

Computer-completed fit note – fact sheet for patients and employees

The purpose of the fit note

GPs use fit notes to provide you with fitness for work advice, which you can pass to your employer.

A fit note allows GPs to indicate when you may be able to return to work following a period of sickness absence, and advises on the effects of your health condition on your capability for work.

This will help your employer to understand how they might help you return to work sooner.

Even if you have not fully recovered, you may be able to perform some or most of your own role, or an alternative role.

What is changing?

Your GP will complete a fit note on his or her computer and print it for you, rather than give you a handwritten fit note – in the same way that your GP may give you a printed prescription.

A computer-completed fit note also contains a system-generated barcode, which cannot be altered once printed by the GP. The barcode will contain only the information that appears on a computer-completed fit note.

Your GP will **not** be able to send a computer-completed fit note electronically (for example by e-mail) to you or to your employer.

There has been no change to the rules for fit notes, sick pay or benefits as a result of the introduction of the computer-completed fit note – you should continue to give fit notes to your employer or to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Your GP may still give you a handwritten fit note, for example before the ability to produce

computer-completed fit notes has been integrated into their practice's IT system or when they are on a home visit.

Hospital doctors will continue to **only** use handwritten fit notes.

When will they start to be issued by GPs?

Some GPs will start to issue computer-completed fit notes from early July 2012, and most GP practices should be using it by early 2013. See an example www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnotesample

Where can I access more information?

DWP will carry out a complete revision of the fit note guidance for employees, which will be published towards the end of 2012. All the latest news and information on the fit note, can be found on the Directgov website – www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Sicknessabsence/DG_187161

- DWP guide for employees on the Statement of Fitness for Work www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/fit-note-employee-guide.pdf
- DWP Statement of Fitness for Work page www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote
- Occupational health advice services for employees working in small and medium-sized businesses

England: Health for Work Adviceline – 0800 0 77 88 44 www.health4work.nhs.uk

Scotland: Healthy Working Lives Adviceline – 0800 019 2211 www.healthyworkinglives.com

Wales: Health at Work Advice Line Wales – 0800 107 0900 www.healthyworkingwales.com