**Occupational Health Service**

**Fitness for Work Referrals - Employees**

**Guidance**

**Introduction to the Occupational Health Service**

We have produced this guidance to give you as much information as possible about what to expect if you are referred to the Occupational Health Service.

**Discussion with your manager**

Before sending the relevant form to the Occupational Health Service your manager should discuss with you in full the reasons for the referral. This will normally be because they are concerned that health problems may be affecting you at work or preventing you from attending work.

If you feel there are any hazards or difficulties at work that are affecting you or your health, then please discuss these either with your manager, or the Occupational Health Service once referred.

**Referral Process**

When the Occupational Health Service receive the referral form from your Manager, a nurse will telephone you to discuss the referral.

Based on the telephone conversation, the nurse will either write a report to your manager outlining the action that your manager should take or alternatively refer you for a face to face appointment with an occupational health nurse or doctor to assess your condition further.

**Medical Confidentiality**

All doctors and nurses are fully trained and experienced health professionals. They are required to maintain medical confidentiality as are other health professionals. Any information disclosed by you is in strict confidence and covered by the Access to Medical Records Act and Data Protection Act.

**Medical Assessment**

The doctor or nurse will only examine you if it is strictly necessary; for example in the case of back pain, injuries, or for specific medical fitness assessments such as driving. You are entitled to refuse to be examined (see Withholding Consent section). You may ask for a nurse to be present or you may take a friend or relative in with you.

If you have any special requirements, for example if you require assistance with mobility or language, please let the Occupational Health Service know prior to your appointment.

**Appointments process**

If you are unable to attend the Occupational Health Service appointment, you must provide at least 24 hours notice and an alternative appointment can be arranged for you. If the appointment is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice please be aware that your employing department will be charged. the Occupational Health Service will inform your manager of all cancelled appointments or if you do not attend.

Every employee of Cumberland Council, Westmorland and Furness Council or Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has a duty to comply with the respective organsiations absence policy. For more information regarding your duties and responsibilities under the policy please refer to the Roles and Responsibilities section of the policy.

**The Occupational Health Service** **Medical Reports**

Following a face to face appointment you and your manager (if you provide consent) will both receive a copy of the doctor or nurse’s medical report. The report will:

a) Advise on your fitness to work and carry out your duties.

b) Answer any specific questions that your manager has asked on the referral form

c) Advise your manager if there are any reasonable adjustments that he or she can make to aid your return to work and support you in achieving work attendance.

Confidential medical information will never form part of the report to your manager without your express consent.

**Access to Medical Records**

You may be asked to give permission for further information to be requested from your General Practitioner or specialist. Written permission is required to comply with the Access to Medical Records Act. No request will be made before it is discussed with you by the Occupational Health doctor or nurse.

The Act stipulates that you have the right to see any GP or specialist’s report before it is sent to the Occupational Service. Details of this will be explained to you at the time permission is requested.

All reports will be kept in your health records. These are kept secure within the Occupational Health Service.

The aim of both the Occupational Health Service and your manager is to help you to continue attending work or to return to work. Many options are available with agreement from your manager such as a gradual return to work, job share (where applicable), redeployment (where suitable employment is available) or adaptations to the work area. If a return to work is not possible due to health reasons, advice will be given by the Occupational Health Service and your manager.

**Withholding Consent**

The fitness for work referral process aims to support you to attend work regularly and be effective in your role. However, you have the right to withhold your consent to various actions e.g. you could refuse to be referred to the Occupational Service or refuse to allow access to your medical records.

Whilst this is a very personal decision that we would not wish to influence, you need to be aware that should you withhold your consent in this way, your manager will continue to manage the situation in accordance with the County Council’s Positive Attendance Policy on the basis of the limited information.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Occupational Service should be made in the first instance to the HR Service.