

HR Guide Management Referrals

Situations frequently arise whereby an individual's health may be impacting on their ability to do their job. This typically manifests as either absence from work or reduced performance at work. An individual can be absent for a protracted period of time or can have recurrent spells of short-term absence.

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

In both situations, a management referral to occupational health for an independent medical assessment may be beneficial.

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 impact 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, a management referral will help to generate solutions where employee health affects their work, or, where work affects the health of an employee.

It is not...

- To explore the legitimacy of absences.
- A punitive or disciplinary process.
- A treatment or diagnosis 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 long-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?

1. Manager and employee discuss the reason for a referral

It is important that both the employee and referring manager understand the purpose of the referral, taking into account the previous 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 is there for their benefit as well as for their employer.

2. Request for OH Assessment

All referrals to OH must be submitted on an OH management referral form, along with the signed consent form (wet signature required), copy of job description and purchase order number (if required). Please ensure you confirm the billing department/cost centre for invoicing purposes. We are unable to progress any requests without all of the necessary completed information and documentation. As we require the employee's "wet signature" on the consent form, please note, we will accept a good photo of each page of the consent form to avoid delays in processing referrals. Please send these to us in "pdf" or "jpeg" format where possible.

Please note, you will need to select (tick the relevant box on page 1) to highlight whether you would prefer an occupational health nurse adviser (OHA) or consultant occupational health physician (OHP) to conduct the assessment, and also which type of assessment you would prefer – face to face, MS Teams or Telephone.

Telephone referrals require the employees main/personal contact number. The referring manager/HR should communicate to the employee that they will be receiving a call from a withheld number or one they may not recognise on the date and time specified. The assessing clinician will make several attempts to contact the employee on the contact number provided by the referring manager/HR. If no contact is made, the cancellation policy will be enforced. Willis Towers Watson 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.**

Video/Teams appointments requires the employee to have access to a laptop/phone with camera facilities. The referring manager/HR needs to provide us with the employee's personal email address ensuring that the email address is compatible with MS Teams. The employee will need to log on in advance of the appointment to check their settings. It is the responsibility of the referring manager/HR to communicate to the employee that they will be attending a Teams Assessment on the date and time specified. The assessing clinician will make several attempts to contact the employee via the Teams Invitation. If no contact is made, the cancellation policy will be enforced.

3. Manager to complete and send the referral to OH

It is important to bear in mind that any correspondence received by OH about an employee becomes part of their OH file and that the content of the referral form will be shared with the employee during the assessment. The employee has a legal right of access to these records under GDPR. **It is the referring manager's responsibility to give a copy of the referral form to both the employee and HR.**

Completed referrals paperwork should be emailed to: hgbg.oh@wtwco.com

4. What to include on the Referral Form

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 the OH team where we will be able to schedule a call with one of our OH Case Managers.

5. 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.
- Details of absences – if available photocopies of fit notes, it would also be helpful if you send brief summaries of relevant and current information.
- Main concerns and reason for referral - include what measures and adjustments have 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.
- Nature of duties including any hazards (i.e. copies of risk assessments).
- 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.

6. What to ask the OH Clinician... some suggestions to consider

- 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 to return to work?
- How long should the phased return/adjustments continue 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, formerly the Disability Discrimination Act 1995? (*Please note that ultimately the final decision about the Equality Act 2010 eligibility is a legal one and not medical*).

7. OH Admin Team to advise referring manager/HR of date and time of appointment

Once received by WTW, the referral documents will be reviewed and assessed to determine the most appropriate appointment – either face to face, telephone or Microsoft Teams (video), unless a preference is selected on the form. As part of the WTW 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 and will be referenced on the invoice. Appointments will be scheduled at either WTW, Wincham, or with one of our network providers based on the information provided on the referral documentation. **It is therefore important that you reference any dates the employee is unavailable.** The occupational health administration team will email the referring manager with the earliest appointment (date, time and location) for the employee and, if WTW does not hear back from the referring manager, we will assume that the appointment is confirmed. NB: The cancellation policy is included on all email appointment confirmations.

8. Consultation

During the consultation, the contents of the referral will be discussed with the employee by the OH Clinician and an assessment of their health issues and the impact this has on their work will be undertaken.

9. The Occupational Health Report

The OH report will be sent following consultation and typically we receive written reports approximately 5 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, 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 employer 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 Clinician who will document this in their report.

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 15/1/15 and not 14/1/15. *Please note, any recommendations or suggestions made by the assessing Clinician are for the employer's consideration only.*

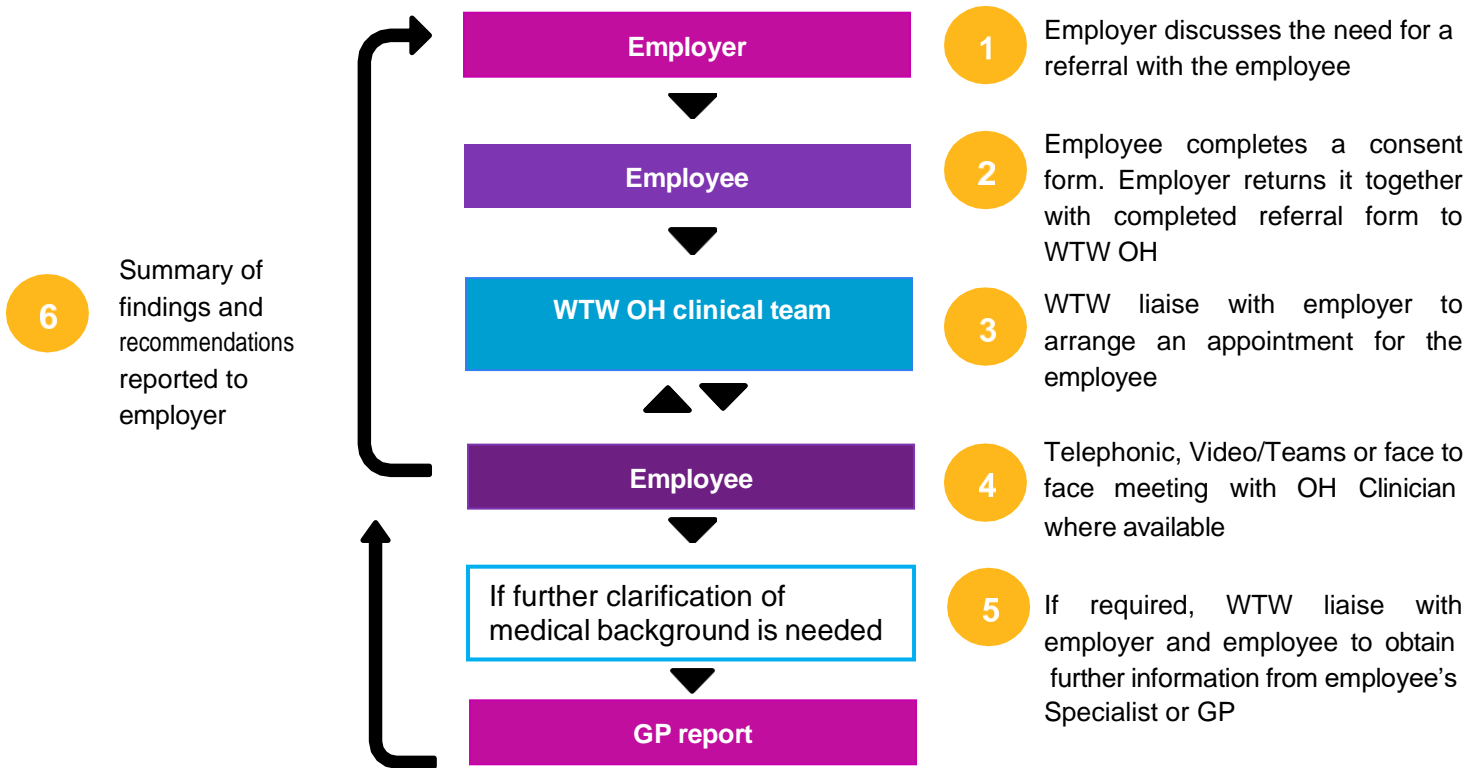
10. Correspondence

All occupational health report letters will be sent by email as a password-protected attachment. The password format will be provided on the email sent directly to the employee. Where personal email addresses are not provided by your employees, hard copies will be sent by post.

11. 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. The employee has the right to view the report ahead of it being sent to WTW, under the Access to Medical Records Act. WTW will advise the referring manager at the time of any additional charges. Once the report has been received by OH, it will be interpreted by the assessing Clinician and the report will be sent to both the employee and employer explaining the findings.

Management Referral Process



WTW can provide feedback to the Employer within 20 working days of the initial referral, unless GP/Specialist reports are required.

Employees are required to provide consent prior to contact with their GP/Specialist and may wish to view any GP/Specialist medical reports before recommendations are returned to the Employer.