

Absence Concierge Package HR Guide To Referrals

In the course of an employee's working life, an individual's health may have an impact on their ability to do their job. This may manifest as either an absence episode or reduced performance at work. An individual could be absent for a protracted period of time or have recurrent spells of short term absence.

Similarly, a situation can arise whereby an individual or their colleagues may have concerns that work is having a detrimental effect on an individual's health.

In these situations referral to clinical professionals, experienced in absence management and Occupational Health, is beneficial for both the employee and the employer.

The Absence Concierge Package has been designed specifically to target these areas by supporting both the employer and employee. The Package provides cover for 10 cases over a specified 2-year contract period. If you use all cases within that period, additional packages can be purchased.

WHAT IS A CASE?

A case is defined as an individual who is referred into the service. If the same individual with the same condition is referred again into the service within a 12 month period it will be classed as the same case. If the individual is referred into the service after 12 months of the original case being closed and they have the same condition, it is then classed as a new case. A case can access all the services or just one element in isolation and it would still be classed as one case.

WHAT DOES THE SERVICE PROVIDE?

Guidance for managers

- Initial point of access is an experienced HR Case Manager to deliver a co-ordinated service to referring managers.
- Telephone based service for both HR and the employee offering ease of access.
- Triage service where the HR Case Manager will advise the referring manager on the most appropriate intervention to manage the case. NB Steps may include a telephone referral to an OH Clinician, support calls with a Registered Nurse or you may be signposted to any other eligible employee benefits available.
- Referring manager will receive email progress updates from the HR Case Manager after every support call with a nurse.

Clinical opinion and support

- Confidential clinical support for employees.
- Assistance with access to appropriate treatment, using either NHS or private facilities.
- Regular contact with the employee by a Registered Nurse or Physiotherapist throughout the period of absence.
- Telephonic or Video/Teams OH assessment by an experienced OH Clinician (one per case). NB: Further referrals are available at an additional cost.
- Report on Fitness to Work and guidance on RTW plans following OH referral.
- Recommendations on adjustments required by the Equality Act.

Optional additional services (available at an additional cost on a pay as you go basis)

- Additional Referrals to an Occupational Health Physician or OH Nurse (Face to face, Telephonic and Video/Teams appointments).
- GP or specialist report requests.
- Ergonomic Workstation assessments (DSE assessment).
- Functional capacity assessments.
- Hearing Impairment & Vision Impairment assessments
- Dyslexia Diagnostic and Dyslexia workplace needs assessments

MANAGEMENT REFERRALS

What is the purpose of a management referral?

- To seek independent professional advice on health issues to support management actions.
- To give employees an opportunity to raise health issues and to explain how they are impacting on their work.
- To assist with short term sickness absences where management action alone has not improved attendance.
- To assist with the management of long term absenteeism.
- Ultimately, it will generate solutions where health affects work or work affects the health of an employee.

It is not...

- To explore the legitimacy of absences.
- A punitive or disciplinary process.
- A treatment or diagnostic service i.e. we do not duplicate services provided by GPs or other specialists and we are unable to influence NHS waiting lists.

When to refer an employee:

- If there is a pattern of frequent short term absences.
- If there are concerns about changes in an employee's performance, behaviour or attendance levels.
- If there are concerns about the effect of work on an employee's health.
- If an employee is off sick due to mental health/stress issues.
- Any longer term absences e.g. after a continuous 4 week period of absence.
- For a functional assessment to establish an employee's fitness to perform specific tasks and duties in their current role.

What is the process for making a referral?

Manager and employee to discuss the reason for a referral & ensure explicit consent:

- It is important that both the employee and the referring manager understand the purpose of the referral taking into account the above points. There is a common misconception that employees are only referred when there is doubt about the legitimacy of their absences or when they are going to be disciplined or taken down the route of capability. Unfortunately this can limit the usefulness of the service as individuals are understandably suspicious and less prepared to be open. It is therefore vital that employees understand that OH and nurse led clinical support is there for their benefit as well as for their employer.
- It is also important to bear in mind that any correspondence received by WTW about an employee becomes part of their OH file and that the information will be shared and discussed with the employee by our clinicians. The employee has a legal right of access to these records under GDPR. **It is therefore the referring manager's responsibility to share the contents of the referral form with the employee.**
- The consent form must be completed and signed (with a wet signature) by the employee in order for WTW to process any referral. **No OH assessments or support calls with a nurse or any clinician will be arranged without explicit signed consent, in accordance with GDPR.**
- Please note, employees have the right to amend or withdraw their consent at any stage during the referral process.

Referral Request:

- All referrals must be submitted on an Management Referral Form, along with the signed consent form, copy of job description and purchase order number (if requesting an ad hoc assessment, not the Absence Concierge Package).
- Referrals should be emailed to: **hbgb.oh@wtwco.com**

- **We are unable to progress any requests without all of the completed documents including signed consent.**
- If you would like an ad hoc referral for any of our additional services, please make this clear at the point of referral and provide a PO number.
- It is important that a current contact number for the employee is provided. Where possible landline numbers are preferable as WTW cannot be held liable for any mobile signal problems. **Please note, if a telephone appointment is requested and the employee is not residing in the UK, an additional charge will apply.**
- Three attempts will be made to contact the employee on the number provided and if no contact is made the case will be closed and this will count as one completed case.
- Please also note any days, times or specific dates that the employee is unavailable to attend an assessment to prevent having to reschedule appointments which will result in delays.

What to include in a referral:

- To get specific and relevant advice, you need to ask specific and relevant questions. Consider what action you may need to take and what information you require and ask questions that will generate that information. If you have a complex case, contact us on 01606 354089 and we will schedule a call for you with our OH Case Manager.
- To include what measures and adjustments have already been discussed and/or tried to help the individual in the workplace. The more information you give us the better able we are to give you a balanced opinion of the situation.
- If medical retirement is being contemplated as a possible action, this must be made clear in the referral so that a firm prognosis can be provided.

Background information to include on the referral form:

- Relevant employment details – length of service, nature of working environment, working hours, any current capability, disciplinary or industrial injury issues.
- Nature of duties including any hazards (i.e. copies of risk assessments).
- Details of absences - Please do not send photocopies of fit notes. It would be more helpful if you send brief summaries of relevant and current information.
- Are there currently any performance issues/work related issues or outstanding grievances?
- What company health benefits are available to this employee e.g. EAP, private medical insurance, IP etc?
- If this employee has no company health benefits, are the company willing to support the employee by funding, for example, physiotherapy, counselling etc?
- Has your employee self-funded any treatment of their own?
- Has the employee given you any indication of when they may be fit to return to work i.e. an estimated date?
- Are there any options of alternative duties/roles available on a temporary basis for this employee?
- Is the employee entitled to company sick pay? If so, when will company sick pay run out i.e. please give a specific date?

Some suggested questions to ask on the referral form if an OH assessment is required:

- Is there an underlying health problem that affects the employee's attendance/performance/fitness to work?
- Is the employee medically fit for the post? If not, when are they likely to be medically fit for the post?
- When is the employee likely to return to work?
- Is the employee likely to provide a regular and effective service when they return to work?
- What reasonable adjustments are required to be considered to keep the employee at work/assist the employee back to work?
- How long should the phased return/adjustments continue for before the employee should be fit enough to resume full service?
- Is the employee likely to come under the remit of the Equality Act 2010 (UK) /Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. **Please note, that ultimately the final decision regarding "disability" eligibility is a legal one, not a medical one.*

WTW will advise HR/ referring manager of the date and time of any OH appointments or Initial Support Calls:

- Once a referral is received by WTW, the referral documents will be reviewed and assessed to determine the most appropriate appointment –unless a preference is selected on the form.
- As part of WTW's Data Protection & Compliance policy, each case will be assigned a Member ID to protect the employee's identity. This will be used on all future communications.
- WTW will email the referring manager with the earliest available appointment time for all OH assessments and initial support calls. **It is therefore important that you reference any dates the employee is unavailable.**

- It is the referring manager's responsibility to confirm the appointment with the employee and, if WTW does not hear back from the referring manager, we will assume that the appointment is confirmed.

Clinical Support Calls:

- The initial support call with a WTW nurse will be scheduled by the Admin Team and **it is the responsibility of the referring manager to confirm the details of this appointment with the employee.**
- Follow-up support calls will be arranged and agreed between the Nurse and the employee.
- The OH Case Manager will update the referring manager/HR after every support call. Confidentiality is paramount and the OH Case Manager will only be able to update you with medical information that the employee is comfortable in sharing.
- Support calls will cease and the case will be closed once the employee has returned to work or is happy that no further support is required.

Occupational Health Reports:

- The OH report will be sent following consultation with an OH Clinician approximately 10 working days following the appointment.
- The content of the Occupational Health Report is discussed with the employee during the consultation. There may be a delay in sending the report to the referring manager as the employee has the right to see the report before it is sent to the employer.
- If the report is emailed to the employee they have 3 working days to make any comments, and if it is posted out they have 5 working days to review and provide feedback.
- If WTW does not hear back from the employee within this time frame, we will assume that the employee is happy for the report to be released. The referring manager/HR will be aware of the employee's decision regarding access to the report as this is included on the consent form. However, please note the employee can change their mind during the assessment and notify the assessing OH clinician who will document this in their report.
- If the employee does not give consent for the Occupational Health Report to be released, they will be informed that their manager will only be able to act on the information already available to them and the employer will be informed. The employer will then be required to take the necessary action based on the information already available to them.
- Please note that the employer/employee is unable to make changes to the report if they disagree with the opinion of the clinician. **Only factual information can be amended** e.g. Date of operation was 15/1/17 and not 14/1/17.
- Any recommendations or suggestions made by the assessing clinician are for the employer's consideration only.

OH Report Correspondence:

- All Occupational Health Report letters and medical information will be sent by e-mail as a password-protected attachment to both the employee and the referring manager/HR.
- Passwords to employees will be provided directly to the employee by email. Where e-mail addresses are not provided hard copies will be sent by post to your employees.
- Your organisation will have been allocated a "company password" and this will be provided to all referring managers/HR on request/receipt of an OH report.

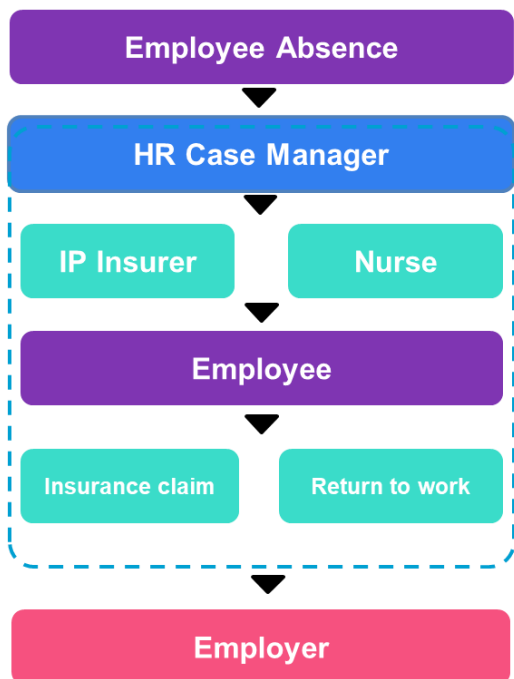
GP/Specialist reports:

- Where it is necessary to obtain further medical information, we may apply for a medical report from the employee's own GP or specialist. This may delay answers to your questions in the Occupational Health Report and will incur an additional charge.
- WTW will advise the referring manager at the time of any additional charges.
- The employee has the right to view the GP/Specialist report ahead of it being sent to WTW, under the Access to Medical Records Act.
- Once the report has been received by WTW, it will be interpreted by our OH Clinician and the report will be sent to both the employee and employer explaining the findings.

SUMMARY OF THE ABSENCE CONCIERGE SERVICE - This needs amending below – add in OH Clinician box beside Registered Nurse

Integrated absence management services

Where there are employee benefits in place



- Employer contacts the Absence Management service to refer an employee who is, or is expected to be, absent from work or whose health is having an impact on their ability to perform their job role.
- If the employee has employer-funded health benefits (which have been placed using WTW) the HR Case Manager will review eligibility criteria and sign-post the employer to the appropriate benefit for the case.
- If an Income Protection policy is in place, the HR Case Manager will liaise with WTW specialists to ensure the employee has access to the relevant support. This specialist team co-ordinates the service between the IP provider, employer and employee, to ensure the best outcome for the employee.
- As part of the integrated service, the HR Case Manager may also recommend the support of a WTW nurse to support the employee. This is a telephonic service, whereby the WTW nurse helps the employee during their illness with advice regarding their treatment or rehabilitation. Prior to return to work, the employee may be referred onto a WTW OH nurse for a telephonic assessment.
- As the case progresses, the HR Case Manager provides regular updates to the employer on likely return to work and any further action required to support the employee on their return to work.