers to your specific questions

If we are unable to fully answer your questions at the first session, it may be necessary for us to make a further appointment. Where it becomes apparent that we cannot progress a case after two appointments, we will endeavour to contact you to discuss further.

If you have any queries or would like any additional information, please contact ohquery@essex.ac.uk

Additional resources

- [Reasonable Adjustments on the Staff Directory](#)
- [Manager Wellbeing Directory](#) (hosted on Moodle)
- [Support with employee health and disability](#) – Government guidance for employers and managers to support employees and understand legal requirements, with a focus on managing absence and staying in touch with absent employees.