

Medical evidence including fit notes

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Self-certification

A self-certificate is a declaration made by the claimant that they have a health condition or disability which limits their capability for work. Self-certification is the minimum acceptable evidence required for up to the first 7 days that a claimant is unfit for work.

For any further days the claimant is unfit for work they must provide acceptable medical evidence if they have not already done so.

Self-certification is reported on a claimant's online account, over the phone or face to face. In exceptional circumstances, other forms of communication are acceptable if a claimant has an accessibility requirement.

To prevent the claim being delayed, a claimant providing self-certification verbally, or on a note on the journal, must be told to complete a declaration on the Service as well.

It must include information about their health condition or disability and the date from which they have been unfit for work. It may also include that they expect to continue to be unfit for work. Alternatively, the claimant may provide acceptable medical evidence.

From the eighth day of a claimant being unfit for work (after the period of self-certification expires), the claimant or their representative must provide acceptable medical evidence.

Acceptable medical evidence

Acceptable medical evidence includes a:

- Statement of Fitness for Work
- doctor's letter
- terminally ill form - DS1500 or SR1
- Benefits Assessment for Special Rules in Scotland (BASRiS) form
- hospital inpatient form - Med10

- psychiatric hospital admission form
- hospital discharge letter
- private medical certificates
- other evidence

This list is not exhaustive, and any evidence provided by the claimant must be considered.

Statement of Fitness for Work including fit notes

The Statement of Fitness for Work (SoFfW) is the most common form of evidence. It is also known as a:

- fit note
- Med 3
- sick note
- med cert
- doctor's note

Throughout the guidance and from this point onward the SoFfW will be referred to as a fit note.

Accepting a fit note (Statement of fitness for work)

A fit note can be issued by a:

- doctor
- nurse
- physiotherapist
- occupational therapist
- pharmacist

Fit notes can be received by patients as a physical document or digitally.

There are currently two versions of fit notes. One contains a signature box where the issuer will physically sign the fit note using a wet signature. The second type of fit note contains the printed name and profession of the issuer instead of a signature box. Both types of fit note are acceptable as evidence.

A wet signature is one written in pen and not by a computer. However, if the signature is written in pen and then scanned into a computer it is still a wet signature.

A fit note will contain:

- the patient's name
- the date of the issuer's assessment on which the fit note is based
- the condition which the issuer advises is making the patient not fit for work
- a statement (where appropriate) that the patient may be fit for work taking account of the advice given
- a statement that the issuer will or will not need to assess the patient's fitness for work again
- the date on which the fit note was given
- the address of the issuer
- a signature authorised by either:

- the signature of the issuer making the statement in ink - a wet signature
- the printed name and profession of the issuer

The condition reported on the Service does not have to match the condition on the fit note. The claimant must be advised to report the additional conditions. It is the responsibility of the claimant to ensure that the information reported is accurate.

Claimants are not required to bring their medical evidence into the Jobcentre for it to be verified. Agents accept these without needing to see them, advising claimants this is how it has been accepted.

If there are any doubts about whether a claimant's reported fit note information is valid, they can be asked to bring their fit note to their next Jobcentre appointment.

Claimants cannot upload fit note documents or forward them on to the Jobcentre via e-mail.

If a claimant is required to bring a fit note into the Jobcentre, the following must be considered:

Paper fit note provided

Agents must check that the document:

- Is the original
- is dated by the issuer
- covers the dates reported by the claimant
- has either:
 - been stamped and signed by the issuer, or
 - the issuers name and profession printed on the document

Fit note presented digitally

Some claimants may bring a digital version (not a paper copy) of a fit note into the Jobcentre. They could also provide a scanned version of a paper fit note. A scanned fit note may still contain the issuers signature rather than their printed name.

Only a scanned version of a paper fit note should contain the issuers signature. All new digital fit notes will contain the printed name and profession of the issuer.

Agents must check that the digital fit note:

- is dated by the issuer
- covers the dates reported by the claimant
- contains the issuers name and profession

Digital fit notes must have a valid Quick Response (QR) or bar code and unique serial number.

Some fit notes provided by NHS establishments that do not have access to the systems to print fit notes will not contain a QR code.

Period covered by the medical evidence

Agents must accept medical evidence regardless of the duration stated on it by the health care professional (including indefinite) even when:

- a claimant presents medical evidence issued by a healthcare professional some time before they declare a health condition on Universal Credit
- it's the first piece of evidence the claimant presents

Provided the medical evidence covers the day on which the claimant reported the health condition or disability on their Universal Credit claim, it will be accepted. This will either be self-certification or acceptable medical evidence from day 8 of the illness or disability.

When a claimant's fit note is about to expire, they will be reminded through their online account to provide a new one. The claimant will receive up to 3 reminders with the first reminder being issued 7 days before their current fit note is due to expire.

Healthcare professionals will issue medical evidence to a claimant (for a clinically appropriate period for the health condition) in accordance with their own professional standards.

Indefinite fit note

If the claimant advises that they have an indefinite fit note the review date is set for 100 years in the future.

Not fit for work

The issuer will describe to the best of their knowledge exactly what the condition is that is making the claimant not fit for work.

May be fit for work

Where it is stated 'may be fit for work', the issuer will put the reason why and (where appropriate) what circumstances or arrangements the claimant and employer might agree so the claimant could return to work earlier. The issuer might state, for example 'no heavy lifting' for a specified period or recommend a phased return to work.

The term 'may be fit for work' must not be taken to mean that a claimant is 'not fit for work'. Agents must consider how the claimant's conditionality can be tailored to meet their circumstances. This includes:

- considering types of work - including a different occupation
- considering work-related activity that does not involve anything the doctor has advised against
- workplace adjustments which would mean a particular type of work could reasonably be considered

Other forms of acceptable medical evidence

Other forms of medical evidence include:

- doctor's letter
- Terminally ill forms
- Hospital inpatient form
- Psychiatric hospital admission form
- Hospital discharge letter
- Private medical certificates
- other evidence

Doctor's letter

A claimant may produce a letter from their doctor, consultant or other medical practitioner confirming a health condition or disability which limits the amount, type and duration of the work they can do.

This is most likely when an in-work claimant's capability to work is restricted (but not prevented) by a manageable condition or disability and a fit note would not be suitable.

Terminally ill forms, DS1500 or SR1 and BASRiS

The terminally ill form (DS1500 or SR1) may also be referred to as the 'Doctor's report for Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Incapacity Benefit to accompany your patients claim under special rules'.

The DS1500 is issued when a person is diagnosed as terminally ill and not expected to live for more than 6 months, and the SR1 is issued when a person is not expected to live more than 12 months. For further information, see Terminal illness.

It can be completed by a doctor, other healthcare professional or a Macmillan nurse.

Benefits Assessment for Special Rules in Scotland

The Benefits Assessment for Special Rules in Scotland (BASRiS) form is issued to claimants in Scotland who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness.

This differs from a DS1500 or SR1 and action is not taken in the same way. See Terminal illness.

The BASRiS form can be completed by a registered medical practitioner or registered nurse.

The DS1500 or SR1 and BASRiS form must include details of:

- the diagnosis
- whether the patient is aware that they are terminally ill
- if unaware - the name and address of the patient's representative who requested the DS1500 or SR1
- the current and proposed treatment
- the clinical findings

A DS1500 or SR1 can be requested and provided directly to DWP by:

- the claimant
- the claimant's representative
- a third party supporting the claimant such as a general practitioner or Macmillan nurse

Once the DS1500 or SR1 is received and the diagnosis and date of diagnosis recorded, the DS1500 or SR1 is sent to Personal Independent Payment using the email: DWP BD Disability Performance and Products Team. For further information, see Terminal Illness.

Hospital in-patient form – Med 10

The Hospital inpatient form (Med 10) is a hospital statement issued to show the date or dates a claimant was an inpatient in hospital.

The Med10 must be signed by a hospital staff member and not cover a period of more than 26 weeks. If required, a fit note will be provided with the Med 10 for any forward period of incapacity on leaving hospital.

The Med10 is accepted like a fit note as it will state the period of the health condition or disability it covers.

Psychiatric hospital admission form

The psychiatric hospital admission form is issued by a psychiatric hospital when a claimant is admitted.

Hospital discharge letter

A hospital discharge letter can be provided as evidence of a health condition in a claim for backdating.

Private medical certificates

Private medical certificates might be provided by a private general practitioner, either:

- one who is physically present when they assess the claimant
- an online general practitioner service
- at a private hospital

These may be presented as medical evidence.

Private medical certificates include 'Push Doctor' or a similar online organisation's medical certificates. If a Push Doctor type medical certificate is provided by a claimant, it is treated as a private medical certificate.

These can be accepted instead of a fit note only if they have been signed by a doctor with a wet signature. The DWP does not accept any form of medical evidence not issued by a registered doctor. It must contain all the information included on the fit note.

Other evidence

Where a local authority issues a notice requiring a claimant not to work because they have a notifiable disease or have been in contact with a relevant infection or contamination, they will get a day 1 Work Capability Assessment referral.

If a claimant gets a local authority notification, they must provide a fit note and follow the health journey.

Receiving medical evidence other than fit notes

When requested to provide medical evidence:

- where a telephone interview is booked, the claimant must bring in or send the medical evidence into the Jobcentre (if they have not already done so)
- where medical evidence is handed in at the Jobcentre - agents must take action on the Service straightaway or photocopy it to action later (the evidence is then returned to the claimant and an appointment must not be booked for the claimant to verify the evidence at that point)
- where the medical evidence is provided by post - the relevant verification action is taken, and the evidence returned to the claimant by post

Medical evidence following Work Capability Assessment

Medical evidence is not required after a Work Capability Assessment decision has been made for the condition relating to that assessment.

If a claimant continues to provide medical evidence after a Work Capability Assessment decision and the condition has not changed, they must be reminded that this is no longer needed for that condition as a decision has been made.

When the claimant's Work Capability Assessment decision is due for review, there is no need to ask them to provide any more fit notes.

Fit notes provided after the claimant is found fit for work

If a claimant is found fit for work following a Work Capability Assessment outcome, no further medical evidence is required for the condition relating to that assessment.

Claimant reports a deteriorating or new condition

If a claimant has a new condition (in addition to an existing condition) or an existing condition which has got worse, they must provide medical evidence to support this.

For information on a claimant who is not on the health journey and reports a 'new' condition see Health conditions and disabilities - day 1 to day 29.

If the claimant provides a letter from their doctor, it can be used as medical evidence. Claimants are not asked to provide a letter from their doctor, as the doctor, can refuse the request or charge for a letter.

If the previous WCA decision was, the claimant is 'Capable of Work', refer to the guidance, After the Work Capability Assessment for further information.

If the previous WCA decision was the claimant has 'Limited Capability for Work (LCW)' or limited capability for work and work related activity, claimants only need to provide one piece of supporting evidence for the new or deteriorating condition. These cases need to be re-referred for a WCA for an assessment to be made on that deteriorating or new condition.