

NEW OHS REFERRAL FORMS



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GUIDANCE FOR REFERRING BODIES

1 INTRODUCTION

Five new OHS referral forms are being issued with this guidance. The new forms should be used for all relevant referrals from now on. This guidance, which should be read in conjunction with the **Referring Sickness Absence Cases to OHS - A Best Practice Guide for Departments and Agencies** (revised July 2008), explains the new forms and also some changes to the procedure for referring individual cases to OHS for occupational health advice and for the provision of that advice back to the referring body. The changes result from the roll out of HR Connect and a general aim to further improve the processes that underpin working relationships between OHS and referring organisations. The new process will facilitate an “**email-in, email-out**” approach for the majority of cases referred to OHS.

2 WHICH OHS REFERRAL FORM TO USE

OHS1	HEALTH SURVEILLANCE	This form is to be used when referring an individual to OHS for an assessment of their suitability for doing work which requires them; to be protected against a range of specific health conditions eg: hearing loss, hand arm vibration syndrome or to have a level of fitness to carry out particular duties eg: confined space work. A full list of such assessments can be found at part 3 of the form. Some health surveillance referrals also require the completion of a questionnaire; where appropriate this is indicated in part 3. Most referring bodies already have template copies of relevant questionnaires, but arrangements are being made to put the questionnaires onto the OHS website for ease of access and completion. If there are any health surveillance categories not listed in Part 3 (due to new legislative requirements etc) for which you require an assessment, please raise them with the OHS Assistant Director, Nursing Services (Patricia McQuillan 028 9025 1805 or internal ext 51805) before making the referral.
OHS2	SICKNESS ABSENCE	This form is to be used when referring an individual who is currently OFF WORK due to sickness absence and for whom an OHS assessment is required.
OHS3	GENERAL FITNESS	This form is to be used when referring an individual who is currently AT WORK and for whom an OHS assessment is required.
OHS4	APPEAL	This form is to be used when an NICS employee wishes to appeal against an OHS professional opinion that has been provided. The employee and the referring body must process the appeal in accordance with the terms of the NICS Staff Handbook or, for organisations where NICS terms do not apply, in accordance with organisational rules on appeals. Organisations in the latter category can contact the OHS Assistant Director, Client & Corporate Services (Victor Douglas 028 9025 1804 or internal ext 51804) to discuss any appeal process they may wish to introduce or amend.

OHS5	DISABILITY ASSESSMENT	This form replaces the existing disability adjustment evaluation form. While the questions for completion by the applicant, line manager and, where required, OHS are essentially the same, the process for handling an application has been further streamlined. It should be noted that not all applications need to be submitted to OHS – often, line management will be able to accommodate reasonable adjustments without needing a medical opinion from OHS.
NOTE	Sections 6a/6b on referral forms OHS2 and OHS3 provide space for you to state if the employer or the employee requires OHS to make an assessment about whether the pension scheme medical criteria for EARLY RETIREMENT ON MEDICAL GROUNDS are met. Even where there is no such requirement expressed by the employer or employee, OHS may still consider early retirement on medical grounds if, in the opinion of an OHS Medical Officer, such consideration is appropriate.	

3 COMPLETING THE REFERRAL FORM

APPOINTMENT LOCATION

There are three OHS appointment locations – Belfast, Ballykelly and Craigavon. Previously, OHS admin selected the location based on the individual’s home address postcode; however, in a significant number of cases, and due to individual circumstances, referring bodies sought a change of location after an appointment had been set up because the location closest to an individual’s home was not the most suitable for a variety of reasons. To ensure the most suitable location is selected in future for sickness absence and general fitness referrals, the referring officer should indicate on the form which appointment location is preferred.

EMPLOYEE DETAILS

National Insurance Number of person being referred is the key identifier used by OHS and must always be quoted.

4 DOCUMENTATION TO ACCOMPANY THE REFERRAL FORM

OHS1 OHS2 OHS3	Each referral form lists the types of supporting documentation that may be provided to OHS. There is also an “other” box for you to describe any other supporting documentation not covered in the list which you consider appropriate to submit with the referral form. There is also space on the referral form for you to give details of any other background information of which you consider OHS should be aware.
OHS4	Supporting information/documentation required under the terms of the NICS Staff Handbook must be provided.
OHS5	Where a line manager decides to seek OHS advice, the form must be accompanied by a report from the applicant’s GP or hospital specialist.

5 SUBMITTING THE REFERRAL

<p>OHS1 OHS2 OHS3</p>	<p>Once you have completed the referral form, please save as a Microsoft Word document with the employee's National Insurance Number followed by the number of the form and date of referral in the format AB121212C_OHSX_DDMMYY (where X is the number of the form).</p> <p>The referral form and copies of all supporting information should be submitted by email. The only exception to this is <u>medical in confidence / protect-medical</u> information which you already have in a sealed envelope – this information should be sent in hard copy on the same day that you email the referral from and all other supporting documentation.</p> <p>If your organisation is part of the HR Connect system, submit the referral form and supporting documentation (except <u>medical in confidence / protect-medical</u> - see above) by email to HR Connect where the referral will be registered and forwarded by HR Connect by email to OHS.</p> <p>If your organisation is not part of HR Connect, email the referral form and supporting documentation (except <u>medical in confidence / protect-medical</u> - see above) by email directly to hrohs@nicsohs.gov.uk</p>
<p>OHS4</p>	<p>Appeal referrals made on OHS4 should be submitted, together with any supporting information, in hard copy.</p>
<p>OHS5</p>	<p>Applications should be submitted to OHS in hard copy together with the required GP or hospital specialist's report.</p>

6 WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM OHS

OHS aims to turn round all cases efficiently and effectively and to meet performance targets set by the OHS Board each year. These new referral procedures will result in you sending most of your referrals to OHS by email, offering scope to further improve **turnaround times**.

OHS also aims to provide the highest **quality of occupational health advice** to referring bodies. Alongside the improvements to the referral procedure, a new electronic approach to preparing professional opinions is being introduced, **initially in the Belfast Centre for sickness absence and general fitness referrals**. Using this new approach, called eMED, the OHS Medical Officer or Nursing Officer who assesses your employee will be able to provide a more detailed opinion. It will be quicker too - in most cases you can expect to receive the professional opinion from OHS on the same day that your employee has their appointment in OHS.

7 IF YOU REQUIRE CLARIFICATION ABOUT OHS ADVICE

If you require clarification about the advice OHS has provided, you should get in touch with your Departmental contact in OHS Administration or email clientservices@nicsohs.gov.uk

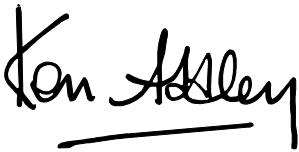
8 IF OUR ADVICE OR SERVICE DO NOT MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS

If OHS advice or service does not meet your expectations, please contact the Director's Office, telephone 028 9025 1825 internal 51825 email clientservices@nicsohs.gov.uk

9 DATA PROTECTION

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE REFERRAL FORM, ONCE COMPLETED, IS LIKELY TO CONTAIN SENSITIVE PERSONAL DATA ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL WHICH YOU MUST PROCESS SECURELY.

INFORMATION YOU SUPPLY TO OHS MAY BE DISCLOSED BY OHS IN COMPLIANCE WITH DATA PROTECTION, ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS OR OTHER LEGISLATION. PLEASE THEREFORE CONSIDER CAREFULLY ANY SUPPORTING INFORMATION WHICH YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT PROVIDING TO OHS.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Addley". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Dr Ken Addley
Director

July 2008