Provided by Business Beckinsale Limited

Conducting Health Risk Assessments for Your Well-being Programme

A health risk assessment (HRA) is a tool for determining the presence of disease and for estimating the risk that someone with certain characteristics will develop a disease. HRAs can be used by employers to identify at-risk employees and target specific strategies to promote employee well-being and reduce health-related costs, such as employer’s liability. Consider the following guidance when conducting an HRA.

The Benefits Conducting HRAs

HRAs are appealing for several reasons:

* They are easy to complete and are generally popular with employees.
* They may increase individual motivation and participation in your workplace well-being programme because they uncover health risks.
* They provide group data that can be used by the employer to identify major health problems and risk factors that can be addressed in well-being initiatives.

Factors to Include

The three components of an HRA are questionnaire, risk calculation and educational reports. Typically, each employee will receive a confidential report and the employer will receive an aggregate report with grouped statistics from all employees.

Some of the most common factors included in a health risk assessment include:

* **Blood Glucose Level:** Blood tests can determine the presence of diabetes or pre-diabetes.
* **Blood Pressure:** Pressure readings are taken and information is gathered about employees’ medical background and blood pressure history.
* **Stroke Conditions**: Blood test is done to detect the presence of blood vessel abnormalities.
* **Body Mass Index (BMI):** A measure of weight relative to height to measure body fat.
* **Cholesterol**: Good and bad levels of cholesterol are detected using a blood test, and information is gathered about diet and medication use.
* **Coronary Disease:** Employees are questioned on their lifestyle choices and any previous heart problems.
* **Demographic Information**: Information is gathered about gender, age, weight, height, race, marital status and geographic location to improve well-being efforts.
* **Family History:** Employees are given a high-level questionnaire about the presence of certain diseases within their families.
* **Stress**: Employees are questioned on their stress levels and sources of stress.
* **Physical Fitness:** Employees are questioned on their activity level.
* **Tobacco Use:** Employees are questioned on their tobacco use.

Keep in mind that the UK has laws involve privacy and discrimination issues and the use of incentives or penalties based on this information.

Employers should be familiar with these laws to make sure their programmes are in compliance. It is wise to seek competent legal advice or legal opinion when devising and implementing a health risk assessment to ensure your company is not at legal risk.

Employees can often complete assessments through printed or electronic surveys. Electronic HRAs tend to be less expensive and have faster feedback. In addition, employers may provide on-site professionals to measure indicators such as blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol.

Selecting an HRA Supplier

Before selecting an HRA supplier, consider asking each potential company the following questions to help you find the best fit for implementing your HRA.

* **How long has your company been in business?** Opt for an experienced supplier to increase the likelihood that their product is field-tested, successful and reliable.
* **What other types of employers have used your HRA tools?** Select a supplier that has a vast client base, knowledge of your industry and a good reputation.
* **Is your HRA tool affiliated with any other organisation or institution?** Select suppliers who have affiliations with highly respected organisations and institutions. Be wary if potential suppliers cannot or will not provide you with the names of their partnerships.
* **What is the price of the services we’re looking for?** Before contacting suppliers, have a price per employee in mind and be honest and open about how much you would like to pay.
* **Can you provide me with references of other employers who have used your HRA tools?** Ask for the names and telephone numbers of a few references who have used the proposed HRA plan. Contact each company to find out their experiences with the supplier.
* **Are you or have you been involved in litigation against your company relating to your HRA tools?**
* **Are you compliant with all UK laws and regulations?** Find out whether the supplier understands UK laws and regulations and if they have effectively created their HRA tools with these guidelines in mind. Involve your company’s legal department in this part of the process.
* **Where will my company’s data be stored?** Select suppliers that will confidentially store your data in the UK, rather than overseas.
* **What customer service and/or technical support is available to my employees?** Choose suppliers who have a toll-free number or electronic support for your employees. They may need assistance logging on to the system, taking the assessment or generating the report.