

Healthcare Professionals in addition to GPs able to provide fit notes

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Introduction

1. In a change of law taking effect in July, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists (working in hospitals and GP practices) and physiotherapists will be able to provide fit notes, in addition to GPs.

Commentary

2. On 1 July 2022, the DWP released [guidance](#) for professionals completing such notes and under the heading 'Key Messages' includes at the outset a message of caution against signing people off work too readily:

"Your assessment about whether your patient is fit for work is about their fitness for work in general and is not job-specific.

If you assess that your patient's fitness for work is not impaired by a health condition, they are fit for work and do not need a fit note.

Always consider if your patient could do work of some kind before advising that they are not fit for any work. Remember the long-term health risks of worklessness when advising your patient that they are not fit for work..."

3. The principal aim is said to be to free up GP's time. Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said: "I know how important it is for people to be able to see their GP speedily and in the way they want. That's why we are slashing bureaucracy to reduce GPs workloads, so they can focus on seeing patients and giving people the care they urgently need".
4. The change is clearly admirable in the intentions to free up GP's time but may fuel some employers' fears that it is already very easy for an employee to be signed off work and that this change will only continue that trend. The 'key message' of caution above may be designed to do the opposite. It remains to be seen what the effect will be and how this

change will affect the assessment for 'stress/anxiety/depression', one of or if not the most common reason for employees to be signed off.

Relevant media coverage includes: [Law change to let pharmacists sign people off sick - BBC News](#); [Pharmacists to be able to sign off employees from work | WorkSmarter](#) and [Pharmacists and nurses at GPs' clinics will be allowed to sign people off sick under new measure | Daily Mail Online](#).

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