

Electronic fit note (eMed) – fact sheet for GPs

How will the electronic fit note work?

The electronic fit note (eMed) will be integrated into your practice's existing IT system. You will be able to complete a fit note on your computer, save details to a patient record, print and sign it, and give it to a patient.

Once printed, signed and issued, an electronic fit note is designed to be used in the same way as a handwritten fit note, including for both sick pay and benefits. You will not be able, or expected, to send a fit note electronically to patients, employers, or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

There are **no** changes to the rules for issuing fit notes.

Once saved on your practice's IT system, you can refer to a fit note when reviewing a patient's fitness for work in the future.

You will also be able to use any information collected for internal audit or to demonstrate examples of good practice within your surgery.

When will the electronic fit note be available for use?

This will depend on your practice's IT system, as each system has a different implementation timetable.

Your IT provider will contact your practice prior to the introduction of the electronic fit note. The first GP practices should be able to use it from early July 2012, and rollout across all GP practices should be completed by early 2013.

Your supplier will provide your practice with information and training on the technical aspects of how the electronic fit note will work.

What happens to the data recorded?

Any fit note data you record will be saved in the normal way alongside all other patient data in an electronic patient record.

In the future it is planned that, subject to secure transfer mechanisms being put in place, anonymous electronic fit note data will be extracted automatically from GP practice IT systems and used to inform policy development. This will be subject to data security protocols and will not identify the patient or the GP.

What will happen to the handwritten fit note?

The handwritten fit note may still be used – for example, if you are visiting a patient at home or are away from a computer.

The handwritten fit note will continue to be the **only** version used by hospital doctors.

Where can I access more information?

DWP will carry out a complete revision of the fit note guidance for GPs, which will be published towards the end of 2012. All the latest news, information and guidance on the fit note, can be found on the DWP healthcare professional website – www.dwp.gov.uk/healthcare-professional

- Current DWP guide for GPs and other doctors on the Statement of Fitness for Work
www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/fitnote-gp-guide.pdf
- DWP Statement of Fitness for Work page
www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote
- Occupational health advice services for GPs
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
- Healthy Working UK website: support on health and work for GPs and health professionals – www.healthyworkinguk.co.uk