

Withdrawn

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> Fit for Work: a quick guide for General Practitioners

Do you have a patient who is employed but off work sick? Would they benefit from occupational health advice to get back to work quickly and safely? If so why not refer them to Fit for Work, a Government backed scheme providing free occupational health assessments and support.

What is Fit for Work?

- **Fit for Work (FfW)** provides individually tailored advice from an occupational health professional.
- For patients not (yet) eligible there is an advice line and website offering work related health advice to help them stay at work or get back to work sooner.
- When you refer a patient they receive a biopsychosocial assessment to identify any obstacles to a return to work.
- Your patient is given tailored advice to enable a safe and speedy return to work.
- Your patient can continue to receive support and further assessments, where appropriate, for up to 3 months to ensure they are on track to return to work.

Why should I refer my patients to FfW?

- Evidence shows that work is good for us.
- After four weeks sickness absence the chance of returning to work reduces and the likelihood of dropping out of work increases.
- Referring patients can result in reduced workloads, as you don't need to write fit notes while they are in **FfW**, and better health outcomes for your patients.
- You are the primary route for **FfW** referrals and so, subject to your patient's consent, may wish to refer your patient, unless there is a clinical reason not to.
- It's in your patient's interest – often they won't have access to an employer occupational health service and **FfW** fills that gap, helping facilitate an earlier supportive return to work.

Is your patient eligible for Fit for Work

- To be eligible your patient needs to:
 - be currently in employment;
 - have been, or are likely to be, off sick for four weeks or more (including any self-certification);
 - have no clinical reason not to be referred (e.g. malignancy investigation or final phase of a very debilitating illness (e.g. advanced MS or COPD)).
- If the patient isn't eligible for referral they can still use the advice line and access the website.

Fit for Work

www.fitforwork.org
0800 032 6235
(Welsh Language: 0800 032 6233)

Making a referral to Fit for Work

Key Fit for Work points for your patient

- Once you have decided your patient is eligible, briefly discuss **Fit for Work** with them including how it can help them, for example explain that:
 - **Fit for Work** provides individually tailored advice from an occupational health professional to help them return to work quickly and safely
 - They will be contacted within two days of referral and the service explained in detail
 - An assessment will normally be conducted over the phone to identify any obstacles to their return to work with tailored advice and recommendations provided and recorded in a **Return to Work Plan**
 - The plan also replaces the need for a fit note.
- Then check your patients contact details and obtain their agreement for you to share those and their fit note details in a referral to Fit for Work.

How do I refer to Fit for Work?

- Ensure your patient's fit note covers them for two weeks to allow **FfW** to contact them and do the assessment.
- Once you know your patient is eligible and has agreed to be referred, if they live in:
 - England and Wales visit www.fitforwork.org access the GP area and click on 'Refer a patient' and complete the referral form (**Tip:** you can save your contact details for future referrals)
 - Scotland access the referral form through your existing **Scottish Care Information (SCI) Gateway**. (**Tip:** add referral form to 'Favourites' so it's easily accessible for future referrals)

What happens next?

Once you have made the referral you will usually receive a copy of the Return to Work Plan. However, if you hear nothing further this is likely to be because your patient has decided not to participate (the service is voluntary) or declined to give consent to share their Return to Work Plan.

Fit for Work
Scotland

www.fitforworkscotland.scot
0800 019 2211

For more information: www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-for-work-guidance