



Guide to Occupational Health Services

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Introduction

Dear Colleague

As part of our commitment to improving health, safety and wellbeing we have secured the services of International SOS to provide a proactive Occupational Health Service.

The aim of the service is to assist you in: **Assessing, preventing and removing risks to employees' health arising from the workplace environment through:**

- A range of risk assessments including workplace risk assessments, display screen assessments, occupational hygiene surveys, pregnant worker and night worker assessments to help meet legislative requirements
- Immunisation to remove the risk of staff acquiring or passing on work-related infectious diseases, e.g. hepatitis B, influenza, tetanus.

Determining the actual effects of the working environment on an employee's health through screening and surveillance for early signs of health-related issues through:

- Pre-employment health screening to ensure new staff are fit to perform the job and to detect and document any health issues acquired through previous employment
- Health screening for a range of jobs including food handlers, drivers, quarry workers and technicians
- Workplace protection screening programmes to help meet legislative responsibilities, for example for staff exposed to noise, respiratory sensitisers, vibrating tools, lead and asbestos

The interaction of employees' health with the working environment with specific reference to sickness absence and/or health conditions which could impact on performance issues through:

- Assessment by specialist nurses and doctors to determine the health of staff following long-term or short-term intermittent sickness absence
- Provision of expert written health reports following referral to help manage absent staff, including advice around rehabilitation and adjustments to the job or workplace to help staff return to work
- Advice on the disability provisions of the Equality Act, reasonable adjustments, redeployment and ill health retirement
- Review of individuals with health issues which may affect their ability to perform their jobs satisfactorily, but which do not necessarily lead to sickness absence

Encouraging employees to take responsibility for their own health through health promotion and health education activities through:

- Well-person health screening and other work-related health promotion initiatives, including participation in Healthy Working Lives



An [Attendance Management Toolkit](#) is available which gives guidance on Creating a Healthy Workplace, Common Health Conditions and gives further advice on When Absence Occurs.

Further information is also available from the [Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing](#) webpage.

About International SOS

International SOS acquired Iqarus in October 2019 as part of a dynamic strategy to expand business in the UK and the North Sea.

International SOS is a well-capitalised, private equity backed company formed to create a new, long-term market leader in the provision of remote medical and occupational health services in the world's most challenging environments. International SOS was initially formed out of the acquisition of the Energy Medical Services business of Capita plc in Aberdeen.

Subsequently, we acquired the C-Chec industrial hygiene consultancy business (a Dunfermline-based environmental science company servicing public and private sector firms including oil and gas, distilleries and other markets), the former Exmed remote medical business. International SOS is committed to enhancing customer services through improvements in quality, efficiency and thought investment in innovative healthcare solutions.

International SOS has access to substantial committed capital to continue a program of growth and improvement through investment in technology and quality initiatives and through further strategic acquisitions.

Our experienced occupational physicians, medical facilities and operational support teams deliver a full range of occupational health services, supporting customer compliance and operational requirements for employees, in accordance with both industry standards and best practice.

We take a strategic approach to environmental sciences, integrating occupational hygiene and occupational health with medical provision to increase the detection and prevention of workforce health issues and ultimately quality of care.

Your Occupational Health Team

One of the main strengths of International SOS is their comprehensive team of occupational health specialists who may be utilised on the Highland Council contract in specific and specialised roles, thereby giving managers the best and most comprehensive advice available. The core occupational health team is:

Name	Role
Kayren Milne	Senior Occupational Health Nurse
Duncan Dallas	Key Account Manager
Barbara Hummel	Physiotherapist
Laura Kelman	Administrator
Dr Stuart Scott	Medical Director

What is Occupational Health?

Occupational Health is a specialist field of medicine concerned with the prevention of ill health in employed populations and looks at the interaction between the job role and the job holder's health. This may be how the individual's health affects the role or how their role affects their health.

It is this primary role which makes it different from the general health service provided by general practitioners.

Occupational health nurses and physicians work within the ethical guidelines of their respective professional bodies, which are the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the General Medical Council (GMC) respectively. Most occupational health clinicians have taken additional qualifications in occupational health, either a degree, masters or a qualification through their professional body.

Occupational health professionals are appointed to advise employers on the employee's health status and their ability to perform their role, so the employer can make informed decisions regarding that employee, or to carry out certain procedures, for example, health surveillance. Occupational health does not provide treatment and diagnosis of individuals and such a role remains with the individual's GP.

Numerous scientific studies have now shown the beneficial effects of work on an individual's overall health and wellbeing and it is now generally accepted that "work is good for you". Occupational health provides advice to managers on how to most effectively and safely rehabilitate employees back to their full working potential; however, the management of this process does remain with the manager.

Occupational Health Physiotherapy tries to correct the source of your problems if certain work duties or positions place a strain on your musculoskeletal system. It can be used to treat conditions such as spinal problems, joint problems, soft tissue injury, after surgery or fracture healing and some headaches.

Physiotherapists treat injury and disease by stimulating and improving the body's own natural healing mechanisms usually without the use of medication unless prescribed by a doctor.

A thorough assessment is done to establish the likely causes for your problem. Subsequent treatment is tailored to those findings and can therefore often lead to a fast recovery.

Physiotherapists use a wide range of skills including mobilisation, massage and manipulation. Electrotherapy or acupuncture can be used to speed up the healing process. Very specific exercises are usually given to allow the body to get back into balance and to promote self- management of the condition. This can bring long lasting effects to avoid the problems from recurring.

Occupational Health and General Practitioner (GP) Roles

The role of occupational health is fundamentally different from that of the GP. Whilst a GP is the patient's advocate and provides diagnosis and treatment based on what the patient tells them, the primary role of occupational health is the prevention of ill health in the workplace. This involves balancing information from the employer, employee and specialist knowledge of the role.

The GP's focus is on diagnosing and treating the individual, while the focus of occupational health is to assess the individual's health and its impact on their work capability. One result of this differing focus is sometimes a differing assessment of an individual's capability to work.

A GP, basing their opinion on their treatment of the patient, may sign the individual as being unfit for work, while the occupational health professional, with their specialist knowledge of the working environment may offer a different opinion and find the individual fit for work, sometimes with some adaptation to the role they perform. This is not a challenge to the GP's role and opinion but a different opinion from a differing perspective and the employer is able to choose which opinion they act upon, as they only need to demonstrate that they have taken independent specialist advice.

Therefore, for example, if an employee is signed off absent from work by their GP and occupational health advises an immediate return on a phased working pattern, the employer is entitled to follow the latter advice. Although occupational health does, where possible, communicate all decisions to the GP in order to gain their support, it is not always possible from a GP's perspective to enter into a dialogue which is regarded as conflicting with the role of patient's advocate.

Occupational Health Services

The following provides a list of the services that International SOS will be delivering to Highland Council:

- Employment Screening/baseline health surveillance
- Management sickness absence referrals
- Ill health retirement assessments
- Health surveillance, including:
 - HAVS
 - Audiometry
 - Spirometry
 - Dermatitis/Skin (visual check)
- Immunisation programmes, including:
 - Hep B
 - Tetanus
 - TB
 - MMR
 - Flu
- Vocational screening assessments, including:
 - Forklift truck drivers
 - LGV Drivers/PSV
- Providing support as required in investigations of accidents and work related ill-health
- Providing advice with regard to outcomes of risk assessments for display screen equipment, manual handling, substances hazardous to health, etc.
- Appropriate counselling and advisory service for those with exposure to blood borne viruses
- Alcohol/drug testing and counselling
- Physiotherapy
- Night Workers assessment
- Wellbeing health checks
- Work site visits/assessments
- Health promotion information/input
- Pension's medicals
- Health assessments for early release of pensions benefits

Health screening questionnaire

Where a prospective employee declares a health issue which may impact on their ability to fully undertake the duties of the job they have applied for, it may be necessary for the individual to undergo a pre-employment health assessment with an occupational health specialist. This will enable any reasonable adjustments to be made and/or additional support put in place prior to taking up the post.

Specific posts require completion of a health questionnaire which enables OH to advise on any adjustments/vaccinations that may be required to ensure post holder able to carry out the tasks of their role.

Health surveillance

Health surveillance entails systematically looking for early signs of work-related ill health in employees exposed to certain health risks. It means putting in place certain procedures to achieve this. These procedures include:

- simple methods, such as looking for skin damage on hands from using certain chemicals
- technical checks on employees such as hearing and respiratory tests
- more involved medical examinations.

It is important not to confuse this type of health surveillance with health promotion or general health checks.

In determining if health surveillance is required the starting point is normally a risk assessment which identifies the health hazards in the workplace, determines who is at risk and measures taken to control the risk. Health surveillance then determines the efficacy of the control measures and assesses any residual risk to health.

Although health surveillance may be required in a wide variety of circumstances, particular attention should be paid to the following common areas where legislation places specific duties on the employer:

- noise or hand-arm vibration. solvents, fumes, dusts, biological agents and other substances hazardous to health.
- asbestos, lead or work in compressed air, ionising radiations or diving.

For other health risks, such as manual handling, work-related upper limb disorders and work that might give rise to stress-related diseases there are no specific legal requirements for health surveillance. In these cases, we can advise on the most appropriate methods to monitor the health of employees exposed to these risks, such as encouraging symptom reporting and checking sickness records.

Work-related ill health

Employees may, from time to time, feel concerned that their health is being adversely affected by their work or working environment. In the first instance they should discuss this with their line manager and following this discussion the line manager should initiate a referral if required.

Referrals for reasons of ill health/absence/injuries

In its guidance for employers, the HSE notes several key facts regarding sickness absence and its management by employers:

- Sickness absence is not just a matter of ill-health. It is affected by a combination of the health condition, personal and work or organisational factors. The last two factors become more important the longer the absence.
- Early intervention is key: the sooner positive action is taken, the better the chances are of an employee making a full and speedy return to work.
- Work in a well-managed workplace often aids recovery and an early return to work improves both mental and physical recovery.
- Simple adjustments can enable workers to return to work safely before their symptoms completely disappear. **Workers can normally return before they are 100% fit.**

At International SOS we can support managers by providing impartial advice to allow them to make informed management decisions regarding employees in their care. The occupational health clinician will offer advice on the capability of an individual to perform their role in relation to their health and well-being in a way that is equally fair to the employee and the Council, and is in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations.

Occupational Health Clinicians, both doctors and nurses, are specialists in the field of rehabilitation to work and can therefore provide advice on return to work that the employee's GP may not feel able to do with their limited knowledge of the patient's job. We can therefore give advice based on our enhanced understanding of the organisation and the employee's role which may differ from that of the GP. This enhanced level of advice may then assist both the employer and employee in being able to start the rehabilitation process to full health earlier. Further information may be found in the section "Occupational health and the GP role".

Current research and government reports advise that recovery from illness or accident is enhanced by an early return to work and we are able to assist employees by providing positive advice to managers to support the employee in their recovery process.

Managers may submit requests for examination of employees to assess their fitness for work in a number of circumstances. Before a referral request is considered, discussion with the employee is important to ensure clear understanding of the referral process

The reasons for referral may include:

- Long term sickness absence
- Recurrent short term sickness absence
- Concerns regarding work performance and fitness for duties/capability
- Alcohol/drug problems
- Stress related problems
- Injuries
- Consideration of ill health retirement.

Such referrals should be forwarded by email to occupational.healthreferral@highland.gov.uk

accompanied by:

- A fully completed [referral form](#) Please always use this link – do not save and overwrite as the form may have changed since you last used it.
- The employee's job description (on the first referral to OH or if there is a change in the employee's job role)
- Where relevant, the employee's absence record for at least the last 24 months
- Any significant aspects of the post or information regarding the employee's ability to perform at work due to their health condition which it is felt International SOS should be aware of.

Once the individual employee has been seen, and following further discussion with the manager concerned or, where appropriate, receipt of information from the individual's GP or specialist, a report will be prepared for the referring manager. The format of the report will normally include the following information as relevant to each individual case:

- Whether or not the employee is suffering from a health condition which will have an impact upon their fitness to carry out their duties. Where the medical adviser is unable to identify any medical condition to account for an employee's absence record then this will be clearly stated.
- The likely duration of any period of absence or, if it is not possible to be precise about this, the minimum period for which they are likely to be absent.
- When they do become fit to return to work, whether they will be fit to return to their full duties or whether limitations will apply, and what these limitations are in functional terms.
- If limitations will apply, whether these limitations are likely to be temporary or permanent.
- What steps could be taken to assist with an individual's return to work, e.g. a period of part time work.
- If an individual will not be fit again for their normal duties, the nature of other types of duties which they might be fit for to allow managers to consider opportunities for redeployment.
- That retirement on the ground of ill health is recommended or that it is likely that this will be the recommendation and when such recommendation is likely to be made.

- The likelihood of ongoing episodes of sickness absence, whether such episodes may be of long or short duration and the period of time during which such absences are likely to occur.
- Whether the employee's health condition may, in any way, be related to their duties and any suggestions as to how further problems may be prevented.
- Recommendations for a further review of the employee.
- Any additional information required from the manager either to assist the medical adviser in making a recommendation or prior to a subsequent review and whether the medical adviser feels that a meeting with the referring manager may be helpful.
- Whether any independent specialist assessment may be helpful and the likely cost.
- Whether a case is reportable under RIDDOR or may qualify as a disability under the disability discrimination provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- In addition, any other specific questions asked by the referring manager will be addressed.
- The option is given via a Consent Form for individuals to be able to review their report before it is sent to their Employer.

In all cases, International SOS will ensure that expert, comprehensive and relevant advice is provided to managers in order to assist with the management of attendance and performance and thereby reduce time lost due to ill health.

The Role of the Line Manager

Line managers' roles and responsibilities are set out in the Council's guidance document

[Attendance Management – Guidance for Managers](#)

Managers **must** discuss the reason for the referral with the employee prior to their attendance at occupational health.

How to Access Occupational Health Services

Referral paperwork for both Occupational Health and Physio services can be accessed from the [Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing](#) pages of the Council's intranet with guidance on the referral process.

One of the core services International SOS offers is the provision of a telephone advisory service to assist and support managers. The service offers answers and suggestions to alleviate your concerns – help that is timely and practical. Often what you need is helpful guidance to address a particular matter which may be causing you worry and this service provides such guidance.

Contact:

- Clinical advice – contact 01463 513100 or ABZ.HighlandCouncil@internationalsos.com (A nurse/doctor will respond to any enquiry within 24hrs)
- Physiotherapy – Tuesday/Thursday 1.30 -2.30 01463 513100

How to refer an employee for a management referral for sickness absence or health capability issues

It is important that prior to referral, managers have notified the employee of the decision to make a referral and discussed with them the reason for referral. A Referral to Occupational Health Form should then be completed and forwarded to occupational.healthreferral@highland.gov.uk who in turn will initiate the referral. International SOS Occupational Health will then assess the case and deal with it in the most appropriate manner which may include initial telephone contact or direct face to face consultation with either an occupational health nurse or physician. If an employee requests a copy of the referral form, this must be provided by the line manager.

Once a consultation has been undertaken a report will be produced which will provide clear, actionable advice to allow you to manage the case forward. Advice and guidance will also be given to the individual employee to ensure they are receiving appropriate treatment and care and that they take personal responsibility for their recovery and return to work.

How to register employees on the Health Surveillance Scheme

There are several ways in which an employee should be registered on a health surveillance scheme:

- Where an employee undergoes a pre-employment assessment which indicates the potential future need for health surveillance, the manager will be informed of this and advised of the due date.
- Where an employee has undergone health surveillance by International SOS, the manager will be advised of the future recommended health surveillance requirement and advised of the due date.
- Where a manager has conducted a risk assessment indicating the need for health surveillance, International SOS should be notified of the necessary requirement. (contact the OH Nurse Manager – ABZ.HighlandCouncil@internationalsos.com)

The line manager is responsible for conducting an annual review of all staff to determine new requirements for health surveillance not previously identified by risk assessment, new starts not identified by pre-employment or pre-placement assessment and staff no longer requiring health surveillance due to change in job role or structure.

YOUR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES Management Referral

What is occupational health?

Occupational health is a medical specialism that is concerned with minimising the impact of an individual's health on their role and vice versa. We provide specialist independent advice to your employer in order for them to make informed management decisions regarding the impact of health on your role or the impact of your role on your health.

Your Management Referral

You have been referred to occupational health by your line manager as they feel they need specialist advice in order to assist them in supporting your attendance at work or more information regarding the duration of your absence and how best to support a return to work. The full nature of this referral should have been discussed between you and your line manager and if not you should seek to discuss this before your scheduled appointment.

Your Occupational Health Consultation

The occupational consultation will usually take the form of an interview either face to face or over the telephone. This will be either with an occupational health nurse or physician. Occupational health will decide the most appropriate consultation method. During the consultation the clinician will need to know details about your role, your current state of health and how you feel that this impacts upon your role, and detail of any treatment or medication you have had or is planned.

The primary function of the consultation may be to explore ways in which you may return to full working capacity, so it is worthwhile giving this some thought prior to consultation. Due to the specialist knowledge occupational health has, you may be able to return to work in an adapted role prior to the expiry of a GP medical certificate.

Your Occupational Health Report

Following the consultation the occupational health clinician will compile a report to your employer giving their opinion as to your ability to work and advising of any adaptations your manager may wish to consider assisting in your return to work. Your line manager is not bound by this advice and needs to consider it in balance with other business needs. The occupational health clinician will inform you of the content of the report.

Attending the Occupational Health Consultation

It is normally expected by your employer that you will attend an occupational health appointment, if reasonably requested to do so. Occupational health will endeavour to consult with you in the most convenient manner with regards to your current condition. Should you have concerns regarding attending an occupational health consultation you should discuss these with your line manager in advance of the scheduled appointment date.

Confidentiality

Medical information held and known by the occupational health professional is privileged and confidential. When information is to be supplied to the Council your consent will be obtained. An exception to this rule would only arise if the occupational health professional believed that keeping the information confidential would pose a serious risk to other people, but this intention would be discussed with you at the time.

Reports from your GP and other Specialists

It is not always necessary for occupational health to request information from other healthcare providers to inform their decisions. Where it is required, we will inform you of the reason and you will be asked to provide consent. If you consent to a report being sought, it is vital that you fully engage in the process and assist occupational health in obtaining such a report; if after a reasonable period of time occupational health have not received the required reports, they are still able to make a recommendation based on the information they already have.

What to expect when you visit us

- A warm, friendly, professional welcome
- Respect and confidentiality
- A full explanation of the consultation process
- Details of any report that will be provided to managers
- Opportunity to ask questions