

## **Occupation Health - Employee FAQ's**

### **What is Occupational Health?**

Occupational Health (OH) is a form of medicine that focuses on the effects of work upon health and the effects of health upon work capacity.

The Council's OH service aims to support people in the workplace, looking both at the physical and mental aspects of employee health. The service is designed to keep employees healthy and safe whilst in the workplace. OH supports both the employee and Perth & Kinross Council through offering advice and guidance to support a proactive approach to managing the health of individuals.

### **What is an Occupational Health Advisor/Physician?**

OH Advisors and OH Physicians are qualified Nurses and Doctors who undertake specialist training in Occupational Health Medicine. They have the appropriate knowledge of Health and Safety and Employment Legislations and have experience in dealing with workplace related health.

### **Why have I been referred to Occupational Health?**

There are several potential reasons, the most common are:

- You are/have been absent from work due to a health condition, injury or illness.
- To help return to work following a period of absence.
- You may be attending work, but a health condition, injury or illness is affecting your performance or the safety of you or others.
- Health Surveillance - job specific assessments such as Hand and Arm Vibrations (HAVS), Audio Screening and Hepatitis B Vaccines.
- New Employment Health Assessments - when an offer has been made to a potential employee, their fitness for work is assessed.
- Physiotherapy for musculoskeletal disorders where the condition is being occupationally caused or made worse.

Your manager will have discussed your referral with you and the reasons for it.

The benefit of the referral to you is that you have an opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any concerns or health problems with the OH professional, and to consider how these might impact on your work.

OH reports issued to management should provide them with information about your health status and suggest any adjustments that could be made to either support a sustained attendance or a return to the workplace.

### **What happens before the appointment?**

Your manager will let you know that they intend to refer you for an OH appointment. You will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the reason for the referral and agree the contents of the referral to be submitted. It is likely that your manager will also confirm your contact details so that OH can contact you directly to confirm your appointment details.

### **Do I have to attend an OH appointment?**

It is your decision whether you attend an OH appointment. However, if you choose not to attend your OH appointment, you should be aware that any decisions taken about your employment would be made based on the advice available.

If you are unhappy about why you have been referred, or if you do not wish to attend, then please discuss this with your manager and advise OH as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment.

### **What will happen at the OH appointment?**

The OH professional will ensure that you understand the purpose of the assessment and their role in providing independent, impartial advice. You will be asked questions relating to your work as well as your health and lifestyle, to help determine the specific nature of the problem. During the consultation, the OH clinician will offer any advice and support they feel appropriate to assist in your recovery and tell you how they believe you can be supported. Your consent will be sought for the assessment and for a written OH report to be sent to Perth & Kinross Council. If a medical examination is necessary, your permission to proceed with this will also be sought.

### **What information is passed to Perth & Kinross Council?**

The OH report shared with Perth & Kinross Council will provide advice about your health in relation to work. This is likely to include advice about your fitness for work, how this might change in the future and any work adjustments that might support you. The report may include limited clinical (medical) information, but this will only be included where it is relevant, and with your permission. The aim of the assessment is to support you and Perth & Kinross Council in managing any health-related problems that are impacting upon your capacity for work.

### **How are my confidential records maintained?**

Your OH records are maintained to the same high standard of confidentiality as hospital or GP medical records, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998. Your OH records will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent.

### **Do I have rights of access to the OH reports written about me?**

At the consultation, the proposed content of the report will be discussed with you. It is routine practice for a copy of the medical report to be shared with you. You may also retrospectively request, in writing, copies of OH reports or records.

### **Will there be any need to contact my GP or Hospital Specialist?**

Occasionally the OH clinician will request, subject to your consent, further medical evidence from your GP or hospital specialist to inform the OH report. This process is subject to the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, which gives you certain rights including the right to see your doctor's report.

### **What should I bring with me to the appointment?**

- A list of the medication that you are taking.
- Any other information that you think may be helpful, such as letters or reports from GPs or hospital specialists.

### **What happens after the appointment?**

Your manager will arrange to meet with you to discuss the OH report and any recommendations that have been made within it. Recommendations detailed within the OH report on adjustments, phased return to work programs, duties and hours are advisory only. These will be discussed with you with your manager so that any actions by you or your department can be agreed and implemented.

The aim of the process is to better understand any health issues you may have which are having a detrimental effect on your ability to do your job and to consider with expert medical advice, what actions both you and Perth and Kinross Council should take.