

## **Fit notes to replace sick notes**

From 6th April 2010 General Practitioners will issue 'fit notes' instead of 'sick notes'. The new certificate will be called a 'Statement of Fitness to Work' and will generally be referred to as a 'fit note'. It has been designed to help employees return to work more quickly. Where an employee has been absent due to sickness, or is likely to be absent, for over seven days, the GP will now suggest the grounds on which an employee may be able to return to work.

### ***Why make the change***

For each day that an employee is off sick there is a cost to the firm. Much of this cost is hidden. Long periods of absence can also lead to employee feelings of isolation, loss of confidence, mental health issues and de-skilling. The work has to be covered by others, affecting productivity and efficiency and this affects the motivation and morale of all staff.

Research shows that work can be viewed as beneficial in aiding recovery so a controlled return is in everyone's interest. When an employee is off for a long time, it becomes ever more difficult to return so anything that plans for the return is good. Getting employees back to work helps them and the employer's bottom line.

### ***How will the change affect my business?***

Your employee will provide you with a certificate which advises you if they are too ill to work (as with the current sick note) or if, despite being ill, they can come back to work but with support from you.

By declaring a person 'fit for work' (albeit with restrictions) you can manage your business to better effect. You will be able to discuss various options to support the employee's return to normal working patterns.

Support that you may have to give may include:

- Accommodating a phased return to work;
- Allowing a temporary change in working hours;
- Temporarily altering duties performed;
- Adapting the working environment.

The new 'fit note' hugely aids situations where employees 'throw a sickie' and get a GP to issue a certificate. Now the GP has to participate in getting the patient back to work and not just issue one certificate after another.

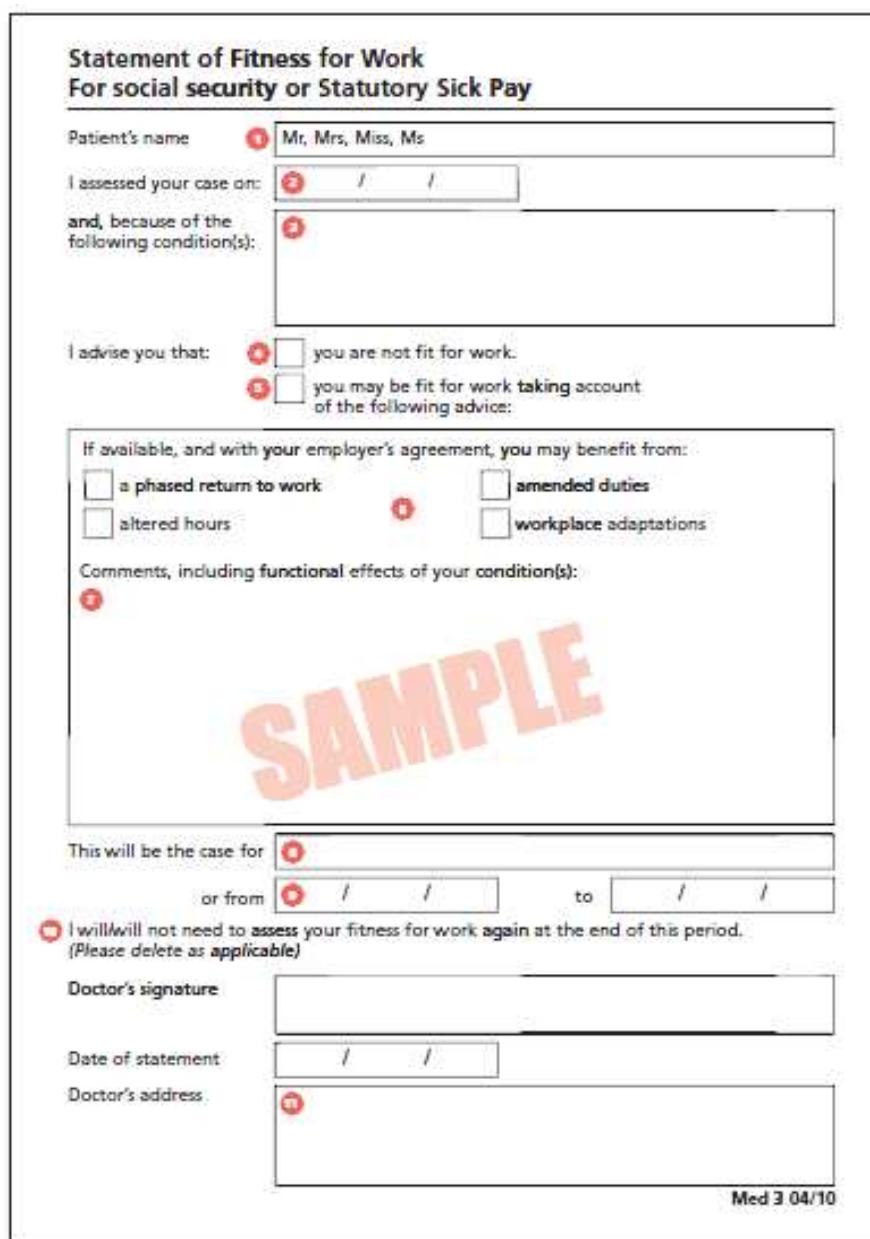
### ***What if it is not possible to follow the GP's advice?***

If, after discussion with your employee, it is clear that you are unable to provide the level of support needed to get the employee back to work you can

consider the certificate as advising that the person is not fit for work. You don't need to get any other certificate from the GP.

### **Using the new form**

Refer to the comments below to see how the new form works. The numbers in the description below refer to the picture of the new 'fit note' below.



**Statement of Fitness for Work**  
**For social security or Statutory Sick Pay**

Patient's name **1**

I assessed your case on: **2**

and, because of the following condition(s): **3**

I advise you that: **4**  you are not fit for work.  
**5**  you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice:

If available, and with your employer's agreement, you may benefit from:

a phased return to work **6**  amended duties  
 altered hours  workplace adaptations

Comments, including functional effects of your condition(s): **7**

This will be the case for **8**   
or from **9**  to

I will not need to assess your fitness for work again at the end of this period.  
(Please delete as applicable)

Doctor's signature:

Date of statement:

Doctor's address: **10**

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1. The employee's name is on the top of the certificate.
2. The date the case was assessed does not necessarily mean the GP had a face-to-face consultation with their patient. The assessment could be based on a telephone consultation or a written report from

- another healthcare professional. It does however tell you when your employee contacted the GP in connection with their ill-health.
3. You will be provided with information regarding the condition which requires your employee to be absent or unfit for normal duty.
  4. If the GP ticks this box it is treated in the same way as the current sick certificate with the employee being unable to work for the duration of the certificate.
  5. Where the GP assesses that the person may be able to fulfil some of their duties, or work reduced hours, even though they have a health issue, this box will be ticked.
  6. The GP will tick any combination of these boxes to provide advice if they believe that a return to work will facilitate the patient's recovery.
  7. Additional information can be added here by the GP to suggest aspects you should consider in helping your employee back to work. The GP may also recommend an occupational health assessment at the firm's expense.
  8. This is the period of time over which the adjustments should be accommodated. This will be for a maximum of three months during the first six months of an illness. If the statement suggests "7 days" this refers to calendar days not working days.
  9. This section is used when the GP wishes to state exact dates for which the advice applies. This could be done for several reasons including the provision of a statement which is for less than 14 days.
  10. Here the GP advises if, and when, they want to see the patient again. Where the GP states that they don't want to make a further assessment you can expect the person to return to normal duties as of the date specified in section 8 or 9 of the statement. If the GP wishes to see the patient again, and they determine that the person can return to work they will not issue any further statements. No 'return to work' certificate is needed.
  11. As with the current certificate the GP will date, sign and provide a practice stamp in this section.

### **What should you do now?**

1. Check that your current sickness absence process reflects the changes, if it doesn't then it needs to be altered.
2. If you have no process, put one in place – NOW!
3. Tell your staff about it. Make sure they understand the new process.
4. If you need help in developing your absence policy and process contact TimelessTime.

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