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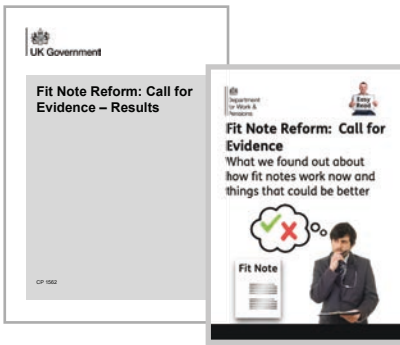


Fit Note Reform: Call for Evidence

What we found out about
how fit notes work now and
things that could be better



About this easy read report



This is an easy read of a bigger report called **Fit note reform: Call for evidence - results**



It tells you about the main things in the bigger report.



This easy read is still quite long. You do not have to read it all at once. You can stop if you need to. Or just read the bits you want to.



You could ask someone to help you read it, if you need to.

What is in this booklet



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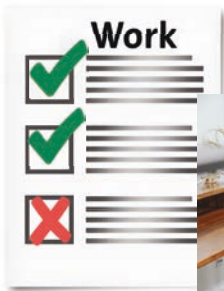


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About fit notes



A **fit note** is a form that says you are not well enough to work.



Or it says you can do some work. But only if your **employer** makes some **workplace changes**.



Your **employer** is the place or person you work for.



Workplace changes are things an employer can do to support you at work.

Things like letting you work from home. Or have a chair that meets your needs.



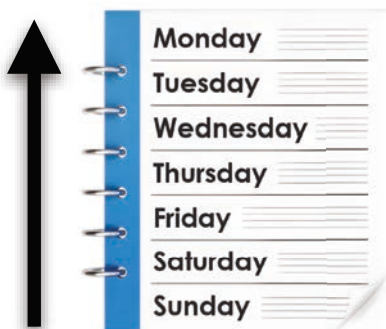
Some people call fit notes a **sick note**.



People mostly get fit notes from their local doctor. But other **healthcare staff** can write fit notes too.



Healthcare staff are people like doctors, nurses and other people who work at the hospital or doctors surgery.



You can ask for a fit note if you are off work for more than 7 days.

About our call for evidence



We are the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care.



We asked lots of people what they thought about fit notes. We call this a **call for evidence**.



Nearly 2 thousand people across the UK answered our questions.



This report tells you the main things we found out.



What people said overall

Some people said that fit notes work well.



But some people said how fit notes work needs to change.



People had different ideas about how to make things better.



What patients said

When we say **patients**, we mean people who have had a fit note.



Most patients said that fit notes work well as they are now.



Fit notes help people to take time off work to get better.



And they help people to have time to go to healthcare appointments and get treatment.



Fit notes help people to still get paid while they are off work sick.



Patients liked how easy it was to get a fit note if they needed one.



Healthcare staff understand why someone might need to be off work.



They understand how disabilities and **health conditions** affect people.



A **health condition** is a problem that affects your body. Things like having a bad back, pain or problems with your heart or your breathing.



Or it could be to do with your **mental health**. **Mental health** is things like your thoughts, feelings and how you cope with everyday life.



Patients said that having a fit note from a doctor shows you really do need time off work.



It helps people to talk to their employers about any health problems they have.



And talk about any workplace changes they might need at work so they can do their job.

What patients think should change



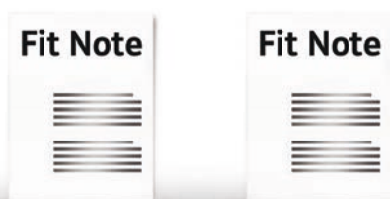
Lots of patients did not think fit notes need to change.



But some patients thought some things could be better.



When you get a fit note it says how long you should be off work for.



If you are still unwell and you need longer off work, you can get another fit note.

This is called a **repeat fit note**.



Some patients wanted it to be easier to get a repeat fit note.



Some patients wanted it to be quicker to get an appointment at their local doctor's surgery.



This would help them to get a fit note faster.



Some patients said it would help to see the same doctor each time. And to get treatment more quickly.



Some patients wanted healthcare staff to know more about people's jobs and workplaces.



This is so they can tell employers what workplaces changes a person might need.



Patients said that sometimes workplace changes are not made.



They said it was important that these changes are made.



Patients wanted their employers to know more about the law and people's **rights**.

Your **rights** are things you are allowed to do and how you should be treated.



A lot of patients said they wanted support from their employer to work.

What employers said



More than half of employers thought that fit notes do not work well at the moment.



A few employers said that fit notes help people have time off work to feel better.



Fit notes show employers how long someone will be off work.



Employers said this can help them to make decisions about **sick pay**.

Sick pay is money some people get paid when they are off sick.



Fit notes sometimes have ideas about workplace changes.



But often there is not enough information about the changes.



Some employers thought that fit notes are too easy to get.



Some employers said it can take a long time for people to get a fit note.



Getting a fit note and the right treatment quickly can get people back to work sooner.

What employers think should change



Employers said that fit notes do not give enough information about things like:



- The person's health condition and why they are off work.



- What work the person can and can't do.



- When a person will be able to come back to work.



- What workplace changes the person needs to come back to work.



- Other services that could help.



More information would help employers to plan and support people better.



Employers said healthcare staff should know more about people's jobs and workplaces.



This would help them to give employers better advice about workplace changes.



They said employers needed more training to support people well.



Some employers thought it would be useful to use **occupational health services** more.



Occupational health services can help people to stay in work or come back to work after being off sick.

They give people information and support.

What healthcare staff said



Healthcare staff thought different things about fit notes and if they worked well.



They said writing a fit note was not a hard thing to do.



They thought fit notes supported people who need to be off work because of a health condition.



But some healthcare staff thought some things did not work so well.



Doctors do not have enough time to decide on fit notes and treat patients in one appointment.



Doctors cannot always offer longer appointments for fit notes.



Doctors don't know enough about different kinds of jobs and what people do at work.



And they don't know enough about workplace changes that can support someone to work.



Some healthcare staff said doctors don't always know enough about a person's health condition.



They may not know how it affects the person at work.



Healthcare staff treating the person might know more than the doctor.



They might be the best person to decide about a fit note.



Some healthcare staff said sometimes people get angry if they do not get a fit note. Or they might **complain**.



Complain is when someone tells you they are unhappy about something.

What healthcare staff want to change



Healthcare staff want more training about fit notes. And about workplace changes.



They want more healthcare staff to be able to write fit notes.



Healthcare staff want more face to face and longer appointments with patients.

This would help them get more information about people's health and work.



They want better ways to share information between different healthcare services.



Healthcare staff want more information on other services that could help people.



They want patients to see the same doctor or healthcare staff every time they come for an appointment.



This will help healthcare staff to make better decisions about what a person needs.

Other things we found out

Who should give out fit notes

People said healthcare staff who give out fit notes should know about:



- Different health conditions.



- Different jobs and workplaces.



- What people might need to be able to work.



- What support people can get at work.



People who give out fit notes need to be good at listening.



A lot of people thought it was important for healthcare staff to give out fit notes.



Some people thought it should be doctors who give out fit notes.



But other people said other healthcare staff could make decisions about fit notes too.



Working together

Some people thought healthcare staff and employers should work together with support services.



Things like occupational health services.



This will help employers to make the best changes in the workplace to support someone.

Work and health conversation



When someone asks for a fit note, they should have a **work and health conversation**.

This is when a patient talks about work and their health with a doctor or healthcare staff.



They talk about if the patient is well enough to work and what they can do.



A lot of people said everyone who has a fit note should have a longer talk about their work and health.

But a longer talk would be more useful for some patients. This might be:



- People who have a long term health condition or a disability.



- People who have a mental health condition.



- People who are off work sick a lot.