

## **Occupational Health Referral**

### **Guidance Notes for Managers**

In order for Occupational Health to provide an effective and efficient service, it is important to provide complete and appropriate information when referring an employee. Referrals which are incomplete, or contain inappropriate or irrelevant information, will be returned and this will cause delay in receiving the service you require.

The following guidance is to assist you when making an Occupational Health referral.

#### **Data Protection and Confidentiality:**

All referrals and the information they contain are treated under the legislation governing medical confidentiality and data protection. Before submitting an Occupational Health referral you must advise the individual that you are referring them to Occupational Health, the reason for the referral, the information you are providing to Occupational Health and the questions that you would like Occupational Health to answer (you must sign the form to confirm that this discussion has taken place). If possible, and practical to do so, you should give the individual sight of the completed referral form. You should therefore be mindful of how you complete the referral, using only factual and objective terms. Anecdotal information, hearsay and speculation should be avoided, as should the details of any third parties.

#### **The Occupational Health Referral Form:**

It is crucial that all the relevant sections of the referral form are completed correctly and fully in order that Occupational Health have all the required information to provide you with relevant, useful advice.

- Manager's information – please ensure you include your contact details and the date that you completed the referral form.
- Employee information - personal details, such as name, date of birth, up-to-date contact details, are vital so that there are no errors with staff receiving appointment letters or other contact. Details about the employee's role and an up to date Job Description are required so that the Occupational Health Practitioner can fully understand what is expected of the employee in the workplace. It is very difficult to give advice on functional ability if the role is not understood. It is important that you ask the employee how they would prefer to be contacted by Occupational Health and indicate this on the form.
- Reason for referral – please select the reason you are referring the individual to Occupational Health. If the referral is due to the individual's high levels of short-term absence please indicate whether the issue is being managed through the informal or formal stages of the relevant University Sickness Absence Procedure. In some cases the individual may not be off work or have had previous periods of

sickness absence but a referral may be needed due to concerns around the individual's ability to fulfil their role as a result of a health issue or their well-being.

• Referral details – please include as much relevant information here as possible. The type of information you provide here should include –

- Length and reason for current absence.
- Absence history (dates, duration of absences, reasons for absences) and any relevant information from Return-to-Work meetings.
- Dates and details of Fit Notes provided.
- Nature of the individual's role and the impact the condition appears to be having on their ability.
- What adjustments, if any, have already been put in place?
- Any other form of support offered/ provided to the individual.
- If appropriate to the referral, please include details of any formal management process the employee is currently involved in.
- Advice required from Occupational Health – please select all the areas that you would like Occupational Health to advise on.

Where an individual is off sick long-term you are likely to want to know the prognosis (the likely course of the condition), when the individual is likely to be able to return to work (whether this is a return to normal or adjusted duties), the treatment the individual is receiving or any outstanding referrals for investigation/ treatment of the medical condition. Depending on the case you may wish Occupational Health to advise whether it is appropriate to ask the individual to give consent to allow Occupational Health to access to the individual's medical records, e.g. if they are being seen by a specialist. In long-term cases there may reach a point where the University requires advice regarding the likelihood of a return to work in the foreseeable future and whether retirement on ill health grounds should be considered.

Where an individual has been referred to Occupational Health because of concerns around high levels of short-term sickness absence you may want to ask Occupational Health to advise whether the individual is able to maintain regular attendance (they will advise whether the individual is suffering from an underlying health condition, any treatment they are receiving, and the prognosis of any diagnosed medical condition).

With all referrals you may want to know Occupational Health's recommendations, for example, if there is an underlying medical condition causing the absence(s), whether adjustments are required to the individual's duties or hours (and how long these adjustments will be needed for or whether they will be required indefinitely), if a phased return to work is required and if so what this will look like. Also, whether the individual's condition or treatment mean that future absences are likely, etc.

In both short-term and long-term sickness absence cases you may wish to know whether the Equality Act is likely to apply (i.e. whether the individual is likely to be regarded as having a disability as defined by the Act), and if the absence is due to an accident or injury at work and whether Occupational Health plan to review the individual again.

As well as the standard areas of questioning the referral details box allows you to state any case-specific questions that you would like Occupational Health to respond to. Your HR Advisor can advise on this.

### **Review Appointments:**

Once a management referral has been initiated Occupational Health will assess the member of staff and then determine whether a review appointment is needed and will advise you of this in the report. In these cases you do not need to complete a further referral form but it may be useful for you to provide a brief update to Occupational Health prior to the review appointment if there have been any significant changes since the last appointment or if there are new, specific questions that you would like Occupational Health to advise on.

### **Documentation Required:**

Please ensure you provide the following information with the referral form –

- Sickness Absence Record (previous 12 months)
- Job Description
- Any other relevant information - It may be relevant for Occupational Health to be aware of any sensitive issues that may be pertinent in order for the appointment to be beneficial. For example if the employee has personal, mobility or transport difficulties, raising awareness of this would be helpful before an appointment is issued.

### **Sending the Referral:**

Once completed the referral should be emailed, posted or hand delivered under confidential cover to Occupational Health.

### **Occupational Health Assessment and Reports:**

The assessment will be carried out and a report sent to the referring manager under confidential cover (reports are normally sent by e-mail). A copy of the report will be given to the employee if they have indicated that they wish to see it. In such cases the individual is given 5 working days from receipt of the report to make any comments before the report is sent to their manager.

The reports will contain recommendations and advice regarding the specific questions asked by the manager. Reports will not disclose medical information unless there is specific consent to do so by the individual concerned.

In order to supply the best possible advice, it may be necessary to obtain further medical information from GPs or treating specialists. In such cases the individual will be asked to give their consent in line with Access to Medical Records Act 1998. You will be informed if the request for a GP/Specialist report is appropriate.

### **Queries regarding Occupational Health Referrals:**

Please contact either the Occupational Health Practitioner or your HR Advisor if you require additional guidance/ advice.