Dear Colleagues,

Performers List Occupational Health Clearance

Please find appended supplementary interim guidance in respect of applications to join the National Performers List and the requirements for Occupational Health clearance. This has been drafted in consultation with the health at work network in response to a number of queries regarding the current policy (Publications Gateway reference 00313).

Further consideration of Occupational Health clearance and support will feature in the revised National Performers List Policy under development.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

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Area Team reference number: 01013  
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To: Area Team Directors  
FAO: Regional Heads of Primary Care  
Area Team Heads of Primary Care

(via email)
Appendix 1

Primary Care Performers Lists Occupational Health Clearance, Fit to Practice Declarations - Interim guidance for practitioners, NHS England Area Teams and NHS occupational health providers
December 2013

Background

NHS England has introduced occupational health clearance as part of the application process for general medical practitioners, general dental practitioners, ophthalmic medical practitioners and optometrists wishing to join the National Performers List/s (1). This is referred to in this document as the ‘NHS England Performers List Policy’.

The purpose is to ensure that there are no health concerns that would otherwise compromise an applicant’s fitness to ‘cover the services they shall provide, or could reasonably be expected to provide, as a performer’. It is also a requirement for dentists and doctors that ‘an assessment is made to ensure that they can undertake exposure prone procedures (EPPs) and that they do not pose a risk to patients’. Dentists perform EPPs routinely and general medical practitioners may also do so in some circumstances.

This interim note is intended to provide advice to practitioners, NHS England Area Teams and NHS Occupational Health providers on the process whereby health screening can be completed.

Current Process

1. General Medical Practitioners, General Dental Practitioners and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners and optometrists need an occupational health [OH] clearance as part of the application process. It is the responsibility of the individual practitioner to secure this clearance.

2. OH screening and assessment may involve scrutiny of OH health questionnaires and previous immunisation information/blood test results. If these are not sufficient for clearance then an immunisation assessment will be required.

3. The standards for healthcare workers ‘work health assessments’ are set out in NHS Employers, ‘Work Health Assessments’ July 2013 (2).

   The requirements for infectious disease clearance, are detailed in the Department of Health, ‘Health clearance for tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV: New healthcare workers’ March 2007,’ which includes details of ‘additional health clearance’ required for those who may perform exposure prone procedures (3).

   General Medical Practitioner and General Dental Practitioner applicants will need to meet the standards for additional health clearance and Optometrist applicants will require ‘standard health clearance.’

4. A practitioner who has previously received occupational health screening when starting work in the NHS, and has been working under the supervision of a postgraduate dean as a trainee, is unlikely to require repeated health screening if there are already satisfactory OH records containing the necessary information, including blood results from identity validated samples. Certificates of satisfactory health clearance, called ‘fit to practise’ declarations by NHS England,
can be provided by Occupational Health Practitioners, working in NHS OH services, on the basis of scrutiny of these previous OH records.

However if there is any doubt about previous OH records or results, concern about health information, or fitness to perform exposure prone procedures further occupational health assessment will be required. This may include assessment by a consultant occupational physician.

5. An applicant to the National Performers List who is new to the NHS, or returning to NHS clinical practice from abroad or after a career break, will require full OH screening. This may include assessment by a consultant occupational physician.

6. The NHS England Performers List Policy states “All new OH assessments and any requiring review by a consultant OH physician should be conducted by SEQOHS accredited OH services.” Until this policy has been reviewed (see below), OH clearance and fitness to practise’ certificates (on the basis of previous health clearance at the time of acceptance into GP training) may be given by non-accredited NHS OH providers. Details of NHS OH services can be found using the postcode locator, http://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/find-providers.asp

(Note - there are 66 SEQOHS accredited NHS OH providers across the NHS in England. Not all NHS providers are accredited. It is for individual providers to decide if they want to offer this service. Not all providers can offer this service).

7. Fees are payable for the initial assessment by the practitioner, unless their employer has agreed to pay on their behalf. The fee charged is set by the service provider but starts from approximately £30 for a basic assessment (the paper based screening). Please note if additional assessments or blood tests/immunisations are required, then this will incur an additional charge that is set by the service provider.

8. If an OH provider cannot issue a fit for practise clearance for an individual practitioner, without a face to face medical assessment, by physician, then the practitioner will need to arrange this OH assessment through their local area team. The cost of this further assessment will be borne by NHS England. Such situations are likely to be rare. SEQOHS accredited NHS services will have access to a consultant occupational physician who is able to complete an enhanced assessment if indicated and liaise with the local area team as necessary.

Policy Review

The NHS Health at Work Network is currently working with NHS England to help review the Performers List Policy issued in June 2013. The aim is to issue clearer direction on the health declaration requirement for each profession and put in place local arrangements for health clearance with each NHS England Area Team. This work will be completed by April 2014.

References


http://www.nhsemployers.org/Aboutus/Publications/Pages/work-health-assessments.aspx

17 December 2013 final

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