

External Medical Reports

InterHealth Occupational Health (OH) provides a wide range of services and does not routinely request external medical reports from employees' medical and healthcare practitioners, e.g. General Practitioner, Specialist Doctor, Physiotherapist, Chiropractor. However, there are occasions when it can be helpful for OH to request reports e.g.

- When a GP continues to provide medical certificates signing an employee as unfit for work when OH considers the employee fit to return to work, on a rehabilitation plan as required.
- When OH requires confirmation and/ or a greater understanding of an employees diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

In some cases a medical report is not required but it can be helpful to write to the practitioner to explain the approach being taken by the organisation and the support that is available and to seek their support with appropriate medical certification.

It is usually more beneficial for our OH team to request reports than HR or managers, as doctors often provide more detailed information to an OH professional.

The Access to Medical Reports Act 1988

OH cannot contact an employee's medical or healthcare practitioner without their written consent. This can be arranged either via OH, your HR department or the manager, using a standard consent form that we can provide. Under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, employees have the right to withhold their consent and to have access to the report and request amendment of the report prior to it being supplied to OH. In cases where employees want to see the report before it is sent to OH, they need to make arrangements to see the report within 21 days of the report being requested.

When asking an employee to sign a consent form, OH explains the reason for wanting to contact the employees' medical or healthcare practitioner and provides an information sheet to help ensure that they understand their rights and the process.

Response Times

Once a medical report has been requested, OH aims to ensure that the report is received at the earliest opportunity. However, OH has no control over when reports are written or employees have access to them and they can take several weeks to receive. Apart from regular contact with the practitioner or their secretaries OH is limited in what it can do to receive reports quickly. It can be helpful for the employee to contact their practitioner or their secretaries as they often have a better response to chasing up a report than OH.

Feedback

On receipt of a medical report, the OH Practitioner will provide feedback relevant to the case to the organisation. Prior to providing feedback, OH may undertake a telephone or face-to-face review with the employee. It is important that the employee is fully informed and is aware of feedback that is being provided to the organisation and gives their consent to the release of any

sensitive or confidential data as appropriate. Medical reports are confidential to OH and copies are not provided to the organisation.