



# SICKNESS CERTIFICATION

## Guidance for Sheffield GPs

If GPs or practice staff have any queries regarding this notice, further advice can be sought from the LMC office. However, we would ask that patients are **not** put in direct contact with the LMC office.

- The provision of official medical certificates is governed by Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regulations and is for the purpose of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Social Security purposes only.
- This use does not extend to certification for purposes such as school children, examination exemptions, probation absence etc, or for employment purposes where the absence is for less than 7 days' incapacity.
- Sickness certification is **not** required for the first 7 successive calendar days.
- GPs are **not** required to issue sickness certification for periods of less than 7 days as part of their contractual obligations within the NHS.
- Shorter employment absences are ordinarily certified on a self-certification form SC2 (available from [www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/sc2.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/sc2.pdf)). Patients should be advised of the correct means of self-certification or, if appropriate, that certification is non-statutory.
- Employers are obliged to accept sight of the SC2 as adequate evidence of incapacity.
- Most employers accept that excessive short term sickness absence is a management problem rather than a medical one. Management solutions are required, often with the input of an Occupational Health Department. It is therefore extremely wasteful of scarce NHS resources for an employee to attend a GP for every minor illness for the sole purpose of trying to obtain a sickness certificate for their employer.
- In April 2010 forms Med 3 and Med 5 were combined to create the *Statement of Fitness to Work*. Along with the introduction of this form, a number of changes were introduced, such as:
  - ❖ Including telephone conversations as an acceptable form of assessment;
  - ❖ Introducing a new option: 'May be fit for work taking account of the following advice' (although employers are not obliged to take note of any such advice);
  - ❖ During the first 6 months of sickness, a *Statement of Fitness to Work* can be issued for no longer than 3 months.
- Statements of Fitness to Work cannot be issued in respect of previous illness when a doctor was not in attendance. However, GPs can issue them:

- ❖ On a date after the patient was assessed, if the GP considers that it would have been reasonable to issue a Statement on the day of the assessment;
- ❖ After consideration of a written report from another doctor or registered health care professional.
- More detailed information can be found in the DWP guide *Getting the most out of the fit note – GP guidance*, which can be downloaded from the *Other Guidance* section of the LMC website at: <http://www.sheffield-lmc.org.uk/website/JGP217/files/51%20fitnote-gps-guidance.pdf>
- Patients who are advised to refrain from work by a hospital doctor should normally obtain medical evidence of incapacity from the hospital doctor. Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has issued *Trust Guidance on Issuing of Medical Certificates by Trust Staff to Patients*, which clarifies the medical certification process that has been introduced into the hospital discharge and outpatient processes.
- For further guidance employers may:
  - ❖ Consult the *Statutory Sick Pay: An Overview* section of the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) website, which includes a link to the *Employer Helpbook for Statutory Sick Pay*: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/payerti/employee/statutory-pay/ssp-overview.htm#8>
  - ❖ Call the Employer's Helpline on 0300 200 3200.