

# HR & OD POLICIES

human resources and organisational development



## Occupational Health Guidance for Employees

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CONSULTATION

This guidance takes the format of frequently asked questions about the occupational health process. If you cannot find the answer to your query please contact your line manager or askHR for further assistance.

Aberdeenshire Council also have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This confidential counselling service can be accessed by telephone on **03303 800658** or **0800 023 9324** and is available to you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can also find further information and a full range of services available at <https://vivup.tercltd.co.uk?CODE=107808>

### What is an occupational health consultation?

The purpose of the consultation is to provide clear, impartial, professional, occupational health advice to the employer (usually your line manager and HR) and the employee. The consultation may be conducted via face-to-face consultation or via telephone consultation. The Occupational Health Adviser or Occupational Physician will decide on the most appropriate type of appointment for you based on your medical needs.

### Do I need an occupational health consultation?

Your line manager will refer you to Occupational Health to assess how any health issues may impact on your job and ensure that the work you are doing will not exacerbate your health issues further. Occupational Health will review all the circumstances relating to your referral. Thereby, providing you and your employer with fair and objective advice about your health and work, both in the short and long term. The advice offered will enable your line manager to ensure that, where practicable, you receive the support that you need to do your job.

### Do I have to attend an occupational health consultation?

[Aberdeenshire Council's Attendance Management Policy](#) stipulates that all employees (with the exception of teachers) must attend. You must advise Occupational Health and your line manager as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment, for a justifiable reason, so that this can be rearranged. If you do not attend, a charge will still be levied for the appointment.

If you are unclear why you have been referred, you should discuss this with your line manager. Your manager will (with the support of HR, as appropriate) try to explain and alleviate any concerns you may have.

## How will my appointment be made?

Occupational Health will contact you directly by telephone to arrange a suitable appointment for a consultation.

## What happens at the occupational health consultation?

Your consultation with an occupational health practitioner is likely to last around 20 minutes. The consultation will have a clear structure in order to utilise time whilst promoting good practice. At the consultation the practitioner will review your medical, work and social history. There will be a discussion regarding the current health problem. The practitioner will clarify recent treatments, tests, referrals and effects that the condition has on daily activities. As part of a face to face consultation it may be appropriate to carry out a medical examination, with your agreement. Although conducted by a medical professional, the role is not to diagnose or treat medical conditions. You will also be asked to consent to the consultation and also to Occupational Health providing a written outcome report to your employer.

The report is deemed private and confidential and copies will only be sent to your line manager and the HR Officer allocated to your case. The content of the report will be discussed with you at the consultation and any review dates, where applicable.

## What questions will my manager ask Occupational Health?

Occupational Health will always answer the following questions:

- Advice on the employees current health status and the prognosis for the condition
- The likely return to work date or return to full duties
- Advice on the current functional ability of the employee. If work duties are affected, advice on if this impairment is likely to be short term, long term or permanent
- A specific rehabilitation plan, advice on adjustments, if appropriate, with clear timescales
- Advice on disability in accordance with the relevant UK legislation

There is also the opportunity for the manager to ask three additional questions specific to the individual circumstances of each referral. Employee input into these questions is essential and will be discussed with you prior to referral.

## What information is passed to my employer?

Occupational Health will produce a report for your referring manager and HR that answers the questions raised in the referral. The report will address the functional work issues rather than the clinical/medical issues. It is likely to include aspects of work that you medically can or cannot do and if on a temporary basis, over what time scale. Employees can be reassured that the highly confidential clinical/medical aspects remain strictly between individuals and the Occupational Health provider. Employees can disclose anything further to their manager or HR at their discretion; or, by agreement for additional information to be passed to your employer via Occupational Health.

## Are occupational health records confidential?

Individual employee's occupational health records are maintained to the same high standard of confidentiality as hospital or GP records, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Information will only be disclosed outside the Occupational Health provider with your consent. The Occupational Health provider also keep some information on a computerised database for administrative and health statistical purposes.

## Can I access the occupational health reports written about me?

Yes. It is normal occupational health practice to allow employees access to reports written about them. Alternatively, you can request at the time of the consultation for a copy of a report. Your right of access to reports written about you is per the Data Protection Act 1998.

## Will there be any need for my GP or Hospital Specialist to be involved?

Occasionally, with your consent, the Occupational Health provider will seek a report from your GP or Specialist to supplement the consultation. This is usually if the occupational health professional requires further clinical information regarding your case, for example, information regarding diagnosis, investigations and treatment plans.

The process is subject to the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988. You have to give your consent before medical practitioners caring for you are approached. You have the right of access to these reports before they are forwarded to Occupational Health. Due to these requirements the process can be lengthy and can take a few weeks. Therefore, it is usual for an interim report to be provided to your employer. A more definitive report will be forwarded after your medical report/s have been received and reviewed by the Occupational Health provider.

In some instances, with your consent, Occupational Health may write to your GP providing information about the outcome of your consultation.

## What should I have in preparation for the occupational health consultation?

- Any medication or a list of medication that you have been taking;
- Any other information that you think may be relevant to your consultation;
- Photographic Identification (Aberdeenshire Council ID badge, passport or photographic driving license) if attending face-to-face.

## Where are Occupational Health based?

Most face to face appointments will be held at the Occupational Health provider's premises at Bridge of Don.

If you are required to attend a face to face consultation an information sheet with confirmation of the address will be included with your appointment letter which will be sent in good time before your appointment by Occupational Health.

## What can I expect if my appointment is on the phone?

If you are due to be at work for the telephone appointment then you must inform your line manager who will make suitable arrangements to allow you to have the conversation in a quiet, private place.

If you are not currently at work then you should make yourself available for the phone consultation. It is recommended that you make arrangements for this call to be taken at a location where you feel free to discuss your current situation away from disruption.

You will be asked to make yourself available 10 minutes before and after the agreed appointment time.

## What happens if I need to cancel my appointment?

As your appointment will be agreed between Occupational Health and yourself on the telephone it is unlikely you will require to change your appointment. If you do require to cancel your appointment then you must contact your manager to discuss the reasons for cancellation. It is not possible for you to cancel the appointment yourself and can only be done through your line manager. The Occupational Health provider will not accept cancellations from employees.

# Occupational Health

## Index of Documents

### Employee Guidance

| <b>Revision Date</b> | <b>Previous Revision Date</b> | <b>Summary of Changes</b>                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 04-09-2009           | -                             | Creation of all documents                         |
| 06-11-2014           | 04-09-2009                    | Amendment to Occupational Health Provider details |
| 23-07-2015           | 06-11-2014                    | Update of guidance                                |
| 05-09-2022           | 23-07-2015                    | Updated EAP Information                           |