

Night worker health assessments

July 2018

Intended audience: All night shift workers

Managers' brief

Introduction

It is our legal obligation to offer all night shift workers the opportunity for an annual **free health assessment**. A night shift worker is defined as an employee who works for at least three hours between the hours of 23:00 and 06:00.

Overview

As part of a legal requirement (Working Time Regulations 1998), every adult worker assigned to night shift work has the opportunity to take up a **free** health assessment.

Royal Mail Group complies with this by ensuring that all employees, who work for at least three hours between the hours of 23:00 and 06:00, are offered the health assessment on an annual basis. This is done through a screening questionnaire that has been compiled with guidance from Royal Mail's occupational health provider.

The assessments are to support your health and wellbeing. Some health conditions which might need to be taken into consideration when doing night work include:

- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Heart disease
- Intestinal problems
- Kidney disease
- Thyroid or glandular disease
- Mental health
- Chronic sleep problems
- Back, joint and neck problems
- Asthma and pulmonary disorders

A night worker health assessment will identify any risk factors associated with the condition(s) and allows advice to be obtained on how to manage them effectively. It does not necessarily mean anyone with these conditions is unsuitable for night work.

The health and wellbeing team will write to all night workers about the free health assessment, enclosed with a copy of the questionnaire and a return envelope. Each completed questionnaire will be reviewed by our occupational health providers. Depending on the information you have provided, it may be necessary for an assessment to be arranged with an occupational health advisor. An assessment could be face to face or over the phone. You will be advised if further action is required.

Should an assessment not be necessary, there will be no further action taken. You will not receive any further correspondence until the next night worker health assessment, unless a personal requirement is identified sooner.

Note: This is a voluntary assessment; colleagues are not obliged to complete this. All returns will be treated in strictest confidence and with your consent information may be shared with Royal Mail, which could result in your line manager being informed about certain aspects (i.e. if reasonable workplace adjustments are required)

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There are wider benefits for the business in that the high level cumulative data helps us understand any emerging health trends amongst our workforce and where any are identified we can take some proactive action to support colleagues.

Both the CWU and Unite CMA have been involved in the planning of this exercise and are encouraging their members to take part. If you have any concerns about completing this questionnaire then do speak to your workplace health and safety representative for clarity and reassurance.

The deadline for returning your completed questionnaire is 20th August 2018.

Actions

- Hand out the accompanying information sheet to every colleague that works night shift hours. Letters with questionnaires will be sent to night shift workers home addresses.
- Everyone is encouraged to complete the questionnaires and send to OH Assist using the return envelope.
- **Health assessment questionnaires must be returned by 20th August 2018.**

Preparing your WTLL session

Print off a copy of the questionnaire, [available here](#), to show your teams. You can also access a copy of the letter template [here](#).

Facilitation tips

- Refer to the huddle messages on health guidance to night shift workers and remind them of the purpose (i.e. leading up to the launch of the night workers health assessment).
- Emphasise that this has been discussed with both our union partners and that the CWU will be writing to branches giving their support to this.

Running the session

- Read out the message above
- Hold up a copy of the letter and questionnaire
- Refer any questions to the HRSC Helpline 0345 6060603.

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Health Advice for Shift Workers



Feeling First Class

It has long been recognised that people who work shifts, especially night shifts, are more prone to certain health conditions due to the changes in their body clock leading to reduced rest, changes in eating habits, taking less physical exercise and having less social interaction with family and friends.

Below are some hints and tips that can improve the physical and social health of colleagues who work shifts across unsocial hours.

For further health information visit our Feeling First Class website www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk using the code "FFC1" when first registering.

Sleep

We all need sleep to rest and repair the body, however sometimes a good days / night sleep is difficult.

- Choose a quiet room as your bedroom, where there is least disturbance from outside and internal noise and sounds
- Blackout the bedroom as much as possible to keep out daylight
- Do some gentle exercise such as a short walk before going to bed
- Relax by reading or listening to music before bed
- Have a shower or bath before bed
- Avoid drinking caffeine or other stimulants a few hours before going to sleep
- Drink very little alcohol as it reduces the quality of sleep.

Diet

We all need food for energy however certain foods can impact on helping us stay alert or sleep when we need to.

- Eat regular light meals as heavy meals can cause drowsiness
- Avoid fatty foods as they are more difficult to digest.
- Choose foods that are easily digestible such as pasta, rice, bread, fruit and vegetables
- Avoid sugary foods, which provide a short energy boost, but then cause a dip in energy levels
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

Physical Activity

Physical activity can help with sleep as well as weight management. In addition it has been proven that there is a strong link between good physical health and good mental health.

Social Interaction

We all need it to keep up to date with family and friends, and it's also good for our mental health.

- Let your family and friends know about how shift work affects you. If they understand the problems,

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- At least 30 minutes daily exercise is recommended and this can be split into two if necessary.
- Exercise can be as simple and inexpensive as a walk, jog, cycle, or exercising at home.
- Swimming is good as you use most of the muscle groups and your joints are supported by the surrounding water.
- It is recommended that physical activity is carried out with a friend or colleague as it leads to social interaction, which is beneficial not only for physical but also mental health.

they can be more supportive

- Let them know your shift schedule well in advance. This means that social and family activities can be planned around your shift schedule
- Get involved with family activities such as meals, household chores, sport and going out together
- Try to carry out some social activities with work colleagues who share similar shift schedules to you.