

CHANGES TO EMPLOYEE FIT NOTES



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To help alleviate some of the pressures placed on GPs, the government has come up with a couple of changes to the way fit notes are issued.

- Firstly, from 06 April 2022 fit notes are able to be issued and received digitally. This ties in with the increasing use of telephone or online GP appointments now being provided.
- Secondly, from 01 July 2022 there is now a wider list of healthcare professionals who are able to provide a valid fit note to cover extended periods of absence from work. This includes doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists.

Data from NHS Digital suggests that around 2.9m fit notes were produced by GPs in the three months from October to December 2021 alone. These measures are hoped to help with the high workloads of GP surgeries, allowing healthcare professionals to utilise their resources more effectively to better serve the local community.

FAQs

When is my employee required to provide a fit note?

A fit note must be provided when a period of sickness absence lasts for more than 7 calendar days. The first 7 days of the absence can self-certified by the employee without any input from a healthcare professional.

Will these changes increase the number of my employees off sick if they do not have to speak to a GP?

Although there are more healthcare professionals now able to sign off on a fit note, these changes are not expected to lead to a significant rise in absence levels. Individuals still need to be assessed by appropriate healthcare professionals who will make a professional judgement on their fitness for work.

How will I be able to tell if it is authentic?

As with fit notes provided previously by GPs, the health care professional will need to sign off the fit note and will input the address of their practice. We would advise taking this at face value, but seek advice if you have concerns.

Can employees go to any healthcare professional regardless of the nature of the illness?

Certain medical professionals may not be able to sign off on an absence if the fitness for work is based on a particular medication or ailment they are unable to professionally advise on. The medical professional will be able to make this assessment and if this is the case, they can signpost the individual to the appropriate healthcare professional – which may very well be their GP.

Can I refuse a fit note that is not signed off by a GP?

If a fit note has been authenticated and signed by the healthcare professional, we should be accepting it unless there are concrete reasons to question its validity. If you have concerns about how much information is provided you can ask the employee if you can contact the practice to gain more information on the note and their condition.

Is this a permanent change?

Information provided suggests this is a permanent change to support the workload of GPs. It is likely this will be a beneficial change and help employers to get fit notes at the time from employees and reduce delays. If there are any changes, we will update accordingly.

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions, or would like further support, please get in touch with Georgia Wilson by calling 0141 221 2984 or by email at georgia.wilson@aab.uk.