

Occupational Health: Guidance Notes

G1372 Fitness to Attend Work Meetings

OH is sometimes asked by managers for advice regarding whether an employee is fit to attend work meetings such as CDI's, fact finding interviews and other meetings that are part of formal management processes. This is usually because the employee has been diagnosed with Stress, Depression or Anxiety and may be off sick.

Current guidance¹ states that, although an employee may not be fit for work, they may well be fit to engage in the management process. Indeed, postponing of any proceedings may have a negative impact on their symptoms. Resolution of issues usually has the most positive impact on an individual's symptoms and aids recovery.

An employee would be fit to attend a work meeting if they can

1. understand the allegations made against them
2. distinguish right from wrong
3. understand and follow the proceedings if given the correct support (eg, extra time)

Only a minority of employees who are off sick with Stress or Depression will require an OH assessment of fitness to attend meetings. Employees should only be referred to OH for this advice if the employee states specifically that they are not able to attend a meeting/interview due to their medical condition or if a manager has similar concerns. Referral would also be appropriate if there are more serious mental health issues.

The OH assessment will use the same criteria as above when advising on an employee's fitness to attend work meetings.

Summary

- If an employee's condition is related to a work incident, resolution of the situation is often the quickest way to recovery.
- Postponing usual management processes can negatively impact on an employee's symptoms
- Being unfit to work does not mean unfit to participate in a management process or management meetings

- Consider how you can support the employee eg referral to counselling, meeting at a neutral location etc
- You do not need to refer to OH for an opinion unless you have concerns that the employee cannot:
 - o understand the allegations made against them
 - o distinguish right from wrong
 - o understand and follow the proceedings if given the correct support (eg, extra time)
- If the employee tells you that they are not fit to attend a work meeting, explore this with them in more depth.
 - 1) What are their concerns?
 - 2) Is there anything you can do to allay them?
 - 3) Discuss with them the key points of this guidance including how resolution of the work issue is likely to improve their symptoms.
 - 4) Try to get an understanding of whether they do meet the criteria for referral to OH.
 - 5) Offer support

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If you do need advice, please contact OH and use the standard referral form.

ⁱ The Health and Work Handbook, Faculty of Occupational Medicine, Royal College of General Practitioners, 2007