

## UK Employment: 'Fit notes' to replace 'sick notes' from April 2010

01 FEBRUARY 2010

Christina Morton

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT LAWYER | UK

**CATEGORY:**  
ARTICLE

The Government has announced that its new 'fit note' system (the 'Statement of Fitness for Work') will be up and running from 6 April this year. Draft regulations, *The Social Security (Medical Evidence) and the Statutory Sick Pay (Medical Evidence) (Amendment) Regulations 2010*, have been published alongside the Government's response to consultation on the issue.

Under the new system:

- The new-style statement will replace the current sick note. It will contain a short list of frequently recommended changes that could be made to an employee's work environment or job role to help facilitate a return to work. If a doctor wishes to suggest something that is not on the list, he or she can write in a comments box.
- The general 'fit for work' option will no longer be available.
- The 'may be fit for some work' option will be replaced with 'you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice', after which the list of suggested adaptations and the comments box appear.
- The maximum period such a medical statement can cover will be reduced from six to three months (during the first six months of a health condition).
- The Government has stated that specific guidance for individuals, employers and healthcare professionals will be available shortly. There will also be a campaign to ensure awareness of the changes. At present there is anecdotal evidence that GPs are not fully aware of the Government's proposals and the policies behind them (namely reducing sickness absence and enabling people with health conditions to return to work as quickly as possible).

The Government has stated that it will review and evaluate the new system and publish its conclusions in 2012/13. Whether this happens will, of course, depend on the results of the General Election.

For further information click [here](#).

# Authors

Christina Morton

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT LAWYER | LONDON

Employment

 +44 20 7597 6654

 [christina.morton@withersworldwide.com](mailto:christina.morton@withersworldwide.com)