



The Future of the Fit Note – What it means for Physios and AHP's

Physiotherapy UK
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Declaration of interests and disclaimer

- Clinical Director, RHH Medical Ltd (08026263)
- Fit note design – DWP Clinical forum
- Ingeus Clinical Advisory Group
- Public Health England Medical Champion for Health & Work (part-time salaried role)

This presentation based on experience and personal perspective only



Number of fit notes issued by GPs rises by almost 9% in two years

Controversy!

5 August 2019 | By Anviksha Patel

REVISED PATIENTS LETTERS

'misleading' GPs about issuing fit notes

17 July 2019 | By Anviksha Patel

IGNORED

9 February 2018 | By [Elisabeth Mahase](#), Julia Gregory

GPs vote that sick notes are 'a waste of time'

21 March 2017 | By Michelle Madsen

Pharmacy Stamp

Age

D.o.B

Title, Forename, Surname & Address

ADRIAN
MASSEY

SICK-
NOTE
BRITAIN

Signature of Prescriber

Date

For
dispenser
No. of
Prescns.
on form

HOW SOCIAL PROBLEMS
BECAME MEDICAL ISSUES

9781787381223

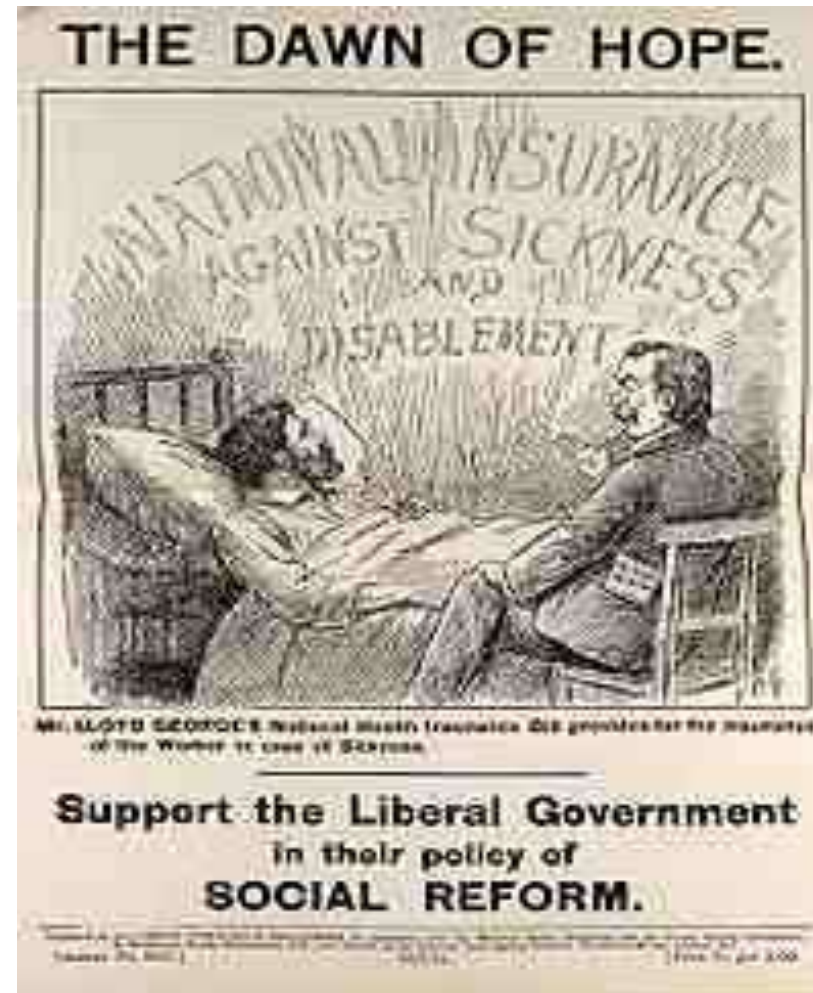
Format for next 15 minutes

- History, facts and figures
- GPs and fit notes
- Resources, Hints & tips
- AHP Wealth & Work Report in primary care
- Fit notes and the future

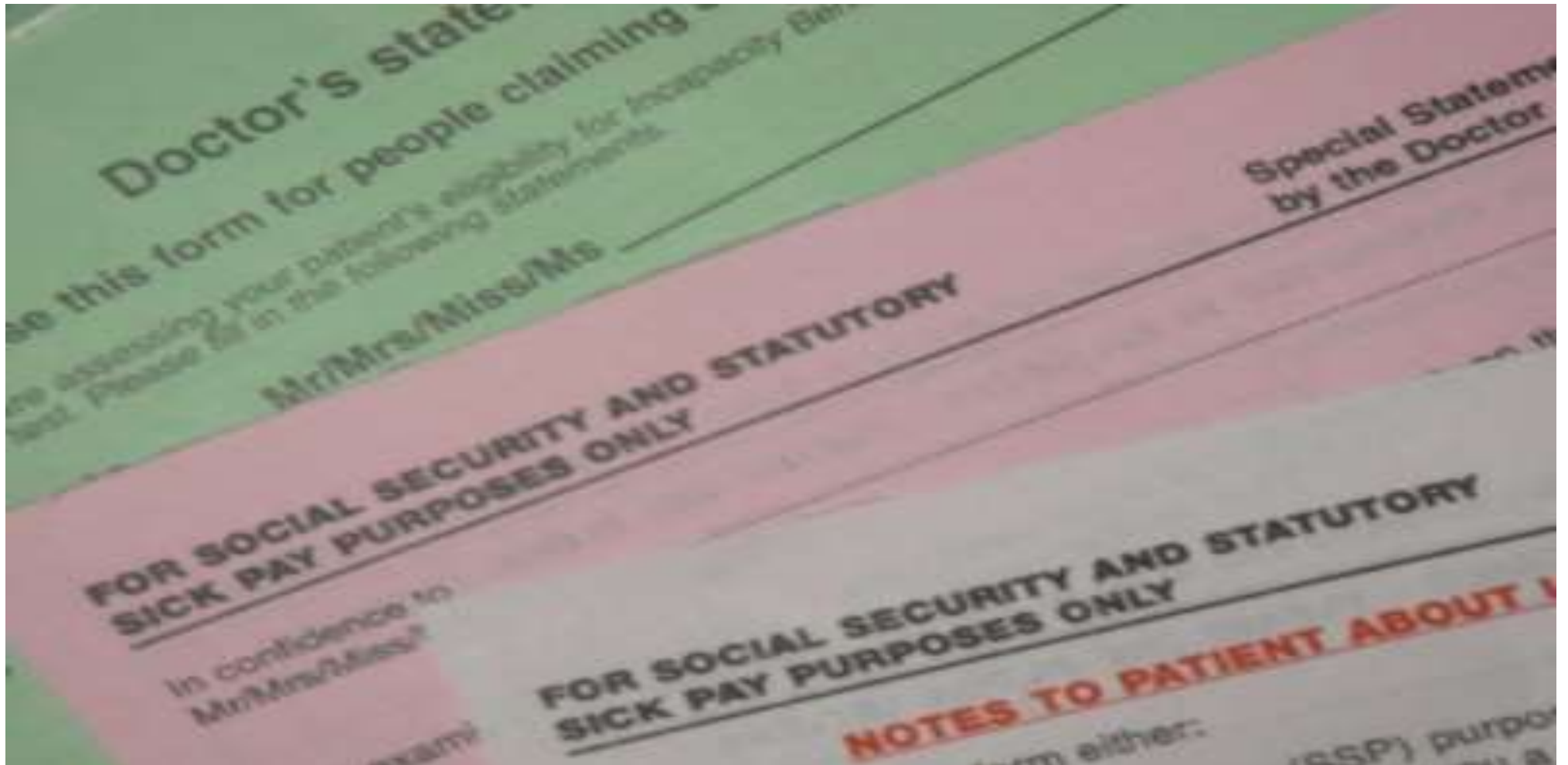


Sick notes

- 1911 – National Insurance Act
- Familiar concerns
- Med 3,4,5?
- GPs from 1946



Sick notes



How are things changing?

- Med 3 – sick note (forwards)
- Med 5 – sick note (backwards)
- Med 4 – on request from DWP
- RM7 – Anonymised note
- 2010 - sick note replaced by fit note (still Med 3)
- E fit notes
 - Used by 37% in 2015 (BMJ masterclasses),
 - Used by 88% in 2018 (DNUK survey)

Fit note data from NHS Digital since 2014

Fit notes issued by GP Practices

Experimental statistics

Fit note distribution

01 April 2015 to 31 March 2019

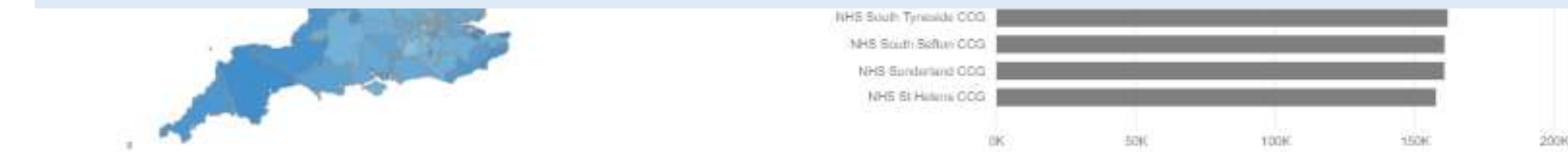


Month: All Year: All Select Region: All Select Local Office: All Select Clinical Commissioning Group: All

Increased by almost 9% in the past two years

9.5 million fit notes in 2018/19

8.7 million in 2016/17



Experimental Statistics are series of statistics that are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed and undergoing evaluation for more information see experimental statistics section in the Guide [page](#)

[Link to the data used](#) [page](#). Coverage information in Guide [page](#).

Fit note data from NHS Digital

Fit notes issued by GP Practices

Experimental statistics

Episode distribution

01 April 2015 to 31 March 2019



Month: All Year: All Select Region: All Select Local Office: All Select Clinical Commissioning Group: All

Number of fit note episodes
15,579,376

Episodes by diagnosis

Mental and behavioural disorders

Maybe fit: 6-7% not all notes

Nearly 60% one note for one episode



‘The medical sickness certificate is one of the most powerful and potentially dangerous treatments in the GP armamentarium’

Professor Waddell, of the Centre for Psychosocial and Disability Research at the University of Cardiff, at a BMA conference on work, health and wellbeing



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GPs and fit notes

The GP and fit notes

575 GPS over 4 BMJ Learning meetings Oct 2014-April 2015

- I feel comfortable dealing with fit note requests for people in employment
74% (completely or somewhat agree)
- I feel comfortable dealing with fit note requests for people in the welfare system
29%
- I would welcome the return of the RM7 (anonymous note that may be fit to work)
83%

GP views on health and work

> 1,000 GPs

- 4 in 5
- 5 in 6
- 2 in 3

- 2 in 3
- 1 in 3
- 7% ha

PULSE At the heart of general practice since 1960

OPINION Doc Martin could soon

NEWS ↓ VIEWS ↓ CLINICAL ↓ YOUR PRACTICE ↓ HOT TOPICS ↓ TRAINEE

HOME → FINANCE AND PRACTICE LIFE NEWS

GPs vote that sick notes are 'a waste of time'

21 March 2017 | By Michelle Madsen

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Resources, Hints & Tips

www.rhhmedical.com

DWP Guidance – March 2013

www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote

Getting the most out of the fit note

GP guidance

Based on research evidence and feedback from doctors, patients and employers, this guide is designed to help you make best use of the fit note to support your patients.

It gives you information on completing each section of the fit note (including the reassessment box, comments section and return to work tick boxes), and uses case studies to illustrate different situations.

It updates previous guidance, reflects new developments such as computer-generated fit notes and has an expanded further support section. You can also use it for Continuing Professional Development and revalidation purposes.

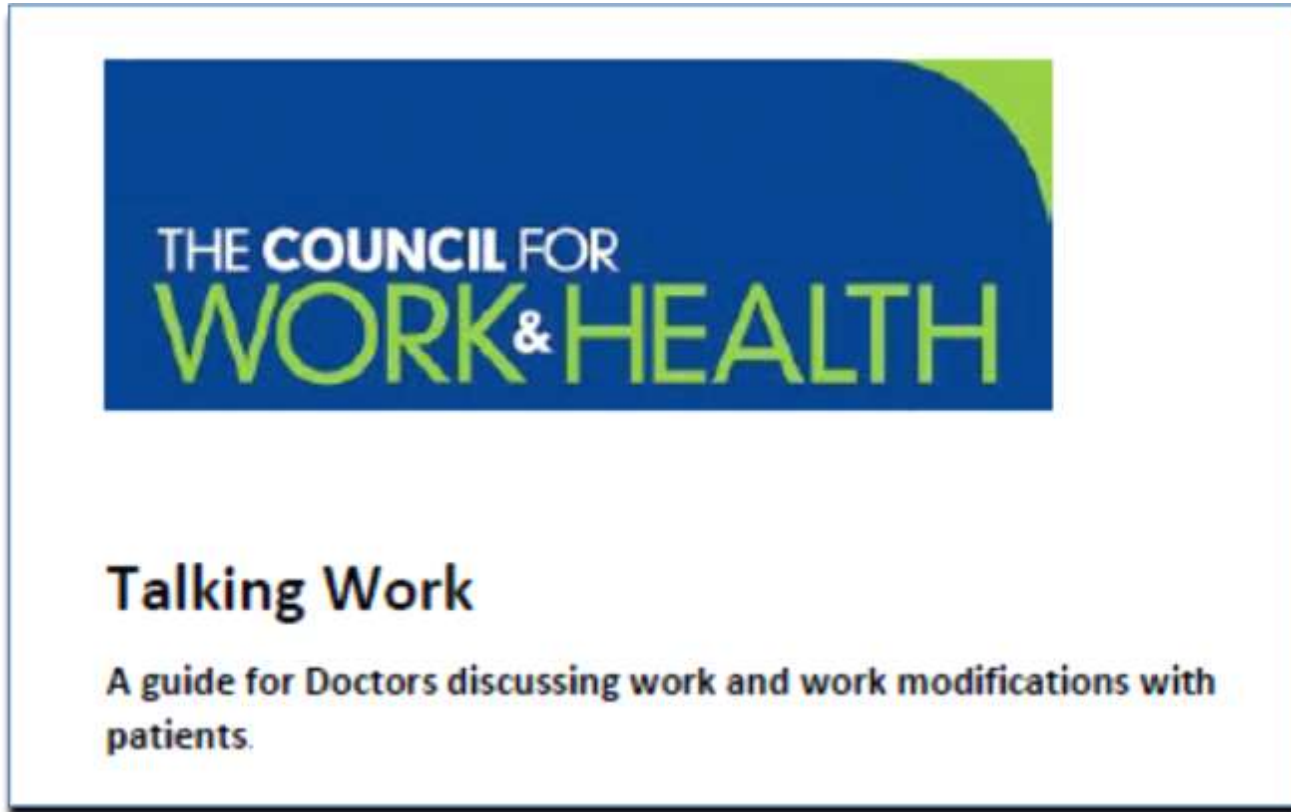
It has been developed in consultation with practising doctors and professional bodies including:

- Acas
- British Medical Association
- Confederation of British Industry
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- EEF - the manufacturers' organisation
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Practical advice for fit notes



www.councilforworkandhealth.org.uk/work-modifications

Examples of commonly used fit note phrases

The following examples have been based on suggestions made by Dr Rob Hampton, a GP with a specialist interest in work and health.

• Please consider avoiding loaded rotation and lifting but all walking or desk-based duties are appropriate	
• Avoid lifting duties from below waist level	
• Avoid duties involving loaded rotation from the trunk	
• Advise to avoid manual handling duties above shoulder height	
• Desk based or walking duties are safe and appropriate	
• Upper limbs have full function	
• Would mediation be feasible?	
• Suggest workplace meeting for return to work plan	
• Consider applying for Access to Work scheme https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work	
• Consider discussion around return to work plan specifically targeted at people with psychological symptoms and their employers. resources available at https://returntoworkmh.co.uk/	
• Consider discussion around return to work plan specifically targeted at people with cancer and their employers. resources at www.macmillan.org.uk/work	
• Is a workplace mentor available to support the person back to work?	
• Can working hours be adjusted?	
• Please consider addressing the reported workplace relationship issue	
• Can he/she avoid Customer facing duties?	
• Consider Prioritising one deadline at a time for the return to work plan?	
• Consider re-location for short term as part of return to work plan?	

Useful resources

- Access to work

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>. special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help you do things like answer the phone or go to meetings

Practical advice for HCPs, employers and employees

- **Mental Health** <https://returntoworkmh.co.uk/>

- **Cancer** www.macmillan.org.uk/work

- **Musculoskeletal**

- <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/living-with-arthritis/work/>

- **Return to work after surgery**

- www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient-care/recovering-from-surgery



The fit note as a clinical tool?

1. Belongs to the patient
2. Message reinforcement
3. Avoids GP as 'Judge and jury'
4. Decision to be made by employer/Jobcentre
5. Stimulate dialogue away from surgery
6. Nudge
7. Flexible timeframe
8. Tie into longitudinal care
9. Hypothesis testing
10. Reflective commentary

Statement of Fitness for Work
For social security or Statutory Sick Pay

Patient's name:

I assessed your case on:

and, because of the following condition(s):

I advise you that:

you are not fit for work.

you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice:

If available, and with your employer's agreement, you may benefit from:

a phased return to work amended duties

altered hours workplace adaptations

Comments, including functional effects of your condition(s):

Sample

This will be the case for

or from to

I will/Will not need to assess your fitness for work again at the end of this period.
(Please delete as applicable)

Doctor's signature:

Date of statement:

Doctor's address:

Med 3 04/10



Better use of the fit note - employed

Musculoskeletal

- Specifics – ‘can do’
 - ‘Desk based duties possible’
 - ‘Fit for any walking or seated duties’
 - ‘Upper limbs have full function’
- Specifics – ‘avoid’
 - ‘Avoid loaded rotation at the trunk’
 - ‘Avoid manual work above shoulder height’
 - ‘Avoid lifting from the floor’

E-Learning for Health & Work



NHS
Health Education England

Work and Health e-learning programme

<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk>



INVESTIGATIONS

SYMPTOMS

TREATMENT

AFFECT ON
YOUR WORK

AHP Wealth & Work Report in primary care

3 DWP/DHSC Joint Unit for Work and Health
Challenge fund projects

'The Link' – Outcomes

- DWP Challenge Fund
- Leicester 6 practices
- Newcastle 3 practices
- 246 referrals in 7 months
- 122 AHP notes issued
- 2 employers requested GP fit note
- Jobcentre Plus/DWP – GP fit notes

PARTNERS



West End
Family Health



+RTW PLUS





GP FIT NOTE

TRENDS AND OBSERVATION BY PRACTICE

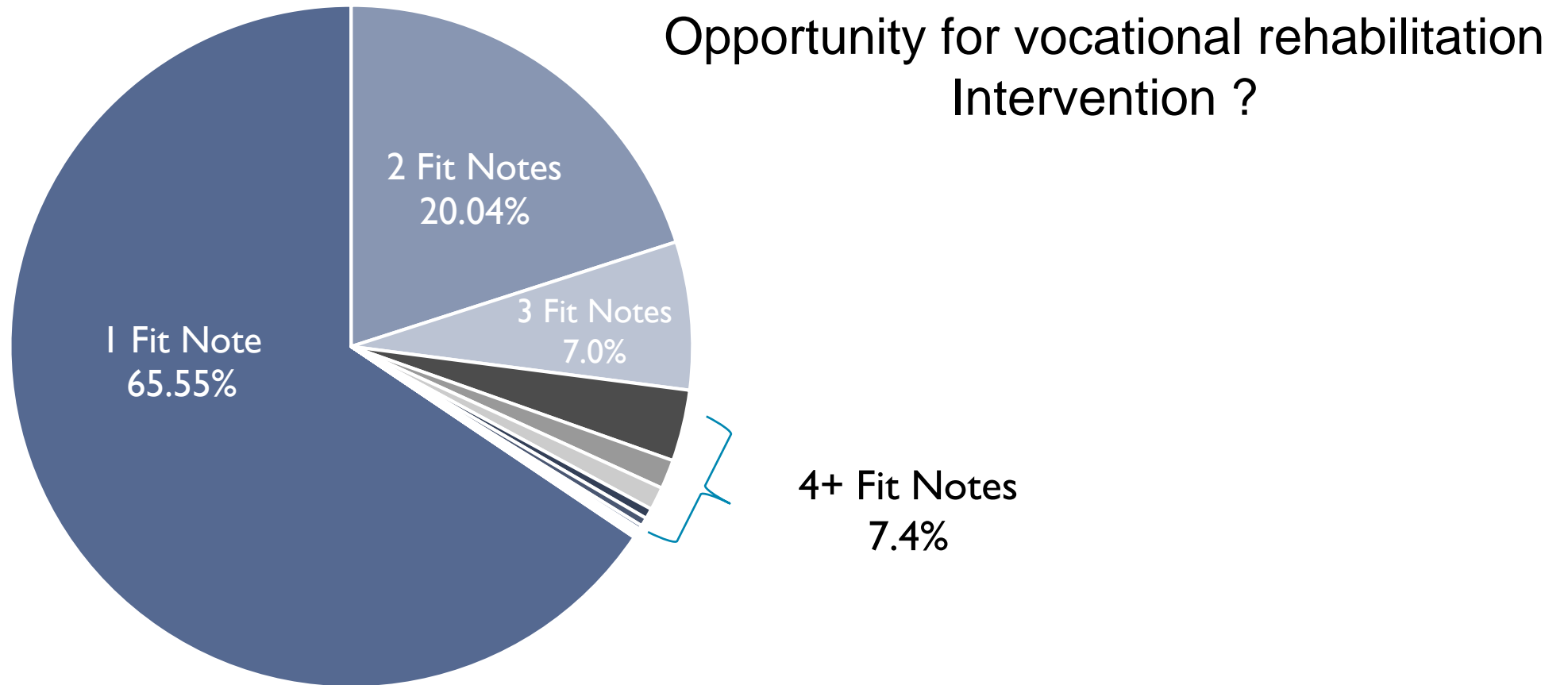
APRIL 2018 TO MARCH 2019

10,000 NOTES IN 1 YEAR

AUGUST 2019



NUMBER OF FIT NOTES PER SICKNESS ABSENCE EPISODE



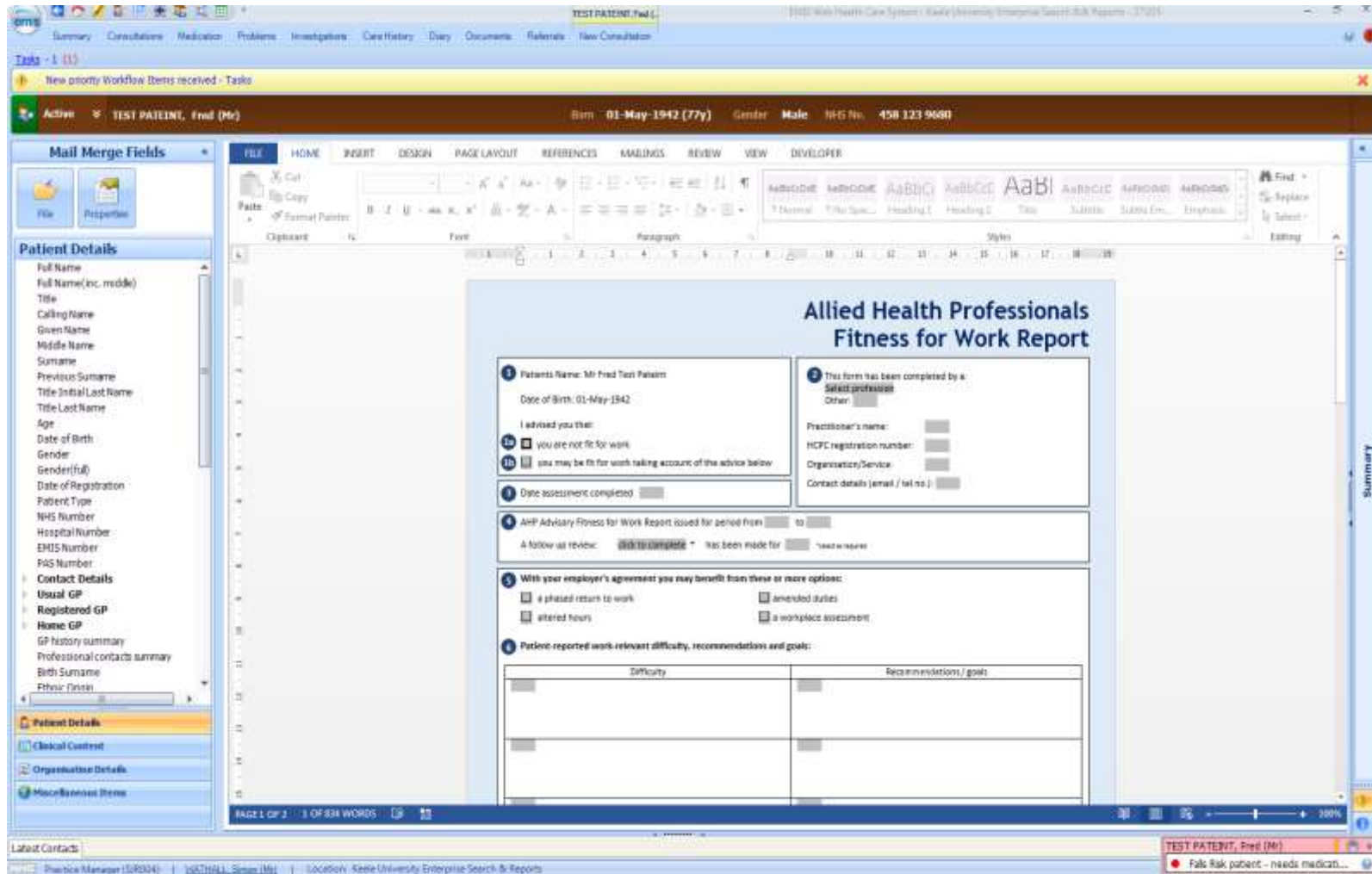
AHP Health and Work Report

Embedding the report in EMIS

PRIMARY CARE
CENTRE
VERSUS
ARTHRITIS

Gwenllian Wynne-Jones
Senior Research Fellow
Primary Care Centre Versus Arthritis, Keele University
g.wynne-jones@keele.ac.uk

It's the Keele difference.



This is an EMIS document and can be accessed and completed via a patients care record either as a stand alone document or a document completed as part of a consultation. The user can either select a tick box, enter free text or select from a drop down list where appropriate in the document.

It's the Keele difference.



AHP Health and Work Report

Developed by AHP Federation and available on the RCOT website:

<https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/occupational-therapy-topics/work>

The Allied Health Professions Health and Work Report (previously the Advisory Fitness for Work Report) is an A4 form which provides an employee their employer and GP with information which may be used to help keep that employee in work if possible or be signed off, usually for a specified length of time while recovering from injury, illness or a procedure.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/helmopen/rlos/professional-development/AHP-advisory-fitness-for-work-report/index.html>

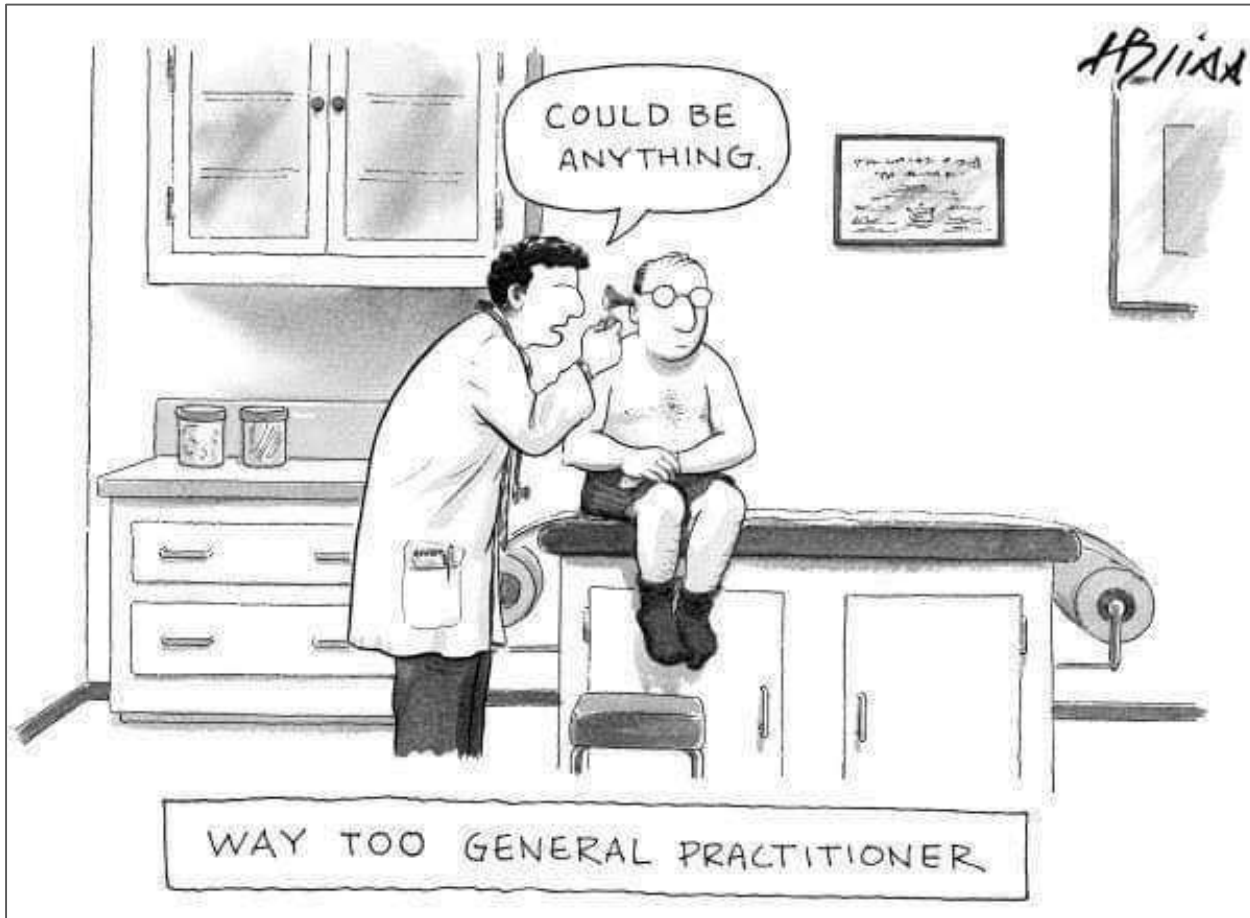


The screenshot shows the 'AHP Health and Work Report' form. It includes sections for 'Employee details', 'Employer details', 'AHP Health and Work Report details', and 'Medical notes'. There is a table with columns for 'Status' and 'Return to work date'. The form is designed to be filled out by the employee, employer, and a General Practitioner (GP).

The future & fit notes?

- Fit notes are here to stay
- Most notes short term & uncontroversial
- Resources and advice will improve
- Other healthcare professions will be issuing them
 - Access to primary care record?
- Reliance on referral by GPs to fit for work services will fail
- Smarter analytics of fit note data could work?
 - Opportunity 4-6 weeks and 2-3 notes
- GP fit notes should stop at Workplace Capability Assessment
- GPs with Extended Role? (*cf Regional Medical Officer*)

AHPs and NHS fit notes? Personal view



- Only ANPs with access to the GP IT system?
- Skill-set should include certificated training in the health & work consultation?
- Pilots should be in Primary Care Networks & supervised by GPs with an interest in occupational health?