

OP1

CHANGES TO THE FIT NOTE LEGISLATION...BUT HAS ANYTHING ACTUALLY CHANGED?

C. Black¹, L. Shemtob², K. Varghese³, S. Pattani⁴, L. Newington⁵

¹*Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, UK*

²*Imperial College London, UK*

³*London Northwest University Hospital, UK*

⁴*Society of Occupational Medicine, UK*

⁵*Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Imperial College London, UK*

Background

Around 95% of the time in primary care, Fit Notes are used to certify patients off sick without including recommended adjustments or advice to support them in work. As of 01/07/2023, allied healthcare professionals, including First Contact Practitioners (FCPs) in primary care, can certify Fit Notes(1). This has the potential to improve workload efficiency and patient outcomes.

Aim

To investigate whether change in legislation has influenced use of the Fit Note within primary care.

Methods

Data published by NHS digital on fit notes issued by GP practices were interrogated to determine:

- The number of Fit Notes completed since July 2022
- The proportion of Fit Notes certified as 'not fit' since inception

Results

1. 10% increase in fit notes issued July- September 2022 compared to the same period in 2021
2. The 'may be fit for work' section is still used less than 10% of the time

Conclusions

Data suggests that the Fit Note is still underused. There has been little change in use of the Fit Note since the changes in July 2022 (2). Yet, the majority of the UK population's healthcare needs are addressed within primary care settings, and most workers rely on primary care for OH support. It should be a welcome step that FCPs as MSK experts and other AHPs can certify Fit Notes. There needs to be more research into the barriers of using the Fit Note to its full potential.

References:

- 1- Social Security (Medical Evidence) and Statutory Sick Pay (Medical Evidence) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022
- 2- Who can issue fit notes: guidance for healthcare professionals and their employers. London: DWP, 2022