

GPC Wales Focus on “Fit for Work”

DWP has recently implemented a new scheme whereby employees, employers and GPs can refer a patient to Occupational Health Services if they are likely to be off work for more than 4 weeks, in order to enable a prompt return to work.

The DWP guidance documents can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-for-work-guidance#guidance-about-fit-for-work>

- Overall guidance
- DWP guidance for GPs
- DWP guidance for employers
- DWP guidance for employees

This new service commenced on the 15th December 2015

Do GPs have to refer patients to this service?

- No – there is no contractual or mandatory requirement for GPs to refer patients to this service but this is an additional service available to patients that GPs may choose to use.
- The patient should consent before referral, they should have a reasonable prospect of returning to work, most of the assessments will be done over the phone and only a limited number will be face to face.

How do GPs refer patients to the service?

- There is a phone number to ring – GPC Wales did ask for a tick box to be added to the Fit Note but this was not taken forward. We have highlighted to DWP representatives that given time pressures on GP services that this may affect take up / usage of the scheme.
- Patients need to consent before they are referred.
- All patients referred should have a reasonable prospect of returning to work

Is it only GPs who can refer?

- No – employees can refer too. Whilst GPs may wish to utilise this service, they can signpost the patient back to their employer to ask for a referral – this may well benefit patients more as employers would be able to answer any specific questions relating to the patients job description / working environment that the GP won't have access too.
- Employees can themselves ring the service for access to advice but it is the employer or GP who need to request an occupational health review.

Why would employers be willing to refer?

- Not only would their employee be potentially able to return to work more quickly but they also get a financial contribution to addressing any issues identified

How quickly does the service respond?

- Within 2 days.
- Most of the referrals will be dealt with via phone with a few being offered face to face assessments

Are DWP going to be monitoring use of the scheme?

- We believe it will be and have asked how this information will be used and in what format – these questions have yet to be answered
- In addition, DWP have identified that there will be a feedback exercise undertaken (via phone / mail) – we have advised that a mail survey for feedback would be more appropriate.

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