

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH – PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE SURVEY

Dear Colleague

The At Work Partnership and the journal *Occupational Health [at Work]* are carrying out a survey of occupational health professional practice. The aim of the survey is to explore important issues for day-to-day practice, including the management of both short and long-term sickness absence and return to work, medical confidentiality and difficult issues. The results will be published in *Occupational Health [at Work]*.

**Receive the summary of the survey findings
 and enter our FREE prize draw to win a FREE one-year subscription to
*Occupational Health [at Work]***

The survey is being conducted anonymously but if you send us your address details (either with your completed survey or separately) you'll be sent a free summary of the research findings. And, you'll also be entered into The At Work Partnership's FREE prize draw to win a one-year subscription to *Occupational Health [at Work]*.

If you have any queries on how to complete the questionnaire please email me at: john@atworkpartnership.co.uk.

Thank you in advance for your time in completing this survey.

Yours faithfully



Dr John Ballard, editor, *Occupational Health [at Work]*

**Please return your
 questionnaire by
 Friday 18 July 2008**

By post to our
 FREEPOST address:

The At Work
 Partnership Ltd,
 FREEPOST NAT 12389,
 19 Bishops Avenue,
 Elstree,
 BOREHAMWOOD
 WD6 3BR

Or, by fax to:
 020 8275 8469

Your name, or your
 employer's name will
 NOT be published in
 the survey analysis

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Please tick the category that best describes your employment

- in-house OH commercial OH provider self-employed/independent OH provider
 other (please specify) _____

OH providers only: If you are employed by a commercial OH provider, or are a self-employed provider, do you work

- mainly for one client organisation? across several clients?

2. In which sector(s) do you mainly work or provide OH services (tick all that apply)

- private sector NHS other public sector armed forces
 other (please specify) _____

3. What is your profession?

- OH physician other physician (eg GP) OH nurse other nurse OH technician
 other (please specify) _____

What is your job title? _____

SICKNESS ABSENCE (LONG AND SHORT TERM)

4. What proportion of your working time is taken up with SHORT-TERM sickness absence issues? (Note if you work part-time in occupational health, please answer this question with regards to your OH work only)

- No time less than 25% 26%–50% 51%–75% more than 75%

5. What proportion of your working time is taken up with LONG-TERM sickness absence issues? (Note if you work part-time in occupational health, please answer this question with regards to your OH work only)
- No time less than 25% 26%–50% 51%–75% more than 75%

6. Which three of the following absence-management activities do you spend the most time on? (If you answered 'no time' in questions 4 and 5, please go straight to question 7)

PLEASE TICK THREE BOXES ONLY

- carrying out fitness-for-work medicals following sickness absence trigger or referral
- carrying out return-to-work interviews
- developing/implementing sickness absence policy
- making/maintaining contact with absent individuals
- providing fitness-for-work reports to management/HR
- record keeping/collating absence data
- supporting return to work from long-term absence
- other (please specify) _____

7. How often do you see individuals who have been referred because of their sickness absence but whose case, in your opinion, should be addressed by managers and not 'medicalised'?

- never very rarely occasionally frequently very frequently

Please provide details

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITH RESPECT TO YOUR MAIN PLACE OF WORK (OR WHERE YOU SPEND MOST TIME IF YOU PROVIDE OH SERVICES TO CLIENTS)

8. It is often said that not all sickness absence is justified on health grounds.

What percentage of total *lost time* (both long and short term) in your organisation do you believe is unjustified?

_____ % don't know

What percentage of total *absence spells* (both long and short term) in your organisation do you believe is unjustified?

_____ % don't know

Which three factors do you think are the main causes of this 'unjustified absence'?

PLEASE TICK THREE BOXES ONLY

- alcohol misuse
- care of elderly relative or spouse
- childcare needs
- employee too tired to attend
- drug/substance misuse
- poor motivation at work
- revenge because employee feels mistreated at work
- sickness absence perceived as 'entitlement'
- time out to 'recharge batteries' (unauthorised 'duvet day')
- unauthorised holiday ('skiving')
- other (please specify or comment) _____

9. Does your organisation use absence trigger points (eg number/duration of absence spells) for referral to OH?

- yes, routinely yes, in certain situations only no don't know

If yes, how would you rate their effectiveness in tackling absence:

- very useful fairly useful not very useful not at all useful don't know

10. Does your organisation use absence trigger points to initiate disciplinary sanctions for those with poor attendance records, that could eventually lead to dismissal

- yes, routinely yes, in certain situations only no don't know

If yes, how would you rate their effectiveness in a disciplinary context in tackling absence:

- very useful fairly useful not very useful not at all useful don't know

11. Does your organisation use 'Bradford Scores'? yes no don't know
- If yes, how would you rate their effectiveness in tackling absence
 very useful fairly useful not very useful not at all useful don't know
12. How would you rate the accuracy of absence data recording/monitoring at your place of work
 very accurate fairly accurate not very accurate not at all accurate don't know
13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the government plans to replace the current FMed3 certificates with 'fit notes', focusing on what an employee can do rather than cannot do. Do you
 agree strongly agree neither agree nor disagree disagree disagree strongly
14. What percentage of employees signed off sick at your main place of work do you think could be at work despite ongoing health problems?
 %

RETURN TO WORK/JOB RETENTION

15. Thinking in general terms, across the range of cases and situations you deal with, which of the following generic interventions do you/your organisation find effective in promoting return to work/retention. Please rate each according to how effective you believe it is.

<i>Return-to-work and job retention interventions</i>	<i>Not used at organisation</i>	<i>Very effective</i>	<i>Fairly effective</i>	<i>Not very effective</i>	<i>Not at all effective</i>
return-to-work interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
absence call-centre: employee rings call-centre rather than manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
case conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
physiotherapy (musculoskeletal)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
counselling (mental health/stress)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cognitive behavioural therapy (mental health/stress)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
motivational interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
conflict management/mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
referral for specialist medical opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
private medical insurance/health plan – senior/executive grades only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
private medical insurance/health plan – all employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
work or workplace adjustments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
flexible hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
home working (temporary or permanent basis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
training/retraining for people who have developed a work-limiting health condition or impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Again, thinking in general terms, across the range of cases and situations you deal with, which are the three most significant barriers to successful return to work?

PLEASE TICK **THREE** BOXES ONLY

- communication/relationship problems between manager and employee
- employee attributes ill health or injury to work
- employee believes they should not return to work until 100% fit or pain free
- employee disengaged from workplace or lacks motivation
- employee's negative beliefs about his/her condition
- employer/manager unable/unwilling to accommodate employee who is not 100% fit
- generous sick pay/PHI entitlement
- inappropriate advice on recovery time from consultant
- inappropriate sick certification from GP
- lack of contact by manager with the absent employee
- lack of opportunities for adjusted work during recuperation period
- lack of opportunities for phased return to work
- waiting lists for specialist medical treatment/tests
- other (please specify) _____

Please specify why these three barriers are so significant _____

17. Does your organisation have any difficulty in accommodating people back to work before they are fully fit for all the demands/tasks of their job? yes no don't know

If yes, please state why _____

CONFIDENTIALITY

18. In your work, do you receive requests to reveal confidential health information to line managers to which they are not entitled? never very rarely occasionally frequently very frequently

19. Do you ever feel pressurised by line managers to reveal such information?

never very rarely occasionally frequently very frequently

20. In your work, how often do you receive requests to reveal confidential health information to HR/personnel managers to which they are not entitled?

never very rarely occasionally frequently very frequently

21. Do you ever feel pressurised by HR/personnel managers to reveal such information?

never very rarely occasionally frequently very frequently

22. Do you believe that the confidentiality of workers' health information is ever breached inappropriately at your organisation?

never very rarely occasionally frequently very frequently

Please provide further information _____

23. Have issues of confidentiality ever caused you problems at work? yes no

Please provide details _____

24. Should HR practitioners be subject to a professional code of conduct and ethics?

yes no don't know

If yes, should this be (please tick all that apply):

a voluntary code a statutory code a code regulated by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, which could annul membership if breached

OH PRACTICE

25. Which three things make your occupational health work difficult?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

26. What three things would make it easier for you to do your work?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it in the enclosed FREEPOST envelope by Friday 18 July 2008. We would also be pleased to receive your address details if you should like a copy of the survey report or would like to be entered into our prize draw.

Please include these with your survey or put them in a separate envelope, as you prefer, and send to:
The At Work Partnership Ltd, FREEPOST NAT 12389, 19 Bishops Avenue, Elstree, BOREHAMWOOD WD6 3BR

Your name, or your employer's name, will NOT be published in the survey analysis.

© The At Work Partnership Ltd, 2008