

## Seeking medical advice guide

Sometimes you might need to refer to somebody who knows more than you about mental health issues.

You may wish to speak to your occupational health adviser or the employees GP.

With the employee's permission, you may request medical reports or an assessment with an occupational health adviser (OHA) to see how you, their line manager can support them.

You cannot contact an employee's GP without their express permission. If you feel this is necessary then have an open discussion with the employee about why you need to speak to their GP.

## How do you have this discussion with your employee?

First of all emphasise that above all you wish to know how you can help make any appropriate adjustments to support them at work.

Be clear about the reasons for requiring information; what information you are requesting, where it will be stored, who it will be disclosed to, what the next steps are, and what the consequences might be.

Make it clear that under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1998 they may ask for reasonable changes to be made to any medical report before it is submitted to the employer.

In the case of an employee who sees a psychiatrist, it is appropriate to seek consent to a report from this person.

Remember, you don't necessarily need a medical history it may be more advisable to ask them for a report from their GP detailing any adjustments that may be necessary for them to perform in their role.

## What can GPs and Occupational Health Advisers actually do to help?

GPs can provide medical certificates; identify a medical condition causing difficulties at work; refer people to specialist advice or treatment; explain the effects of any medication or treatments; and they may be able to suggest reasonable adjustments that need to be made under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Occupational Health Advisers (OHAs) can provide medical checks; advise on monitoring conditions and health promotion; help people take preventative measures; provide risk assessments; identify reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act; provide and arrange employee support; help with managing sickness absence; explain the impact of a medical condition; provide occupational rehabilitation; liaise with the employee's GP or consultant; even give advice about medical retirement.

## How do you communicate with GPs and OHAs?

It's a good idea to check they know and understand the [Equality Act https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/equality-act-2010](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/equality-act-2010) (opens in new tab or window) in order to make suggestions for reasonable adjustments.

You should be prepared to provide the employee's job description, details about hours worked, travel requirements, physical requirements, a description of the working environment, intellectual and emotional demands and stress factors, and what is expected of the role.

Remember you can only communicate with the GP or OHA with the express permission of the employee.