

EMPLOYEE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) ABOUT THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL PROCESS

If you have been referred to Occupational Health by your Manager or Human Resources Department (HR), this FAQ explains what to expect.



FAQ 1 – What is occupational health?

Occupational Health is a medical specialty that is concerned with the effects of health on work and work on health. It also considers an individual's health, ability and fitness to perform certain jobs/workplace tasks.

Occupational Health is a medical advisory service aimed at supporting people in the workplace, looking at both physical and mental aspects of employee health. It's designed to keep employees healthy and safe whilst in the workplace and advise employers about potential risks that could have the potential to increase work related ill health.

Occupational Health is designed to support both employers and employees, offering advice and guidance to support a proactive approach to managing the health of individuals.

FAQ 2 – Is occupational health simply a way of getting rid of ill employees?

No. Occupational Health is about keeping people healthy at work, and supporting employees if they have a medical condition that could have an impact on their workplace activities; these medical conditions may affect them or the work they undertake. It's a support mechanism for an employer to access and support employees with health problems, not a tool to use to get rid of employees.

In some cases, employers have a duty under the disability legislation to make reasonable adjustments or accommodations to your role or workplace, to accommodate an employee's underlying medical condition under the Equality Act 2010, Occupational Health can provide advice and guidance on these adjustments.

FAQ 3 – Will my employer see my medical records?

No. Any clinical information taken during the consultation will be stored securely and confidentially and your employer has no access to them. However, you will have complete access to all files, records, reports and notes pertaining to you.

We only include medical information directly related to an employee's fitness for work and the reported medical condition, injury or illness. This will generally include such information as the nature of the condition and its impact on your functional work capability.

All medical information will remain confidential. The only exception to this rule will be if the OHA/OHP considers it is necessary to breach medical confidentiality, because there is a significant risk or threat to the safety of others or that you may be a risk to yourself. This would be in line with the guidance provided by the General Medical Council.

FAQ 4 – Why has my employer referred me to Occupational Health?

There are several potential reasons and the most common are as follows:

- You are/have been absent from work due to a health condition, injury or illness.
- You may be attending work but a health condition, injury or illness is affecting your performance.
- You have recently started and you require a new starter health screening for fitness to work.
- You are required to complete health surveillance dependent on your employees H&S requirements.

A referral into OH also gives you the opportunity to talk over, in confidence, any concerns you might have about your health in relation to your work with an experienced OH professional.

FAQ 5 – What is an Occupational Health Advisor/Physician?

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

FAQ 6 – What goes into a referral? Do I have to consent to the referral?

Please follow this link to see a referral form – <https://www.caerhealth.co.uk/referral-form/>

Yes. You must consent to the referral; we require your explicit and informed, signed consent to conduct the assessment and to issue a report to your employer. You also have the option to view the proposed report before it is released to your employer – and can withdraw consent at any stage until the report is released. If you do not consent to our assessment, and/or the issue of our report, your employer must use other information available to them. This may mean that they do not have the best available information to make decisions that may affect you and your health at work.

FAQ 7 – What happens after my employer has made a referral?

The following actions will be undertaken by Caer Health Services when you are referred to OH:

We may contact you directly to arrange the assessment or your employer may liaise with you to confirm the assessment. The assessment may be conducted over the telephone or face to face and this will be specified by your employer at the time of referral.

We will obtain your informed consent to conduct the assessment and issue a report to your employer following this. Consent will be obtained formally by signing a consent form and we will also verbally re-confirm your consent at the time of assessment. We will need your job description and a completed referral form. The report will be based on the information you provide at the time of assessment and the questions on the referral form asked by your employer at the time of the assessment. The report may include the following information:

- Opinion on your fitness for work.
- Nature of your reported health condition, injury or illness.
- Expected time frame for recovery and/or return to work.
- Potential modified duties and/or workplace adjustments.
- Return to work plan.
- Recommendations to address any identified issues/barriers.
- Functional education and guidance on health condition management.
- Opinion on applicability of Equality Act provisions.

Following the assessment we may recommend further occupational case management/review assessments to help aid your recovery and/or return to work.

FAQ 8 – Is there more to it?

Sometimes it is not possible to give a clear opinion on your fitness after a single assessment. The OH Clinician may need information from your treating doctor or want to look at where you work. They may also need to review you again to assess your progress before being able to judge when you might be ready for full duties or a return to work.

When further information from your treating doctor or specialist is required, occupational health will discuss this with you and ask you to sign a form giving your informed consent to approach these. You have the right to see the report your treating doctor or specialist generates before it is sent to Occupational Health.

FAQ 9 – Can I withdraw or change my consent options at any stage in the process?

Yes. You can withdraw or change your consent at any stage of the process and then the process stops.

FAQ 10 – Is it “my report” and how do I know what’s in it?

Yes, it's yours. Once your assessment has been completed, the OH professional will write a report for your Manager and/or HR. The OH professional will discuss with you at the appointment what they intend to write in your report. You are entitled to see the OH report before it is sent to the Manager and/or HR to check for accuracy of factual content, not medical opinion. You have the right to refuse the OH report being sent to your Manager and/or HR. In this situation, an OH Advisor will explain the risks of refusing consent to ensure you are fully informed of the possible implications.

FAQ 11 – Do I have to consent to release my report?

Yes, you do, and this will be discussed with the Occupational Health professional you are dealing with.

FAQ 12 – Can I have a copy of the report?

Yes. Under the Access to Medical Records Act & the Data Protection Act, you are entitled to request a copy of the report at any time, you may also request any/all other records that Occupational Health possess of yours.

Once you have consented to the report being written you have several options:

- You can choose not to receive a copy of the OH report.
- You can choose to receive a copy of the report at the same time it is sent to your employer, via email or a printed copied in the post.
- Or you can have access to the report before it is sent to your employer. However, you cannot ask for the report to be amended unless the report contains factual inaccuracies. You will have 3 working days from receipt to inspect the report. If you do not contact the author within this time frame, you are consenting to the report being released to the intended recipient.

FAQ 13 – What happens next?

Your Manager/HR may arrange to meet with you to discuss the OH report and any recommendations that have been made within it.

Recommendations given to your Manager/HR by the OH Advisor on adjustments, phased return to work programs, duties and hours are advisory only. These will be discussed with you by your employer.

Confidentiality

All clinical information you give to the OH Advisor/OHP or the medical information obtained from your treating doctor and/or specialist is confidential: clinical and medical details are not given to anyone else outside of Caer Health Services, without your prior informed, signed consent. Only in **exceptional** circumstances will details be disclosed for health and safety reasons where there could be a risk to you or others. You will be informed of this if it is felt this becomes necessary.

The report back to your manager or HR deals with the effects of your health on your fitness to work. Clinical and medical information is only included in a report where your Manager needs to know the detail, e.g. for safety reasons and only after you have given your express permission for this.

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act ensures that people with health issues and disabilities are treated fairly in the workplace. It obliges employers to consider reasonable adjustments when recruiting and when considering work arrangements, hours and the working environment etc. to accommodate disabilities. The Act defines a disabled person as someone who has an impairment that has a substantial adverse (and long-term) effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Everyone seeing Occupational Health will be treated fairly with privacy and dignity.

What should I do to prepare for an OH assessment?

Please ensure you have the following information to hand during the assessment (if applicable):

- Details of any medications being taken (name and dosage).
- Names and addresses of your treating doctors and/or specialists.
- Copies of any relevant correspondence or reports from your GP or specialist if available.

Appointment date and time:

We ask that you arrive 15 minutes before your appointment time. In the event that you arrive late for your appointment it may not be possible for your appointment to go ahead. If you are more than 15 minutes late, your appointment will be automatically cancelled and your employer will be charged a cancellation fee. If you feel unable to proceed with your appointment or you need to cancel please notify your employer at the earliest opportunity.