



Consortium of Local Medical Committees

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) and requests for fit notes (Med3)

(With thanks to Cambridgeshire LMC)

Requests for certification of absence from work may fall into five categories:

1. Personally affected – isolating for seven days
2. Personally affected - remaining unwell for over seven days
3. Household member affected – isolating for fourteen days as per government advice
4. At risk group – following government advice
5. Those in full time education

1. Personally affected – isolating for seven days

Patients should self-certify for the first seven days as normal if they are unfit to work.

They do not need to contact their GP. *If patients do get in touch, please see suggested template letter for patients overleaf.*

2. Personally affected - remaining unwell for over seven days

If patients remain unwell and unfit to work over seven days, advice is to visit www.111.nhs.uk and complete an online self-assessment. The patient may be asked to call 111 for further advice on the next steps regarding their illness/ fitness to work.

They do not need to contact their GP.

3. Household member affected – isolating for fourteen days as per government advice

4. At risk group – following government advice

GPs cannot and are not the gatekeeper of the statutory sick pay system. Employers are responsible for putting in place arrangements for home/remote working where this is possible. Where it is not, the employee may self-certify and return to work following the relevant absence which their employer may authorise as per government advice. Where they do become unwell during or after this time, point 1 and 2 applies.

They do not need to contact their GP.

5. Those in full time education

There is no requirement to issue certification to schools or colleges to confirm absence. These organisations must work with parents and students to ensure that any absence is appropriately recorded, obviating the need for a 'doctor's note'.

They do not need to contact their GP.

As per the current www.gov.uk S13 Guidance for Employers it should be noted that:

By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. After 7 days, it is for the employer to determine what evidence they require, if any, from the employee. This does not need to be a fit note (MED3) issued by a GP or any other doctor.

Your employee will be advised to isolate themselves and not to work in contact with other people by NHS 111 or Public Health England if they are a carrier of, or have been in contact with, an infectious or contagious disease, such as Covid-19.

We strongly suggest that employers use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home due to suspected Covid-19, in accordance with the public health advice being issued by the government.

Template letter for practices to use for patients requesting fit notes:

Dear patient

RE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) and requests for fit notes (Med3)

You have requested a sick note from your GP in relation to being off work. By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. For any period of illness less than 7 days you can self-certify.

In light of the emerging COVID-19 crisis it is likely a vast amount of people will be self-isolating in accordance with advice provided by the Government and Public Health. In these cases, your GP will **not** be able to issue you a sick note. We expect your employer to be sympathetic towards the circumstances.

General Practice is under a lot of pressure and needs to prioritise the healthcare needs of patients who are acutely unwell. We hope that you understand the current situation and sorry for any inconvenience.
