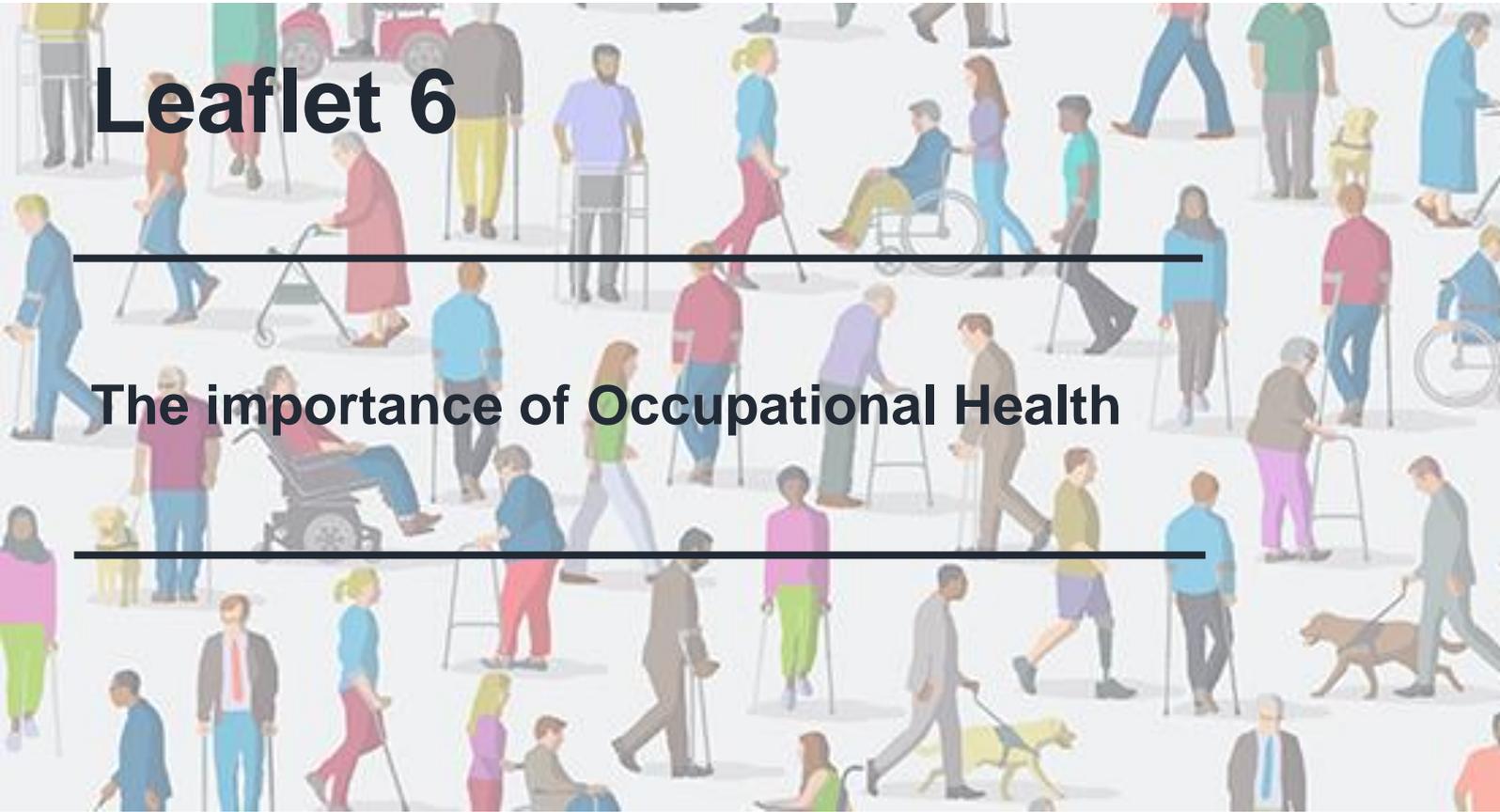


Leaflet 6

The importance of Occupational Health



The role of occupational health:

Occupational health specialists can assist by¹:

- advising on reasonable adjustments and what they might be
- confirming in writing whether an individual's condition satisfies the legal criteria of a disability,
- and therefore, deciding upon whether the **Equality Act** [2010] applies
- assessing the functional capability of an employee against the demands of the job
- advising what duties the employee would be able to 'cope with'
- devising a rehabilitation programme specifically aimed at returning the employee to work

It is important for every doctor with a disability to have access to appropriate and timely occupational health advice and support, to prevent short-term sickness becoming long-term.

Doctors may *acquire* a condition or disability at any stage of their career.

If a doctor in training develops a long-term health condition or disability, they may need specialist occupational health advice through an accredited occupational health physician, to make decisions about training, working and future career directions.

Self-referral to Occupational Health (OH):

Doctors, like any other employee, may be able to refer themselves to their employer's occupational health service. If for any reason, this is not possible, it is always possible to self-refer to a private occupational health physician for an opinion if this is a financially viable option for the individual concerned. It is worthwhile checking that they are an accredited service on the Safe Effective Quality Occupational Health Service (SEQOHS) website prior to instructing them².

The OH report:

The content of a report will depend on the reason for the referral, the specific questions that have been asked and any necessary specific recommendations.

Copies of the report will be sent to the individuals named on the management referral form only.

This is likely to be the referrer, the individual and where indicated the relevant contact in the human resources department.

The occupational health physician may recommend that a copy of the report is sent to the individuals GP and/or specialist for information

An example of an occupational health report form can be found in Appendix A9 of the GMC publication 'Welcomed & Valued'

The fundamental steps in an OH referral:

¹ <https://www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Publications/Fitness%20for%20work.pdf>

² <https://www.seqohs.org/AccreditedUnits.aspx>

- *Step one:* The manager explains to the employee the purpose and reason for the referral and obtain consent.
- *Step two:* The manager writes the referral itself.
- If consent is refused and there is sufficient reason, then a referral can be made anyway.
- *Step three:* The offer of appointment and consultation.

If the employee goes in to the occupational health appointment with a clear list of issues that need to be addressed, clarified and documented, then the appointment is far more likely to be successful and strengthen their position.

Factsheet 6 contains more details on this and a useful document about preparation for an Occupational Health appointment can also be found at www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com/occupational-health

- *Step four:* The occupational health physician writes the report.

The report is produced in order to allow your employer to uphold their legal responsibility of ensuring your health and safety in the workplace. You cannot prevent the specific, necessary and relevant recommendations from being shared with those people who are central to the implementation of those recommendations.

- *Step five:* The report is sent from occupational health to the manager, with a copy to the employee and human resources.
- *Step six:* The manager then reviews the situation in light of the written advice and any recommendations.

The occupational health report is advisory and decisions of whether or not the advised adjustments are reasonable will now have to be made by your employer prior to their implementation.

This leaflet is a summary of our more extensive Factsheet 5. For more in-depth information on the following topics, please refer to this document which can be found on the NHS Practitioner Health and the Disabled Doctors Network websites

-  The role of occupational health
-  Self-referral to OH
-  Higher Education Occupational Practitioners (HEOPS)
-  The OH report
-  The fundamental steps in an OH referral
-  Useful things to ask in an OH appointment

www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk

www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com