

NHS Employers  
Health and well-being

Your occupational health service

April 2012

## **Introduction**

Occupational health (OH) is a specialised clinical service that provides clear benefits to staff and patients, as well as contributing to an organisation's productivity as an investment in the wellbeing of the workforce. The aim of this guide is to ensure that NHS organisations are clear about what to expect from their OH service. It also provides guidance on how to monitor that service, and what to do with the information to ensure the service delivers the best support to staff. Ensuring that your occupational health service is working well for your trust will enable staff to deliver safe, effective and efficient patient care.

## **What you can expect**

The vision and minimum standards for occupational health services state that OH services should:

- be a team of health at work champions preventing ill health associated with work
- provide timely intervention and rehabilitation
- promote wellbeing
- contribute to audit, research and training of a sustainable occupational health workforce
- measure performance and provide regular reports to senior managers and the board
- engage in assessing health needs and design services to support them
- make the case for innovation and investment in health
- provide an excellent clinical service with consistent and reliable support

Occupational health providers supporting NHS staff must either have Safe Effective Quality Occupational Health Service (SEQOHS) accreditation by March 2012, or have completed the preparation for accreditation and be awaiting a date for an accreditation visit. These standards are grouped into six domains that describe the way in which all occupational health services should operate. For OH services delivering to the NHS, there is a seventh domain (Domain G) of six core services:

Prevention	The prevention of ill health caused or exacerbated by work
Timely intervention	Early treatment of the main causes of absence in the NHS
Rehabilitation	A process to help staff stay in or return to work after illness
Health assessments for work	Supporting organisations to manage attendance and retirement
Promotion of health and wellbeing	Using the workplace to promote improved health and wellbeing
Teaching and training	Promoting the health and wellbeing approach amongst all staff and ensuring the availability of future occupational health staff

The six domains applicable to all occupational health services are:

Business probity	Business integrity and financial propriety
Information governance	Adequacy and confidentiality of records
People	Competency and supervision of occupational health staff

Facilities and equipment	Safe, accessible and appropriate
Relationships with purchasers	Fair dealing and customer focus
Relationships with workers	Fair treatment, respect and involvement

The checklist below provides a simple way for you to check whether occupational health services are meeting the above standards. It will also help to inform the development of future plans. For more information about these standards, please refer to *Commissioning occupational health services*. If you are unsure whether your occupational health service providers are meeting some of the standards in the checklist, we would encourage open conversations between OH and HR teams.

The NHS Plus document *A short guide to the future consolidation of NHS occupational health services* describes how occupational health services could be consolidated to provide an improved and more comprehensive service in line with the standards outlined here.

Vision and minimum standards	Evidence
<i>Accreditation</i>	
Working towards or achieved accreditation of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine standards	
<i>OH business delivery</i>	
Provides an accessible service	
Provides a fair and equality-centred service	
Is impartial, approachable and receptive to both clients and employer	
Sets out the services to be delivered by the OH service in a contract, outlining the quality of delivery standards	
Articulates the range of services required and how they will be promoted and marketed through a business plan	
Works in partnership with all healthcare services in locality	
Focuses on high quality, clinically led and evidence based service	
Works in partnership with other organisations and businesses in the local community	
Underpins service provision with innovation	
Offers a depth of specialism relevant to the specific requirements of the organisation	
Offers training opportunities to OH staff	

Links with public health professionals and initiatives	
Contributes to the development of the academic base for OH services	
<i>Data provision</i>	
Provides information to assess and monitor workforce health and wellbeing	
Provides information to enable trust and OH managers to monitor the OH service	
Provides data and information to monitor the quality of OH care provided	
<i>Contributes to organisation</i>	
Contributes to organisational productivity	
Regularly contributes to board level health and wellbeing reports	
OH staff engage with managers and staff representatives	
OH services are aligned to HR strategies	
OH services are aligned to NHS constitution	
Engages with NHS in relevant partnership forums / join negotiating consultative committees and health and safety committees	
<i>Service delivery</i>	
Contributes to prevention of ill health or injury at work	
Provides timely interventions focused on addressing the main causes of sickness absence	
Offers rapid access to intervention that enables early return to work	
Offers health assessments for work	
Promotes health and wellbeing in the workplace	
Teaches and trains OH staff	
Contributes to teaching and training staff around relevant health and wellbeing issues	

### **How you can monitor**

The following section is to help HR teams within NHS trusts and OH services to know which data to collect to assess and monitor health and wellbeing of the

workforce; demonstrate a commitment to staff health and wellbeing; and monitor the activities and quality of OH services and care.

### **Metrics to monitor staff health and wellbeing**

As part of your review of OH services the HR team will need to assess the health and wellbeing of your staff. Although this may seem a subjective task, there is quantitative data that can be used, as shown in the table below:

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Interval</b>
<i>Sourced from ESR – note data can be broken down into medical cause and into staff group</i>	
Sickness absence - %FTEs lost	Monthly, quarterly, annually
Incidence of long-term sickness (>4 weeks) – number and %	Quarterly, annually.
Prevalence of frequent sickness absence (>3 per year)- number and %	Annually
Incidence of ill-health retirement – number and per 1000 staff employed	Annually and 5-year moving average
Staff turnover – number of joiners and leavers expressed as counts and as % of average number of employees during measurement period	Annually
<i>Sourced from NHS staff survey – frequency distribution data – numbers and % of responders</i>	
Self-rated health	Annually
Disability from poor mental health	Annually
Perceived managerial interest in personal health and wellbeing	Annually
Adequacy of adjustments at work for long-standing illness/disability	Annually
Job satisfaction	Annually
Enjoyment of work	Annually
Violence at work	Annually
Harassment at work	Annually

### **Metrics to monitor activities of occupational health services**

It is important to recognise how the OH services are used. This can be achieved by speaking with your OH service provider and asking for records and statistics about the service. Part of the minimum standards is data provision, so they will be able to provide the following information:

- number of referrals from managers
- number of self-referrals
- number of telephone enquiries handled

- number of email enquiries handled
- number of sharps injuries managed
- number of vaccinations given
- number of workplace visits
- number of training courses/lectures delivered
- number of health surveillance assessments made.

The information gained by tracking these statistics every month and creating an annual report could help determine how you develop your occupational health services going forward.

### **Metrics to monitor quality of occupational health care**

The following metrics, which OH should be able to provide upon request, will show how responsive and effective your occupational health services are in impacting on the health and wellbeing of staff:

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Sourced from OH records</i>	
Time from referral to first appointment	Frequency distribution
Time from first appointment to delivery of a report to manager	Frequency distribution
Completeness of hepatitis B immunisation	Number and % of sharps injuries managed in which injured member of staff was fully immunised against hepatitis B
Prevalence of return-to-work planning	Number and % of patients who when first seen after an absence of >4 weeks have a documented return-to-work plan
Prevalence of referral of musculoskeletal disorders for treatment	Number and % of patients seen after an absence of >4 weeks because of musculoskeletal disorder, who are under care of or have been referred to a treatment service by six weeks from the start of their absence
Completeness of referral for longer term sickness absence	Number of patient seen by OH after >4 weeks absence as a % of all employees with >4 weeks absence beginning in same period
Incidence of patient complaints	Number with breakdown by nature of complaint

<i>Sourced from ESR</i>	
Return to work following longer term absence	Number and % of employees with sickness absence lasting >4 weeks who remain off work at 12 weeks
Prevalence of employees on half or no pay because of prolonged sickness	Numbers and as a % of all employees (separately for half and no pay)
<i>Sourced from OH satisfaction surveys</i>	
Prevalence of dissatisfied OH patients	Number and % dissatisfied with summary of main reasons for dissatisfaction
Prevalence of dissatisfied managers	Number and % dissatisfied with summary of main reasons for dissatisfaction
<i>Sourced from trust management records</i>	
NHS litigation authority level	

### **What to do with the information**

Once you have collated the information you can see how healthy your workforce is, how effective the OH service provider is and the impact that OH service has on staff health and wellbeing. You will then be able to work in conjunction with the occupational health service providers with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of staff.

In order to improve provisions of occupational health services you will need to speak to a wide variety of audiences. The table below shows some examples of the types of information different working groups may want or need:

Audience	Information
Trust boards	targeted information which indicates the general health and wellbeing of the workforce and the impact any initiatives have had on the business
Staff who manage contract for OH	detailed information about OH service performance and activity
Service managers	small number of key statistics relevant to their area which can be rapidly assimilated, with the option to delve deeper where problems are evident
OH services managers	wide range of data relating to OH service performance and its wider impact on staff health and wellbeing and organisational performance
External organisations	data on health and wellbeing, e.g. Care Quality Commission, Monitor, NHS litigation authority

## **Conclusion**

This document should help clarify what services OH providers should be delivering, how OH services can be monitored and what can be done with the information collated from both HR teams and OH service providers. A healthy and happy workforce is one step towards improved patient care, so ensuring OH services are delivering the best service possible is imperative. For any further information about occupational health services, visit the NHS Employers website [www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org) or the NHS Plus website [www.nhsplus.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsplus.nhs.uk).



## NHS Employers

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NHS Employers represents trusts in England on workforce issues and helps employers to ensure the NHS is a place where people want to work. The NHS workforce is at the heart of quality patient care and we believe that employers must drive the workforce agenda. We work with employers to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

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## Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work, email [getinvolved@nhsemployers.org](mailto:getinvolved@nhsemployers.org)

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