

24 March 2020

Dear Patient

CORONAVIRUS AND REQUESTS FOR DOCTORS' NOTES (MED 3)/LETTER TO COVER ABSENCE

You have requested a sick note from your GP in relation to being off work. The Government's rules around issuing a sick note (Fit-Note - Med3) are that a medical professional can only issue a Med 3 when an individual has had more than seven continuous calendar days off sick due to an illness (including weekends).

For any period of illness less than seven days, you are able to complete a self-certification certificate and provide this to your employer. In the unlikely event that your employer does not accept a self-certification then your doctor may be able to issue a private sick note, for which they are entitled to make a charge.

In accordance with Government advice in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, it is inevitable that a number of employees will be required to quarantine themselves at home for 14 days because other members of the household are showing symptoms. Under such circumstances, your GP will **not** be able to issue a sick note as the time off work is not due to an illness, and is not affecting your ability to work, but rather is a precaution to avoid transmission of any illness that is yet to produce symptoms. Your employer needs to understand that the reason for this self-isolation is to protect the welfare of your work colleagues and the wider community. If absolutely necessary, we understand that you may be able to contact NHS 111 (<https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note>) to request confirmation of the suspected Coronavirus diagnosis, to show to your employer.

Whilst we appreciate this may cause some difficulties between you and your employer, these actions are in accordance with government guidelines. GPs have a responsibility to prioritise the assessment and management of the healthcare needs of patients who are acutely unwell, rather than spending time dealing with requests for sick notes, particularly when it is not possible to issue a Med 3.

Additionally, for children who had taken time off school prior to the Government's decision to close schools with effect from 20 March 2020, there is no NHS requirement for GPs to provide letters to the school to confirm this.

As I am sure you will appreciate, with the rapidly evolving pandemic situation, and the already existing pressures on GPs to meet the day to day demands from unwell patients, the practice is unable to accommodate a school request for a GP letter. We hope that schools will work with parents to ensure any time off had been appropriately recorded, obviating the need for a doctor's note.

This briefing has been written for and on behalf of your GP surgery and is a response to your request for either a sick note, fit-note or letter.

Yours sincerely



Dr W D Westwood
Honorary Secretary