



# HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

Health Surveillance is an integral part of any workplace. It is set up to protect employees and employers. It is about putting in place systematic, regular and appropriate procedures to detect early signs of work related ill health among employees exposed to certain risks.

The early identification of any health condition will help identify any responsive action needed to prevent any symptoms worsening.

## Health surveillance is required by law if an employee is exposed to any of the following:

- ▶ hazardous substances such as chemicals, solvents, fumes, dusts, gases and vapours, aerosols, biological agents
- ▶ asbestos, lead, work in compressed air
- ▶ noise, hand-arm vibration
- ▶ noise or vibration, solvents, fumes, dusts, biological agents and other substances hazardous to health, or work in compressed air.
- ▶ working at heights
- ▶ night workers

## Where health surveillance is required, employees have duties under health and safety law, and should understand:

- ▶ that health surveillance has been identified for this situation as a statutory requirement
- ▶ that they must attend their appointments
- ▶ that they are entitled to attend appointments within paid working time

## WHY CARRY OUT HEALTH SURVEILLANCE?

Health surveillance is a system of ongoing health checks and is only one part of the overall management of health risks. It provides many benefits, including being able to:

- ▶ Provide information to be able to detect harmful health effects at an early stage, thereby protecting employees and confirming whether they are still fit to do their jobs;
- ▶ Check that control measures are working well by giving feedback on risk assessments, suggesting where further action might be needed and what it might be;
- ▶ Provide data, by means of health records, to detect and evaluate health risks;
- ▶ Provide an opportunity to train and instruct employees further in safe and healthy working practices;
- ▶ Give employees the chance to raise any concerns about the effect of their work on their health.

## METHODS FOR HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

The methods for health surveillance are dependent on the nature of the potential hazards an employee may be exposed to. They can involve online screening questionnaires through to appointments with qualified Occupational Health (OH) Professionals. Medigold is the OH provider that East Dunbartonshire Council use.

### 1. Online questionnaires

Some health surveillance is carried out via an online questionnaire. Where this is the case, online questionnaire links and passwords will be distributed to all relevant managers to provide to the members of their teams who should complete the questionnaire. These can be completed on any device, however, if an employee does not have access to a device, managers must make arrangements to ensure that the questionnaire can be completed.

### 2. Clinic Appointments

An appointment will be made for any employee that is required to attend a health surveillance clinic. The duration of a clinic appointment depends on the combination of health surveillance which is required. For example, a skin and audio clinic is 35 minutes and an audio, skin and working at height clinic is 45 minutes.

Managers are responsible for notifying employees of their appointment and ensuring that they attend or fulfil the requests made where required.

All details of on-site clinics and COVID-19 safety measures in place will be communicated individually to Line Managers to share with the relevant employees.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW

Where health surveillance identifies that an employee's health is being affected by their work, then steps must be taken to prevent further harm to the individual by reducing, or temporarily removing them from, exposure to the hazard.





## HEALTH SURVEILLANCE DEFINITIONS

**Audiometry** – an audiometry exam tests your ability to hear sounds. Audiometric tests determine a subjects hearing levels with the help of an audiometer but may also measure the ability to discriminate between different sound intensities, recognise pitch or distinguish speech from background noise. This testing will help to identify employees at risk of significant hearing loss by identifying changes in their hearing threshold. Employees exposed to noise should be tested, for example, employees working with stihl saws, lawnmowers, grinders, audio/visual equipment and waste operatives.

**Banksman** – banksmen are operatives trained to direct vehicle movement on or around site. Banksmen can be used for reversing of vehicles if trained and authorised to do so. Appropriate health assessments are required for this role.

**Colour Vision - Ishihara** – the Ishihara test is a colour perception test to determine colour blindness.

**Confined Spaces** – a confined space is a place which is substantially enclosed (though not always entirely) and where serious injury can occur from hazardous substances or conditions within the space or nearby (e.g. lack of oxygen). Examples of employees who may work in confined spaces include plumbers, pest control officers, boiler/gas engineers.

**Driver Medical (FLT/Plant)** – a professional driver is an employee who is paid to drive a vehicle as part of their employment. Driver medical assessments are essential for anyone in such a role.

**Drugs and Alcohol Testing** – to enhance the health, safety, work capability and conduct of all people in the work environment, drugs and alcohol testing within the workplace is available. There is a responsibility placed on the employer and employee to ensure that risks in the workplace are kept to a minimum for everyone and testing is applicable to all employees.

**Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) (Tier 1 or 2)** – HAVS is the main concern posed by exposure to oscillating machinery. Commonly manifesting as vibration white finger or carpal tunnel syndrome. HAVS is caused by the transfer of vibration through a workers hands and arms. The purpose of testing is to determine if anyone has been exposed to HAVS whilst at work and prevent progression and eventual disability. Examples of employees who may require this testing are those who work in Streetscene, Property Maintenance and Roads.

**Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD's)** – MSD's are injuries and disorders that affect the human body's movement or musculoskeletal system (muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc). Ergonomic risk factors, including force, repetition and posture and individual risk factors, including poor work practices, poor fitness and poor health habits can contribute, over time to MSD's. Examples of employees who may require this assessment are waste operatives, and those who work in Streetscene and Property Maintenance.

**Night Workers** – this is defined as employees who regularly work at least three hours during the night period. The night period is defined as 11pm to 6am unless the employee and employer agree a different night period. If they do, it must be seven hours long and include midnight to 5am.

**Respiratory/Lung Function** – pulmonary function tests are a group of tests that measure how well your lungs work. This includes how well you're able to breathe and how effective your lungs are to bring oxygen into the rest of your body. These tests are used to screen for diseases that affect the airways, such as COPD or asthma. Employees who carry out jobs which would lead them to be exposed to, for example, reactive chemicals, asbestos, silica dust etc. should be tested.

**Skin Assessment** – this assessment is a physical examination of skin colour, moisture, temperature, texture, mobility and turgor and skin lesions as well as inspection of fingernails and toenails. Examples of employees requiring skin assessments include those dealing with chemicals, for example, science teachers/technicians and cleaners.

**Vision - Snellen** – a Snellen chart is an eye chart that can be used to measure visual acuity undertaken by a qualified ophthalmologist (local optician). Employees who require an eye test prior to/during commencement of work would undertake a Snellen test. Examples could be professional drivers, road workers and designated VDU users.

**Working at Heights** – Working at height means working in a place where a person could be injured by falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. Those who may be required to work at heights include roofers or cemetery employees.

