

April 6th 2010 has seen changes for G.P.s, employers and employees with the replacement of the 'Sick Note' with the 'Fit Note'.

Employers will be familiar with the Med 3, commonly known as the Sick Note, where a GP advises when a patient is not fit to work. The Fit Note, unlike its predecessor is designed to encourage GPs to advise on the limitations of the patient's condition in a bid to help them return to work. This will be done through a new option of 'maybe fit for work taking account of the following advice.' It aims to allow employers to know more information about the employee's condition so they can facilitate their return to work by making any changes required.

The Suggestions in the new 'tick box' system means that a GP can suggest which area, or areas need to be addressed for an employee to return to work, these include 'a phased return to work', 'amended duties', 'altered hours' and 'workplace adaptations'. The extent that the suggestions are implemented rests upon a mutual agreement between employer and employee.

It is believed that, with some form of basic support from an employer, employees with ill health are able to work whilst they recover from their condition. This should, therefore, reduce the rates of absence from sickness. Employers and employees alike should benefit from the changes as it will help to irradiate those who could benefit from support whilst at work, who were advised that they could not work.

Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work states;

Work plays a significant role in determining a person's health. The fit note is a hugely important development which means that GPs will be encouraged to think about their patient's ability to work and provide more helpful information to patients to discuss with their employer. This is why the fit note is a win-win for both employees and employers.



In short, the main changes for employers are:

- The removal of the fit for work option, and a new option for a doctor to advise if an employee may be fit for work with some support
- More space for a doctor to provide information on how your employee's condition will affect what they
- Helpful tick boxes for doctors to use to suggest common way to help a return to work

(Source: DWP, 2010)

For further information and advice, visit www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote

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+44 (0)121 435 0000



contact@skillvault.com



www.skillvault.com