

Service Descriptions

OH Consultations

With a good understanding of both the workplace and health issues, our team can assist you in preventing sickness absence and facilitating an earlier and sustained return to work.

Occupational Health services play an important role in helping to manage your employee's health issues from a work perspective. An employee's General Practitioner or Specialist does not always fully understand the employee's work, health and safety risks or options for workplace adjustments and rehabilitation. With a good understanding of both the workplace and health issues, InterHealth Occupational health (OH) is able to assist you in effectively managing employee health issues and disabilities from a work perspective, preventing sickness absence and facilitating an earlier and sustained return to work.

When you have a concern

In cases where there are employee health concerns, our OH team can assist HR and managers by discussing the issues and providing advice to help develop a reasonable management plan and undertake an OH Consultation to provide a more detailed opinion and advice. These concerns could relate to long-term sickness absence lasting more than 4 weeks, disability, a newly diagnosed or symptomatic health condition, alleged work-related ill-health, and when there are, or may be, underlying health issues related to poor performance and intermittent short-term sickness absence.

In some cases, an early referral can make a significant difference to the long-term outcome e.g. psychological ill-health (depression, stress etc) and musculoskeletal injury (back pain, upper limb disorder etc). We can review with HR the major causes of absence in the organisation and agree specific trigger points for referral.

Medical reports

The OH team liaises with the employees' doctors as required by requesting medical reports and/or explaining the approach being taken by the organisation and seeking the doctors 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. Written consent is required from the employee and this can be arranged either via our OH team, your HR department or the manager, using a standard consent form that we can provide.

Understanding the referral process

Consultation referrals are made by HR or a manager using a Referral Form, provided by OH and that can be developed to meet the specific needs of the organisation. The process and reason for the referral is discussed with the employee by HR or the manager, prior to the referral being made to OH. This is important to ensure that the employee understands the reason for the referral and gives their informed consent for a consultation to proceed. An Employee Information Sheet is provided by OH and should be given to the employee by HR or the manager as part of the referral process.

Consultations

Consultations can take up to one hour. During this time, the OH Practitioner checks that the employee understands the role of OH and the reason for referral and asks specific questions about the health condition and treatment, lifestyle, social factors and their work. The consultation ends with the OH Practitioner answering any questions, providing advice and summarising the planned feedback to be given to HR and/or the manager.

Consultations can be undertaken by telephone or face-to-face. We do not undertake home visits except in exceptional circumstances. If physically able to travel, most individuals can travel a short distance to a work site or other suitable location and by meeting away from their home; a positive focus is given about recovery and return to work.

Telephone consultations are an effective way of dealing with many referrals. The approach we take to the consultation and the questions asked are the same regardless of whether it is done via telephone or face-to-face. The individuals' GP has usually undertaken thorough investigations and given a diagnosis and we may only undertake a clinical examination if there is a discrepancy between the diagnosis and the individuals reported symptoms. As the focus is on symptoms, the limitations these may have on the employee's work and how these may be overcome to help enable the employee to undertake their role, a telephone consultation is a suitable and effective way of doing a consultation and being able to provide the organisation with a professional OH opinion. Employees themselves often find it easier to talk to an OH Practitioner on the telephone as they can discuss sensitive issues anonymously.

Benefits of telephone consultations

- HR working with our OH team who understand the issues and the organisation
- Ability to do a consultation with an employee wherever they are based
- Reduced costs e.g. travel, time away from work, follow-up OH reviews
- Reduced waiting times for an appointment
- Flexibility to do consultations/ assessments anytime Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
- Minimal administration to arrange appointments
- No wasted resources by employees not attending appointments
- Employee perception of independence and anonymity

There are no specific criteria for determining whether a telephone or face-to-face consultation is appropriate and a decision is made based on our professional and clinical experience and judgment and also in close liaison with HR or the referring manager. The type of consultation can be agreed with HR or the manager at the beginning of the referral process in each individual case. Face-to-face consultations will be undertaken as required.

Feedback

Following the consultation, the OH Practitioner provides a clear professional opinion to help enable HR and the manager to deal with the case effectively going forward.

A detailed written feedback report includes advice on:

- Relevant details on the health condition(s) and treatment that may affect work, that can be disclosed without breaching confidentiality, e.g. whether it is on-going or likely to recur and how work may be affected in terms of attendance, performance, time off for appointments etc
- Fitness for work and, if applicable, the likely date for return to work
- Any limitations on work activities
- Reasonable adjustments and rehabilitation
- Any work issues that may be contributing to or could exacerbate the employee's health condition

We do not routinely provide a copy of the report to the employee concerned and they are usually advised to contact HR or their manager if they would like a copy. However, under the Data Protection Act 1998, we are obliged to provide copies of health records to the employee if a request is made.

Rehabilitation

A focus on rehabilitation is at the core of our approach to good workplace health management. Rehabilitation includes making reasonable adjustments according to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and should be considered following long-term sick leave and also when an employee has a new or symptomatic health condition. Good rehabilitation plans help employees to manage conditions from a work perspective and can help to prevent or minimise health risks and sickness absence. Our OH team can assist HR and management in developing realistic, structured plans that meet the needs of both the employee and the business. We do not dictate the specific details of any rehabilitation plan to be implemented but make recommendations that HR and the manager can discuss with the employee, as they formulate the plan. We can be involved to the level you require.