

## Guidance on health and work for healthcare professionals

Copied below is a letter, which is being circulated to members of the RCGP, SOM and FOM. The sources of advice listed will probably be of most value to general practitioners, but it is important for occupational physicians in the UK to be aware of what is going on, and of where advice on work and health can be accessed by non-specialists. The communications that we have with colleagues in general practice when managing patients, sometimes offer good opportunity to pass on messages about the benefits of work for health, and the ways in which incapacity for work can be minimised (including best use of the new fit note). We should aim to take the lead in this way where we can.

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THE SOCIETY OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE



Dear Member

August 2010

### Health and work support available for healthcare professionals

We thought it would be useful to send you this letter to draw your attention to the support available for you on health and work.

The new fit note (the revised Med 3) has raised the profile of health and well-being in the workplace amongst medical practitioners. The fit note reflects medical evidence that work is good for most people with health conditions, as recently acknowledged by the British Medical Association when they carried a resolution about work being good for health and well-being at their Annual Representative Meeting in June 2010.

To support the introduction of the fit note, a number of initiatives have been launched to support healthcare professionals.

An adviceline service is available for GPs across Great Britain to access occupational health advice about an individual patient issue or a general enquiry. Details about the advicelines are enclosed, and can also be found at [www.dwp.gov.uk/healthcare-professional/news/occ-health-adviceline.shtml](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/healthcare-professional/news/occ-health-adviceline.shtml)

In addition to the adviceline services, a website supported by DWP and developed by the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Society of Occupational Medicine and the Faculty of Occupational Medicine provides advice and guidance on the fit note and on dealing with health and work during consultations - [www.healthyworkinguk.co.uk](http://www.healthyworkinguk.co.uk)

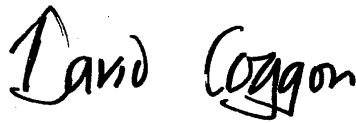
Since June 2009, a National Educational Programme for GPs has been taking place to raise awareness of the positive links between health and work and ensure they can provide support and advice to patients about fitness for work issues. The Programme consists of a series of one-off half-day workshops. So far over 1500 GPs have attended the workshops. To find the closest workshop to you, please visit [www.rcgp.org.uk/healthandwork/](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/healthandwork/)

The DWP has also published comprehensive guidance for healthcare professionals, including GPs, on the fit note, available at [www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote/). Doctors seeking general advice on Medical Statements (including the fit note), reports and disability benefits are advised to call the ATOS Healthcare line. There are different numbers for different parts of Great Britain, and can be found at [www.dwp.gov.uk/healthcare-professional/guidance/atos-healthcare/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/healthcare-professional/guidance/atos-healthcare/). This is a general advice service for doctors and does not cater for individual patient queries.

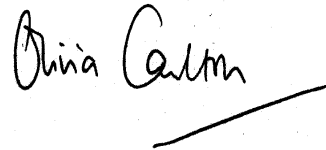
Yours sincerely



Professor Steve Field CBE  
Chairman of Council  
Royal College of General Practitioners



President  
Faculty of Occupational Medicine



President  
Society of Occupational Medicine



## Occupational health advice line for GPs

GPs can now access telephone advice on health and work issues affecting individual patients, through new occupational health advice lines in England, Scotland and Wales.

The service connects GPs with qualified occupational health nurses who will provide free, professional and confidential support on all occupational health issues, including those raised by the new Statement of Fitness for Work (fit note).

The advice line is delivered by NHS Plus in England, Healthy Working Lives in Scotland and the Welsh Assembly Government in Wales.

<b>England</b> Occupational health advice line for GPs t - 0800 022 4233 <a href="http://www.health4work.nhs.uk">www.health4work.nhs.uk</a>	<b>Wales*</b> Health at Work Advice Line Wales t - 0800 107 0900 <a href="http://www.healthyworkingwales.com">www.healthyworkingwales.com</a>	<b>Scotland*</b> Healthy Working Lives Advice Line t - 0800 019 2211 <a href="http://www.healthyworkinglives.com">www.healthyworkinglives.com</a>
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## Service

- Telephone advice on patient occupational health issues
- GPs will speak to a qualified occupational health nurse
- Free & confidential
- A pilot project running from 6 April 2010 until 31 March 2011

## Opening Hours

- Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (9am – 4.30pm on a Friday in Scotland)

## Additional information

Free telephone occupational health advice is also available to patients, and their employers, if they work in a small business. GPs may wish to pass details of these services onto patients:

<b>England</b> Health for Work Adviceline t - 0800 0 77 88 44 <a href="http://www.health4work.nhs.uk">www.health4work.nhs.uk</a>	<b>Wales*</b> Health at Work Advice Line Wales t - 0800 107 0900 <a href="http://www.healthyworkingwales.com">www.healthyworkingwales.com</a>	<b>Scotland*</b> Healthy Working Lives Adviceline t - 0800 019 2211 <a href="http://www.healthyworkinglives.com">www.healthyworkinglives.com</a>
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\* In Scotland and Wales, the number is the same for all callers.