Manager’s Guide

Safety-Critical Medicals & Temporary Work Restrictions

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Purpose of a Safety-Critical Medical

- Ensure individuals in high-risk roles are medically fit
- Protect employee and public safety
- Assess fitness to operate machinery, work at heights, or drive
- Support sustained concentration and emergency response

Why Temporary Restrictions May Be Put in Place

- Medical condition limits ability to perform certain tasks
- Examples: recovery, medication, mental health, fatigue
- Aim: reduce risk while keeping employee productive and safe
- Restrictions are short-term and reviewed regularly

What Is Required to Lift a Restriction

- Follow-up OH appointment
- Clearance from GP or specialist (e.g. optician)
- Submission of home readings (if applicable)
- Formal OH confirmation required to return to full duties

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How to ensure best outcome

1. Prepare Employees in Advance

- **Inform team members early** about upcoming medicals and explain what they involve.
- Share the **purpose** of the assessments: to ensure they are medically fit to carry out safety critical roles.
- Remind them to **bring necessary documentation** (e.g., glasses, medication details, ID).

2. Promote Healthy Habits Ahead of Time

- Encourage staff to:
  - **Sleep well** the night before.
  - **Stay hydrated** and eat sensibly (avoid caffeine overload or energy drinks).
  - **Avoid** running or rushing to your appointment
- Consider sharing a **pre-medical checklist** to help them prepare.

3. Attend MMU Discussions Promptly and Constructively

- If contacted by the OHT, attend the Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) promptly.
- Use the opportunity to:
  - Understand the reason for any restriction.
  - Ask what support or changes can help lift the restriction quickly.
  - Show the employee that their safety and role matter.

Summary: Manager Best Practices

Do	Avoid
Encourage healthy habits before assessments	Pressuring employees to “just get through it”
Promote a supportive, open culture	Ignoring early warning signs
Be present and cooperative if a restriction occurs	Delaying attendance to MMU
Help with adjustments and follow-ups	Blaming or penalizing employees for restrictions
Use the experience to improve team health	Viewing the medical as a box-ticking exercise

Occupational Health Advice vs. Decision

- OH provides evidence-based advice
- Employers make final decisions based on OH guidance
- Ignoring OH advice may pose legal/safety risks

Restriction vs. Referral

- **Restriction** = immediate workplace adjustments needed
- **Referral** = further investigation required
- Referral may be to GP, specialist, or further OH review
- Helps determine long-term impact of health on work

What Do I Do When Notified of a Restriction?

1. Review the restriction notice
2. Adjust the employee's duties
3. Communicate clearly with the employee
4. Inform supervisors (confidentially)
5. Document changes
6. Schedule follow-up reviews
7. Do not reinstate full duties without OH clearance

Comparison: Restriction vs. Referral

After conducting a safety-critical medical or case review, Occupational Health may recommend either a workplace restriction or an onward referral. Understanding the difference is essential for appropriate follow-up.

Outcome	Restriction	Referral
What It Means	OH has completed their assessment and determined the employee can work but with specific limitations	OH has completed their assessment but believes further investigation is needed to fully understand the impact of work on the employee's health
Employee Status	Employee remains at work in a modified role	Employee remains at work without immediate restrictions, pending further information
Purpose	To reduce risk and support recovery by limiting exposure to certain tasks	To explore underlying causes, assess work-related factors, or seek specialist opinion
Next Steps	Restriction stays in place until a review or clearance is provided	Referral to GP, specialist, or additional OH evaluation (e.g. case management, diagnostic follow-up)

- A **restriction** means the OH clinician has identified a specific, immediate risk and advised modifications to the role.
- A **referral** means no immediate adjustments are required, but further investigation is needed to understand workplace health impact.

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