

Pre-placement / pre-employment health assessments webinar

Prof Anne Harriss

Past President of Society of Occupational Medicine

They are all “fit” – but fit for different roles



Pre-placement health assessments

- This will cover:
 - Why they are undertaken and linking this to legislative issues.
 - Who undertakes them?
 - The necessity of linking the assessments to features of the job role
 - the assessment for the post of admin assistant will differ from that of a veterinary surgeon, a general surgeon, someone working at heights or those working in confined spaces as a sewer worker.

Legal considerations

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** (Sections 2 and 3) – duty of care
- **Equality Act (2010)** (Section 60)

Initiate health surveillance such as is required by:

- **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002)** (Health surveillance, Reg 11)
- **Control of Noise at Work Regulations (2005)** (Health surveillance, Reg 9)
- **Control of Vibration at Work Regulations (2005)** (Health surveillance, Reg 7)

To avoid disability discrimination, employers can ask various health questions, but **only after** an offer of employment.

Most employees make a job offer conditional on satisfactory health checks.

At the start of my career...

- Many pre-emp health assessments far too complex
- Often undertaken by doctors - included a full medical examination
- Nurse assessments did not include a full medical examination but could be a few pages long. I recall one that was six pages of A4.

At the start of my career...



Even those with very significant long-term health problems can be fit for work - they may need workplace adjustments

The aim of pre-placement screening

- May link with statutory requirements
- From a health perspective, ensure that the prospective employee;
 - can manage the physical, psychological and the cognitive demands of the job
 - is “fit” to undertake the requirements of the job role, albeit with reasonable adjustments.
- can work regularly, effectively and safely - whilst undertaking their job role they will not cause harm to themselves or others
- the prospective employee will be able to give regular and effective service
- provides a baseline health record for ongoing health surveillance eg audiometry, spirometry, HAVS

The assessment:

Aims to ensure that there is no risk to:

- The worker/co-workers
- The public (eg drivers)
- The product – e.g. food handling
- Others eg in the transport sector (passengers and road users), health care (patients).

- Most assessments can be undertaken using a health questionnaire assessed by an OHN
- May require (?statutory) medical input – eg divers
- The practitioner must understand the possible health impact of work tasks and responsibilities, and the hazards to which they may be exposed.

Health standards

- Understand the reciprocal impacts of health on work
- Consider the job requirements that might impact the safety of the employee or others?
- Does it involve working at heights, in confined spaces, using PPE such as RPE or hearing protection?
- Some job roles have particular demands requiring assessment of visual acuity, colour vision, hearing.

There are advantages for the employer, the employee and the occupational health professional providing the service

Employer perspective

- Establishes health status - only **after** the offer of employment but before the person starts their new role
- Ensures the worker's health will not impede their ability to do their job nor will the job adversely affect their health.
- Can reduce costs associated with future sickness absence or attrition

Employee perspective

Provides opportunities to:

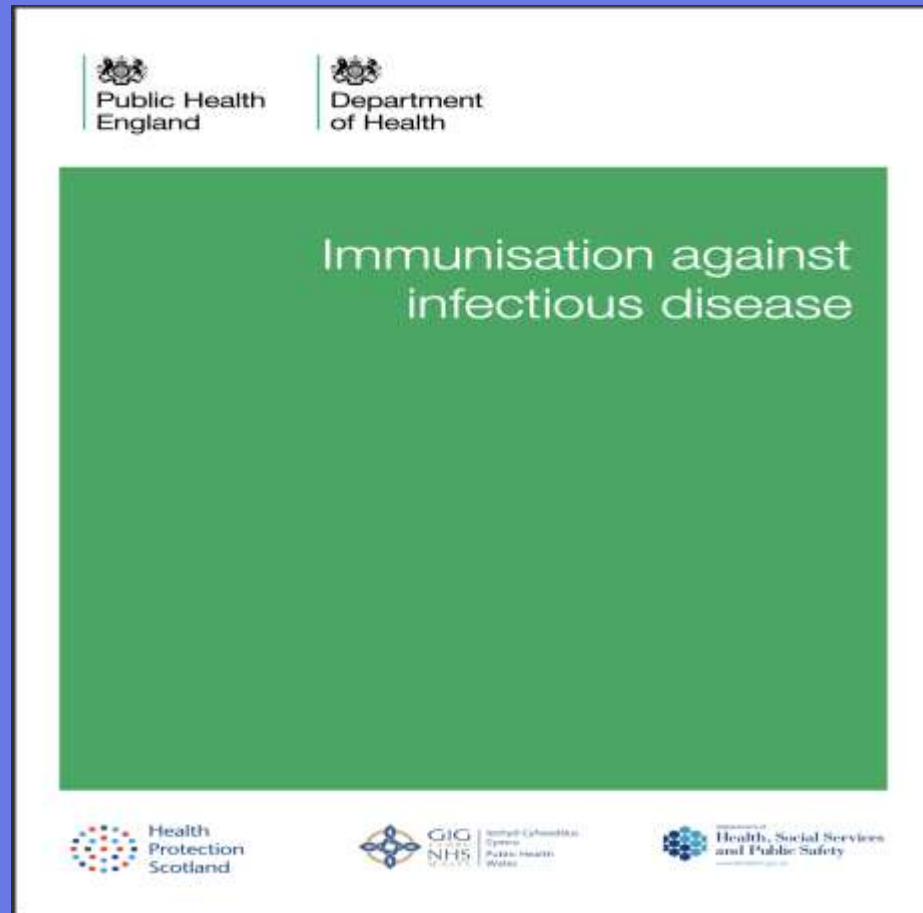
- discuss the hazards to which they may be exposed, the importance of control measures and ongoing health surveillance if appropriate
- Identify if any adjustments may be required

Occupational health provider's perspective

- Generally, the process commences with the submission of a health questionnaire – this may be supplemented with a F2F assessment
- Assess and confirm the appropriateness of the person:job fit
- Virtual/F2F assessments **may** be required subject to what the questionnaire reveals and whether additional tests are required

- Work with exposure to significant hazards eg chemical/biological agents, or physical hazards F2F assessments will be required to collect baseline data using spirometry, audiometry or assessment of HAVS
- Provides opportunities for health promotion, discussion on health and work
- Pre-placement assessments for those exposed to bio-hazards eg work in some laboratory settings, health care or work involving overseas travel, may need work-related immunisations.

Bio-hazards – consult the online “green book”



Access via
this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book>

Outcome categories

- **Fit**
- **Fit with adjustments** – e.g. a DSE user with visual difficulties
- **Fit with restrictions** – eg for those with a long-term condition, e.g. poorly controlled epilepsy, are there issues with regards to lone working?
- **Unfit for this role**

In summary - The assessment should be fit for purpose

- Base the assessment on job role and potential hazard exposure
- Use appropriate, evidence-based fitness standards
- Periodically audit the process to confirm it remains “fit for purpose”.