

FIT NOTES AFTER HOSPITAL CARE

If you are likely to need a fit note (AKA a “sick cert” or a Med3) when you come out of hospital or following Outpatient attendance please ask the Dr treating you in hospital to provide you with one before you leave ¹. This information sheet gives you some myths and facts about this issue

Why is this important? Why doesn't the GP just do it?

Thousands of appointments and telephone calls with GPs are taken up each year by patients requesting fit notes when they could have been issued by Hospital Drs and Healthcare Professionals. This has a direct effect on how other patients can access the GP. Please help us to keep our appointments free for patients who have genuine clinical need rather than administrative paperwork that could easily have been dealt with by others at the end of your hospital visit or stay.

MYTHS

“consultants and junior doctors don’t write fit notes. Fit notes are a GP’s job”	Untrue. See guidance below ²
“the hospital don’t have any Fit Note pads”	Untrue. Hospitals order these like many other stationery items from BSO.
“the hospital can only issue fit notes for 1 to 2 weeks at the very most”	Untrue; see below
“the hospital can’t issue you with a fit note if you’ve only been to outpatients”	Untrue
“the hospital won’t be able to send me a fit note”	Untrue

FACTS

The doctor who is treating you at the time has a statutory obligation to provide you with a fit note if you need one. This includes all Hospital Drs

The Dr who is treating you should sign you off for the appropriate period according to the condition you have been treated for.	Each fit note in first six months of an illness can only have a maximum duration of 3 months. Many patients will not need that length of med3 and a note is not required to go back to work sooner than the duration ³
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Both private and NHS Drs can issue Fit Notes

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-note>

As a last resort if you are encountering difficulty please contact

Belfast Trust	028) 9504 8000	complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net
Northern Trust	028 9442 4655	user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net
Southern Trust	028 3756 4600	serviceuserfeedback@southerntrust.hscni.net
South Eastern Trust	028 9056 1427	complaints@setrust.hscni.net
Western Trust	028 7161 1226	complaints.department@westerntrust.hscni.net
Ulster Independent Clinic	028 9066 1212	https://ulsterindependentclinic.com/contact/
Kingsbridge	<u>028 90 667 878</u>	governance@kingsbridgehealthcaregroup.com

¹ In Jul 2022 the law changed to allow some nurses, physios, pharmacists and Occupational Therapists to sign a Med3

² “It is important that the healthcare professional responsible for the episode of care is the one who issues the fit note if it is within their ability. It is critical that patients are not signposted to other healthcare professionals purely for the purposes of certifying a fit note where this is avoidable, such as part of hospital discharges”.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fit-note-guidance-for-healthcare-professionals/getting-the-most-out-of-the-fit-note-guidance-for-healthcare-professionals#filling-in-the-fit-note>