

Protocol for Management Referrals to Occupational Health (Revised November 2018)

Management referrals are made to occupational health via the '*Managers Referral Form*', which can be obtained from the Intranet, Ealing Grid for Learning or directly from Occupational Health. The form may be filled in electronically and emailed to occupationalhealth@ealing.gov.uk or printed off, completed and forwarded to the unit by post or in person. Guidance is made available on how to complete the form.

It is important that referrals are fully completed and information is accurate with sufficient detail. The manager's declaration on the final page must be fully completed noting that:

- The referral has been discussed with the employee, where possible, and a copy supplied
- A copy has been supplied to the relevant HR Advisor
- Full contact details are supplied

Further guidance is also available to managers on the referral process ('*OH Guidance to Managers on Referrals to Occupational Health*').

On receipt of a referral an OH Nurse Advisor (OHNA) will check the form to ensure it is fully completed, if not, it will be returned to the manager to supply the missing information or where appropriate the information may be supplied by email as an addendum. Please note that any addendum's will be made available to the employee.

Once the OHNA is satisfied that the form is complete, it will be passed to the admin team to register the referral, allocate a case number, retrieve any old notes and make up a medical file.

The file is then passed to an OHNA to assess and decide the next action, which may consist of one of the following:

- An appointment is allocated with the OHNA or the OH Physician
 - A consent form is sent to the employee for completion
 - A workplace visit may be scheduled
 - An appointment is allocated with the advisory physiotherapist
- (List not exhaustive)

Appointments are allocated on first come first serve basis and reviews are scheduled for the most appropriate interval decided by the OHNA or OH Physician.

Where further issues arise the manager may request a further review appointment if this is within a reasonable time frame of the original referral. Where there has been a considerable time lapse (several months), or the issues presented are different, the manager will be required to submit a new referral with the up to date information.

It is assumed that the referring manager has communicated the reason for their referral to occupational health and provided an opportunity for the employee to discuss this with them.

Appointments

Appointment letters are sent out to the employee's home address, unless otherwise indicated, and a copy is sent to the manager and HR Advisor for their information.

Employees are requested to confirm their attendance at the appointment by calling or emailing the Occupational Health. Managers are expected to facilitate the release of employees from work to attend the appointment and encourage attendance by checking the employee is aware of the time and date, diarising the appointment details and reminding the employee as necessary.

A family member, friend, colleague or union representative may accompany employees to their occupational health consultation but will be asked to remain in the waiting room during the consultation to ensure doctor/nurse/client confidentiality.

The occupational health staff make every effort to ensure that employees are seen on, or close, to their allocated appointment time but occasionally there are delays due to the complexity or late attendance of the case preceding theirs. Therefore staff should allow sufficient time to attend the appointment, much as they would when attending their GP surgery or hospital consultant.

Employees who arrive more than 15 minutes late for their appointment may not be seen.

Failure to attend a scheduled appointment is confirmed in writing to the manager and HR Advisor. Managers are expected to actively manage non-attendance at occupational health appointments by establishing the reason and discussing this with the employee.

The manager may request a second date is allocated where there has been a non-attendance, supplying the reason for this.

Following a second non-attendance, no further appointments will be issued until the manager has written formally to the employee instructing them of the need to attend, only then will a third and final appointment be allocated.

A similar approach is taken with employees who continually cancel appointments as it is our assumption that the manager is requesting the assistance of occupational health and this cannot be given in a timely fashion where there is continued delay in the employee attending.

It has been necessary for the Occupational Health Department to implement this policy due to the high demand on the service and limited resources. This

ensures that delays are kept to a minimum and there is fair access to the service for all managers and staff.

It should be noted that the purpose of the occupational health assessment is to provide advice and guidance to the manager and is not part of the formal disciplinary or capability process, although the advice provided by occupational health may be used to inform a manager's decision on how to proceed in dealing with an employee's absence.

Chaperones

We are unable to offer a choice of OH Physician, Physiotherapist or OH Nurse due to resources available to the service and therefore where an employee requests a chaperone, we will arrange for another member of the OH team to accompany the employee into the consultation. In most cases this would be an OH Nurse Advisor unless there were exceptional circumstances and one was not available. In this case another non-clinical member of the team would assist.

On occasions the OH Physician/ OH Nurse Advisor may request a chaperone and the same conditions would apply. This would be explained to the employee before a consultation commences to ensure consent is explicit. If the OH Physician/ OH Nurse Advisor require a chaperone and the employee refuses to allow a third party to be present then the consultation could not continue.

In some cases an OH Nurse Advisor will also be present during a consultation where he/she may have had prior involvement in the case or have additional information which may assist the Physician e.g. risk assessment, case conference, workplace visit. This may be particularly helpful to outside consultants providing an independent assessment on an employee and who has limited knowledge of the organisation.

Interpreters

Where an employee does not speak English the employing department may agree to fund an interpreter to attend the occupational health appointment in order to provide assistance with the agreement of the employee.

Mental Health Advocates'

Where applicable a recognised mental health advocate may attend with the employee in agreement with the Occupational Health Physician/Nurse.

Specialist opinions

In some cases Occupational Health advises that it would be helpful to have an opinion of a specialist in a specific field i.e. psychiatry, neurology, respiratory

etc. This is discussed with the employee and if they consent to a referral the OH Physician/Nurse Advisor will make this recommendation to the manager.

Occupational health will inform the manager of the costs involved in obtaining a specialist opinion and it is the manager's decision as to whether or not to provide funding.

Where funding is agreed occupational health will arrange for the employee to be seen by a specialist in the required medical field.

Following an assessment, a report will be supplied to the OH Physician to inform their advice to the manager.

Feedback to management

Following medical consultations, with the employees consent, the OH Nurse Advisor or OH Physician will provide a written report to the manager, providing advice and an occupational health opinion on the issues raised in the referral and subsequent communications.

Review appointments may be indicated and will be scheduled as appropriate.

Managers are required to provide updates as requested or when additional information becomes available to them.

Consent

Occupational Health staff will assume from the managers declaration on the final page of the referral document that the employee is aware of the reason for their referral. Occupational Health will clarify the employees understanding of the role of Occupational Health and obtain their consent to the process.

Requirement to attend occupational health appointments are in the terms and conditions of service for Ealing employees. However, the employee may refuse to attend an appointment and therefore the manager will need to manage the absence/issues and make decisions without the benefit of medical advice available to them. HR would provide guidance in this instance.

The employee may also withdraw consent:

- For the OH Nurse Advisor or OH Physician to write to their doctor for information
- To the provision of feedback to the manager

In these cases occupational health will advise the employee and write to the manager informing them that consent is wholly or partly withdrawn and recommendations cannot be made or may be limited.

In order for the OH Nurse Advisor or OH Physician to write to the employee's doctor, the employee must provide informed consent in writing, a copy of which is supplied to the doctor with the request for a report.

Should the employee withdraw their consent for part or whole of the process, occupational health will inform the manager that they are unable to advise or only partly advise.

Written consent

Written consent is required in the following circumstances:

- Applying for a medical report from the employees own General Practitioner, hospital consultant or other person supplying clinical care.
- Referring an employee's case for second opinion in order to obtain ill health retirement.
- Providing a written report to the Manager/HR Advisor
- Referring the employee to an independent specialist
- Referring an employee's case for assessment of Industrial Injury benefit
- Providing copies of medical records to a third party i.e. solicitor
- Providing full copy of medical records to employee

Written consent stands as a record that a discussion has taken place and the person's choice. Where consent is refused this should be reflected in the records with any additional notes.

Verbal/Implied consent

Written consent is not obtained for all processes within occupational health. Verbal consent may be sufficient on occasion and the employee may also imply consent by attending and cooperating with the process. They may also withdraw or refuse consent in the same way.