



NHS Employers

Part of the NHS Confederation

OCTOBER 2019
YOUR OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH SERVICE

GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

Occupational health (OH) is a specialist clinical service that provides clear benefits to staff and patients, as well as contributing to the productivity of an organisation as an investment in the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

The aim of this guide is to ensure that NHS organisations are clear about what they can expect from their OH service. It also provides guidance on how they can monitor that service, and what to do with the information to ensure the service delivers the best support to staff. Ensuring that your OH service is working well for your trust will enable staff to deliver safe, effective and efficient patient care.

Where NHS organisations prioritise staff health and wellbeing, performance is enhanced, patient care improves, staff retention is higher and sickness absence is lower. There is also evidence that access to good OH support improves staff engagement and can contribute to cultural change.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

The vision and minimum standards 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 OH workforce
- ✔ measure performance and provide regular reports to senior managers and the Board
- ✔ engage in assessing staff health needs and design services to support them
- ✔ make the case for innovation and investment in staff health
- ✔ provide an excellent clinical service, with consistent and reliable support

The six domains applicable to all OH services are:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Business probity | Business integrity and financial propriety |
| Information governance | Adequacy and confidentiality of records |
| People | Competency and supervision of OH staff |
| Facilities and equipment | Safe, accessible and appropriate |
| Relationships with purchasers | Fair dealing and customer focus |
| Relationships with workers | Fair treatment, respect and involvement |

OH providers supporting NHS staff must either have Safe Effective Quality Occupational Health Service (SEQOHS) accreditation or be working towards it. These standards are grouped into six domains which describe the way in which all OH services should operate.

For OH services delivering to the NHS, additional standards relating to their ability to deliver six 'core' services is required. This consists of:



| | |
|--|--|
| 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 OH staff |

For more information about these standards, please refer to **'Commissioning Occupational Health Services'**.

You may be unsure whether your OH service providers are meeting some of the standards in the checklist; in this instance we encourage open conversations between OH and HR teams.

The **NHS Health at Work Network** represents in-house NHS OH services in England, and is a useful source of help, support and advice.

VISION AND MINIMUM STANDARDS CHECKLIST

Accreditation

- Working towards or achieved accreditation of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine SEQOHS standards.

OH business delivery

- 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 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 the locality. Focuses on high-quality, clinically-led and evidence-based services.
- 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.

Contributes to organisation

- 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 with the NHS constitution.
- Engages with NHS in relevant partnership forums/join negotiating consultative committees and health and safety committees.

Service delivery

- 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 contribute to teaching and training staff around relevant health and wellbeing issues.



HOW CAN YOU MONITOR

The following section of this document is to assist HR teams within NHS trusts and OH services in knowing which data to collect to assess and monitor the 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 such as data sourced from the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) (note data can be broken down into medical cause and into staff group). There is also data from the annual NHS staff survey which will help you build the picture within your trust.

METRICS TO MONITOR ACTIVITIES OF OH 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/contamination 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 OH services going forward.

METRICS TO MONITOR QUALITY OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTHCARE

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

| Metric | Notes |
|---|--|
| Sourced from OH records | |
| 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 >four weeks have had a documented return-to-work plan considered |
| Prevalence of referral of musculoskeletal disorders for treatment | Number and % of patients seen after an absence of >four weeks because of musculoskeletal disorder, who are under care of or have been referred to a treatment service where clinically appropriate |
| Completeness of referral for longer term sickness absence | Number of patients seen by OH after >four weeks absence as a % of all employees with >four weeks absence beginning in same period |
| Incidence of patient complaints | Number, with breakdown by nature of complaint |
| Sourced from ESR | |
| Return to work following longer term absence | Number and % of employees with sickness absence lasting >four 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) |
| Sourced from OH satisfaction surveys | |
| Prevalence of satisfied OH patients | Number and % satisfied |
| Prevalence of satisfied managers | Number and % satisfied |

OH providers supporting NHS staff should produce an annual audit plan and provide periodic reports demonstrating the actions that have been taken as a result of audit. This plan should normally be included in and monitored with trusts' complete plans for audit in all clinical services.

OH providers supporting NHS staff should undertake systematic audit of their clinical practice and participate in clinical benchmarking/audits of OH. The main source of audit support and clinical benchmarking is the **Faculty of Occupational Medicine's MoHaWK service**.

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 OH Service providers to improve the health and wellbeing of staff. In order to improve provision of OH 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 Service 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, for example, the Care Quality Commission, NHS Improvement/ NHS England. |

CONCLUSION






This document should make it clear 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, please see the [NHS Employers](#) website or the [NHS Health at Work](#) website.

Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work:

-  www.nhsemployers.org
-  healthandwellbeing@nhsemployers
-  [@nhsemployers](https://twitter.com/nhsemployers)
-  [NHS Employers](#)
-  www.youtube.com/nhsemployers

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NHS EMPLOYERS

NHS Employers is the employers' organisation for the NHS in England. We help employers to develop a sustainable workforce, improve staff experience and be the best employers they can be.

Our practical resources and expert insights help make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues, to keep employers up to date with the latest thinking and ensure they are informed and equipped to support the NHS workforce.

We generate opportunities to network and share knowledge and we actively seek the views of workforce leaders to make sure their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice.

We also lead the national collective relationships with trade unions on behalf of the NHS and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.