

**To: Chief Executives, Health Boards
Supply Managers, NHS Secure Forms
Medical Directors, Health Boards**

8 March 2010

Dear colleagues

From **6 April 2010** a new Statement of Fitness for Work (also known as the Form Med 3 or “fit note”) will be introduced across Scotland, England and Wales which will enable doctors to give their patients more helpful advice about returning to work.

Where appropriate a Medical Statement should be provided by the doctor who, at the time, has clinical responsibility for the patient. This is usually the GP. However, where a hospital doctor has clinical responsibility they should assume responsibility for the patient’s sickness certification needs. The failure to do this leads to patients unnecessarily visiting their GPs and explaining their health condition to a doctor who is less familiar with their recent medical history. This does not benefit the patient or the GP as, in many cases, it is the hospital doctor who is best placed to advise the patient on their fitness for work.

Through analysis of hospitals’ ordering histories, it is clear that many hospital doctors are not aware that they should be issuing Med 3s. The launch of the revised Medical Statement presents an ideal opportunity to address this and ensure that all hospital doctors have access to the revised form and understand its purpose. Therefore, we are asking you to ensure that all the relevant medical staff within your Health Board are made aware of the need to issue Med 3s and also the changes to the Med 3 that are coming into effect in April.

To aid this we have enclosed a brief guide which explains the new Statement and highlights the role of hospital doctors in the sickness certification process. The guide can also be found online at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/fitnote->

[hospital-guide.pdf](#). It would be appreciated if you would draw this to the attention of your staff.

As previously communicated, prior to the launch date you will be receiving a supply of the revised Medical Statement (in pads of 50 forms) to distribute within your Health Board. **Please bear in mind the need to allocate some of these forms to the hospitals within your area when planning their distribution.** After this initial distribution the normal ordering process will resume.

Further information on the Statement of Fitness for Work is available online at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/healthcare-professional/news/statement-of-fitness-for-work.shtml> and www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote.

In the meantime, if you have any questions please email the DWP policy team at dwphealthandwork.enq@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Gunnyeon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Bill Gunnyeon
DWP Chief Medical Adviser