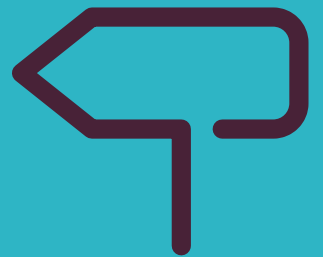


health  assured

# Occupational Health Referral

Manager's Guide



# Contents

Introduction.....	3
What is an occupational health referral? .....	3
How can a referral support a manager? .....	4
Is an occupational health referral always appropriate? .....	4
What are the steps to making an OH referral? .....	5
What sort of questions should I ask on the referral? .....	6
What happens next? .....	7
My employee refuses to give consent. What can I do? .....	7

# Introduction

The Health Assured occupational health service provides independent and impartial medical advice to employers and employees about health and work issues. This guide provides you with the information that will help you get the best out of our service.

## What is an occupational health referral?

Sometimes, a person's health can affect their ability to work. Or work can begin to affect their health. Either way, employers have a duty of care to make sure this is minimised.

The occupational health referral process is designed to provide advice and support to employees.

Most issues you notice with an employee can be fixed by talking to them. A medical opinion isn't always needed. However, in cases of long-term absence, noticeable performance loss due to health, or illness caused by work, you should consider an occupational health referral.

In a referral, a trained specialist will ask questions and assess your employee on several criteria:

- Their ability to do their job
- Any complications that affects their ability to carry out tasks
- Reasonable adjustments to make those complications easier

They'll provide you with a written report, which is used to understand how to get the employee back into normal working hours as quickly and smoothly as possible.

**Please note:** When a referral is received, the clinical triage team will review the details provided and determine the most appropriate assessment type required to produce a suitable report to aid employers and employees. There are occasions when referrals will meet certain criteria which would be deemed as either standard, complex telephone or face-to-face. The criteria has been put together and approved by a panel of senior occupational health practitioners.

There may be times when an employer disagrees with the professional opinion of the practitioner who has reviewed the referral, and may request that the case is done as a standard telephone assessment, instead of a complex telephone assessment or face-to-face. Health Assured practitioners will use their clinical expertise in determining the correct pathway for a referral to be processed. The best way to obtain a robust report which would meet management expectations is part of the professional service we endeavour to provide. We will work together to achieve the best outcome for both the employer and employee.

# How can a referral support a manager?

Occupational health is an advisory service. Specialist advisors and physicians can provide advice and guidance on:

- Assessing an employee's ability to work due to health or disability reasons. After the referral, we provide a clear written report to help you manage your case.
- The specific tasks or duties your employee can or cannot manage safely.
- Estimated timeframes for returning to work, and returning to normal hours and duties.
- Whether the work that an employee is doing is causing or exacerbating their illness.
- Suggestions for adjustments or modifications that could support the employee in their role.
- An employee's rehabilitation back to work after a period of sickness absence. This includes reasonable adjustments and modifications.
- Advising employers on their legal duties towards ill or disabled employees. This includes the Equality Act 2010, Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and Control of Vibration at Work Act 2005.
- The likelihood of the employee's attendance or performance improving.
- Pension medical assessments—early release of a pension on medical grounds. Advice regarding fitness of an employee to attend a formal meeting, such as a disciplinary or grievance, with management.

## Is an occupational health referral always appropriate?

There are some things that an OH referral is not designed to help with:

- Finding out highly detailed medical information about an employee's health. This includes any medication or diagnoses—employees are entitled to privacy.
- Getting a second opinion on a diagnosis or treatment when an employee is unhappy with their GP's advice.
- Providing specialist investigations such as blood tests or X-rays for an employee's symptoms.
- Giving you definitive advice about Equality Act 2010 status—this is a decision that employers and courts of law make. We can give advice about activities and impairments to help make your decision.
- Managing your employee for you. We give advice but the employer may have other operational, business or legal needs to consider. It's up to you to form your management plan based on the referral's advice.

# What are the steps to making an OH referral?

Making a referral might seem complex, but it's actually a simple process. We need certain information, and there are best practice steps which you should follow for the confidence of your employee.

- 1** First, discuss the referral with your employee. This is the most important step—it's possible that you might find a solution to the issue here, and won't need to go any further.
- 2** Complete a management referral and employee consent form. You can get these forms from us by emailing [occhealth@healthassured.co.uk](mailto:occhealth@healthassured.co.uk). You should share the content of this form with your employee, as transparency and honesty are always positive.
- 3** There are a number of things you should be sure to include in your referral. Job description, specific details of tasks, any recent changes that affect the job. Try to build an accurate picture of the work environment, and the employee's place in it.
- 4** Include sickness and absence records, along with any fit notes or doctor's comments.
- 5** If you have questions, you think should be asked about specifics—this can mean possible substance abuse issues or personal conflicts—include them on the referral form. We'll go over some example questions later in this guide.
- 6** Once the forms are filled out, and your employee has read them and given consent, email them to [occhealth@healthassured.co.uk](mailto:occhealth@healthassured.co.uk).

Remember, under GDPR employees have the right to request a copy of any information we hold on them. This includes your referral. With this in mind, please ensure that everything you note down is clear, accurate and honest.

# What questions should I ask on the referral?

It's a good idea to make these questions specific. Vague questions get vague answers, and you need clear, unambiguous responses. A referral is meant to be a supportive process, rather than adversarial—it's about finding ways to help an employee get back to work and do their best.

Some good example questions:

“

*Is this employee medically fit to work in this role?*

*When, if absent, are they likely to be able to return to work?*

*Is a phased return recommended?*

*Is a review appointment recommended?*

*Would the employee's condition be covered by the disability provisions of the Equality Act (2010)?*

*Are any adjustments needed to help the employee in their work?*

*Are there any restrictions in what the employee can do in their role?*

*Is the employee receiving the appropriate medical care and support?*

*Is the employee's illness caused or exacerbated by their work?*

*If the employee is taking medication, is it likely to impair their ability to do their job safely and effectively?*

”

Obviously not all of these are relevant to every case—use your judgement and knowledge to ask the right questions for the best results.

## What happens next?

When we receive the forms, we will contact the employee to arrange an appointment. This can be either a telephone consultation, or a clinic appointment. Should your employee be unable to attend a clinic, we can offer home visits in certain circumstances. Tell us about this on the referral form. Home visits incur extra charges.

If an employee can't make the appointment, you must contact us providing the following:

- Two working days' notice for phone consultations.
- Two to five working days' notice for clinic appointments—this varies depending on the clinic, see the appointment letter for details.

We reserve the right under our cancellation policy to charge a maximum of £275 plus VAT. If your company policy is to pass this charge on to an employee, be sure to inform them of this when gaining consent. If your employee has difficulties with English, it's your responsibility to advise Health Assured and provide an interpreter.

## My employee refuses to give consent. What can I do?

Employees have the right to refuse the consultation, or refuse to release the report afterward. This doesn't happen often, and we advise that you assess and discuss these rare cases with your employee.

Sometimes, employees fear that an OH referral can be used in order to dismiss or treat them unfairly. Explain that this isn't the case, and the referral is a means of finding the best path forward for all concerned.

Our occupation health advisors are available [Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm](#) to help with issues like this—call us for advice.

Contact us:





## Health Assured Ltd

The Peninsula, Victoria Place  
Manchester, M4 4FB

[occhealth@healthassured.co.uk](mailto:occhealth@healthassured.co.uk)

