

VOH - Employer Guidance for Occupational Health Assessments

(External Document)

The advice provided by Occupational Health (OH) Clinicians in this context is primarily designed to support the referring manager and Human Resources in their decision-making when dealing with a health-related issue in the workplace. OH, advice is also given to the employee.

After the assessment of the health problem, a report is provided to the referring manager. This is not a “medical” report, but a “management” report designed to answer specific questions asked by the referring manager. It does not go into medical detail but addresses the functional implications of the medical problem using lay language.

Reasons for Referral

There may be many reasons for wishing to request Occupational Health advice in relation to an employee, such as:

- Long-term sickness absence – usually defined as a continuous absence of 4 weeks or more.
- Recurring short-term absences – based on episodes and their frequency e.g., Bradford formula.
- Concerns over work performance – poor or reduced performance levels where there may be a health problem.
- Investigation of work-related illness/injury – assessment of whether a health problem is likely to be work-related or not.
- Substance abuse concerns – assessment of suspected or admitted substance abuse affecting work.
- Ill-Health Retirement assessment – whether the scheme ill health retirement criteria are met. If you are considering this contact your pension provider first before submitting a referral to occupational health.
- An employee is about to be transferred to another job or is about to be promoted and a medical assessment is required.
- Assess an employee for fitness to attend a disciplinary

Consent & Confidentiality to an Occupational Health Assessment

It is the employer’s responsibility to obtain express consent from the employee to release personal data, some of which is sensitive contained in the referral form and to the Occupational Health process.

This consent must be given in circumstances in which the individual is:

- Competent to give consent
- Suitably informed of
- Why the information is required and the purpose for which it will be used
- What is the scope of the information required?
- Who will it be shared with?
- When it will be shared
- How it will be securely shared
- Consent to be obtained not under duress, inducement, or coercion; given freely
- Able to understand the consequences of disclosure or non-disclosure.

Consent can be withdrawn at any stage.

The referring person should provide the employee with our Guide to Occupational Health assessments.

Completing a Management Referral Form

A standard Management Referral Form **must be completed** in its entirety within the Orchid Live portal (Word versions of this document will not be accepted) before an employee can be booked for assessment. It is essential that key information is provided to the assessing Clinician and the quality of this information is vital to the effectiveness of the referral process.

Key information to complete the management referral form: -

- Health reason for referral
- Job Description
- Sickness Absence Record
- Performance Issues
- Stage of sickness absence management process
- Specific aspect of the role that is causing issues for the employee.

Without adequate background information, the assessing Clinician **will not** be able to fully assess a problem and respond to the questions asked.

The following questions are listed within the referral form to be selected by the referring person. These will be used as the foundation and structure of the Occupational Health assessment and answered within the OH report.

1. Is there an ongoing underlying medical condition (is the condition temporary/short-term, reoccurring, chronic/long-term?)
2. Is the individual fit for work?

3. Are you able to suggest any adjustments that the workplace could consider to support the employee at work or to assist in a return to work?
4. Possible impact the medical condition could have on the employee's ability to provide regular and efficient service in the future?
5. Is the Equality Act (disability) 2010 likely to apply?

We cap all questions at 10. This can include any of the 5 above, or you can choose 10 of your own questions. (*Total of 10 questions*)

Please note, due to the complexity of some case management referrals, additional time may be required, and this will incur a further cost.

For any complex cases where a 90-minute appointment is required, the additional charge will always be confirmed at the Triage stage.

During the OH assessment and obtaining consent for the report to be sent to the referring person/people.

Please note that telephone assessments will require the employee to be in a suitable location for a private and confidential call for approximately 20-60 minutes. Calls cannot be taken whilst an employee is driving. Please can you remind your employee that they should have close-to-hand, details of medication, other treatments, and past medical history?

The Clinician will read out the content within the Referral Form to the employee. If it becomes clear to the Clinician that the employee is not aware of the content of the referral, the Clinician may decide to terminate the assessment. This will incur a full charge.

The OH assessment entails the Clinician asking carefully chosen and relevant questions to obtain health and medical details. These details are used with the Clinician's knowledge, experience, and research evidence to form an opinion regarding the questions that the referring person has asked.

At the end of the assessment phase of the consultation, the Clinician will outline the report content to the employee and ask for consent to send it to the referring person/persons. If consent is not given the Clinician will enquire why and try to resolve any concerns. If the person is still not able to consent, the Clinician will explain that the business will be informed of this and may make decisions without the health professional's opinion which could be detrimental. This is balanced with the legal standard of consent not being obtained under duress, coercion, or inducement.

The individual may request a copy of the report before it is sent to the referring person. This can often assist in obtaining consent. The employee is given 3 working days to view the report and contact us with changes or other reasons before it is automatically sent to the referring person/persons. Only factual and grammatical changes are made to the report; The Clinician's opinion is not changed.

Report to the Referring HR Representative and Confidentiality

Confidentiality and informed consent are a cornerstone of the assessment and report process. The referring contact will be provided with sufficient information to enable them to appropriately manage the case within the workplace and inform the business decision-making process, whilst protecting the clinical privacy of the employee.

Our service level agreement is to release the report to the referring person in 5-6 working days unless the employee has requested to see it first (prior viewing).

If you wish to seek clarification on receipt of the report, then please do make further contact with Valentine OH. The advice provided will be within the remit of the consent linked to the questions being asked.

Additional Medical Information

If our Clinician feels a GP or specialist report will add value to the case, they will discuss the reasons for the request being made with the employee and ensure informed consent is received. Estimated costing will be sent to the business when such requests are indicated.

Where this is required, permission will be sought from the referring manager to action such a request, as this will incur additional costs. The reasons for the request will always be made clear to the referring manager.

Did Not Attend/Cancellations

Please be aware should an employee fail to attend an appointment or cancellation is not received within three working days of an appointment then this would result in a full charge.

The Clinician will make up to 3 attempts to call the employee 5 minutes apart up to 10 minutes. If there is no response from these attempts, we will class the appointment as did not attend (DNA). A full charge is incurred.

Please note: that verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, aggression, abuse, discrimination, or physical assault will not be tolerated by VOH under any circumstances. There will be still a cost to your business if our staff needs to end the call or leave the premises.