



## The Fit Note

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**To help support people who become ill to return to work as quickly as possible, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has reformed the current medical statement (the 'sick note'). The changes will ensure that individuals and their employers are better informed about when and how it is appropriate to support someone back to work.**

The FSB has supported the introduction of the Fit Note for a number of years on the basis that our members tell us that they want more constructive and positive information from their employees' General Practitioner (GP) about what roles employees are capable of fulfilling in the workplace.

In 2007 the FSB conducted a survey of its members and found that members were concerned that in the past GPs were signing their employees off work too readily which may have cost the business unnecessarily. 45 per cent of our members called for the Fit Note and 33 per cent called for better consultation between the GP and employer which in effect this Fit Note should facilitate.

Our members understand the need for good health in the workplace. In 2007 we found that two-thirds of businesses were convinced that investing in employees' health made sense for the profitability of their business.

The FSB has worked closely with the DWP to ensure that the Fit Note works for small businesses and to help write the guidance. We are mentioned in the guidance as having taken part.

We were keen to underline the fact that the Fit Note does not place any extra obligations on the employer rather it just provides them with more options. If the employer is not able to make the adjustments that the GP recommends to get a person back into work quicker, the employer is not under any extra obligations, the person will be signed off as normal. The Fit Note will allow our members to get their employees back into work in many cases and will therefore save them money back in productivity and in sick pay. The employer only needs to fill in one form where in the past it might have been two forms.

If firms are in any way confused about the Fit Note they should access the guidance <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote/>

We are keen that the Fit Note should be computerized as soon as possible to ensure that there are no complications around employers not being able to read handwriting and we are also keen that extensive training of GPs is undertaken to ensure that they have a better understanding of the workplace and make recommendations that are appropriate to that.

It is also vital that the Government advertises these changes widely to mitigate against confusion and help businesses understand what this means for them. We would like to see this being done more widely.

- There are 4.8 million small businesses in the UK
- 97 per cent of firms employ fewer than 20 people
- 95 per cent employ fewer than five people
- Over 500,000 people start up their own business every year
- 13.5 million people work in small firms
- Small firms contribute more than 50 per cent of the UK turnover
- 64 per cent of commercial innovations come from small firms

#### For further information

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