

## Appendix 2

### **CPI Occupational Health Choosing a competent occupational health professional**

There will be times when an organisation will need help from a specialist e.g. an occupational health practitioner, ergonomist or occupational hygienist. To make best use of their services it is necessary to be aware of what they can and should do, and to consider how their work can contribute to the management of occupational health. The organisation cannot devolve the management of health risks to others; the specialists can only contribute to overall health & safety management.

#### **Specifying the service you require from an occupational health professional**

To enable the organisation to be clear about the services it is going to pay for, and what it will receive in return; producing a written specification is good practice. The specification could include:

- company information, products, processes, methods of operation and working;
- the problems identified and why the organisation cannot deal with them from its own resources;
- the service required from the specialist;
- the feedback required for the company and employees;
- how the specialist will maintain confidentiality;
- timescale for work to be undertaken and frequency of ongoing checks;
- how records will be kept;
- format, frequency and method of providing reports;
- action that will be taken if an individual is found unfit for work;
- the resources the company can offer, including named contact for the specialist and any facilities or premises available etc; and
- how the company plans to use the advice or support

#### **What to look for, when selecting occupational health professionals**

- Recognised qualifications – the minimum competence standards
- Practical experience
- Conversant with current practice

#### **Recognised qualifications**

There are currently three levels of qualification in occupational medicine for doctors:

- Diploma in Occupational Medicine (DoccMed) – (the minimum standard);
- Associateship (is this term correct?) of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (AFOM); and
- Membership of the Faculty (MFOM)

Nurses who carry out occupational health surveillance should, as a minimum,

- be registered with the Nursing and midwifery Council (NMC);
- may also hold an occupational health qualification at Certificate, Diploma or Degree level; and
- should be registered or qualified to be registered as a specialist nurse practitioner in public health in occupational health.

Occupational health technicians

- should be trained in the specific elements of the service that they deliver, and must be clinically supervised.

Different qualifications can be compared at the National Qualifications Database:

[www.openquals.org.uk](http://www.openquals.org.uk)

### Practical experience

Every sector of industry has different health and safety needs, so it is vital that an organisation chooses a professional who has practical experience in and knowledge of your or a similar industry. For example a practitioner with experience in one type of storage and warehousing would probably be able to advise other storage operations effectively.

### Current practice

Competent health and safety professionals will ensure they stay informed about changes in legislation, HSE guidance and industry standards. Professional bodies keep their members informed of these types of changes as well as providing forums for dissemination of best practice.

### Occupational health specialists and their expertise

To help assess the specialist who is most likely to be able to address the occupational issues faced by an organisation the table below provides guidance on the expertise for the various specialists available.

Specialist	Expertise
Ergonomists	Advice on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• field of vision, sight lines, manual handling repetitive tasks, workspace layout, body size, aspects of guarding and containment, demands of tasks/equipment on people;</li> <li>• the equipment used and whether it is appropriate for the task;</li> <li>• the effects of the physical environment including lighting, temperature and humidity on people</li> </ul>
Health and safety management	Help with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy development and planning;</li> <li>• performance monitoring;</li> <li>• involving employees in decision making;</li> <li>• training and communication</li> </ul>
Microbiologists	Assessment of biological hazards and advice on risks and control measures to prevent or control health risks. Sampling for micro-organisms
Noise and vibration specialists	Measure levels and advise on causes, elimination and practical solutions to reduce exposure
Occupational health professionals (doctors and nurses)	Diagnosis and treatment of work-related disease (doctors). Assessment of risks to health and advice on managing these risks. Health surveillance and other health checks. Fitness for work issues. Advice on pre-employment health screening, sickness absence and ill-health retirement. Providing health education, advice on rehabilitation after illness or injury.
Occupational hygienists	Assessment and practical advice on the prevention or reduction of risks to health from chemical, biological and physical agents arising from work activities. Environmental monitoring.
Physiotherapists	Providing treatment and rehabilitation advice. Advice on prevention of musculoskeletal disorders
Radiation protection advisers	Advice on complying with legislation covering the use of ionising radiation in the workplace. Conducting environmental monitoring.