

WESTERN RURAL HEALTHCARE

Supply of Fit Notes (Med-3) for COVID-19 (Official Government Guidance)

Due to the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 (Wuhan Novel Corona Virus) global pandemic we are experiencing a significant uptake in the number of patients requesting Fit Note (Med-3) forms from the surgery.

The official government guidance on the matter is as below:

“By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. After 7 days, employers may use their own discretion around the need for medical evidence if an employee is staying at home. We strongly suggest that employers use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home either as they are unwell themselves, or live with someone who is in accordance with the public health advice issued by the government.”

On this basis, Western Rural Healthcare will not be providing Fit Notes (Med-3) for our patients to provide to employers.

The major reasons a patient may request a Fit Note (Med-3) broadly could be defined as follows:

1. Symptomatic – Isolation for 7 days as per guidance – There is no requirement for certification for the first 7 days of any absence.
2. Symptomatic exceeding 7 days –Patients who remain unwell exceeding 7 days are currently directed www.111.nhs.uk for further guidance. There is no requirement to contact a GP under these circumstances.
3. A member of the patients household has or is suspected to have COVID-19 – 14 days isolation as per guidance – The governments advice on this is clear in that employers should be using reasonable discretion in the face of a global pandemic and not creating a costly and time consuming administrative burden on already stretched NHS resources. Employers are responsible for putting in place alternative arrangements where possible including where appropriate the provision of home or remote working. Where alternatives are not feasible we would expect employees to self certify and employers to authorise in line with government advice.
4. At risk group – should members of a defined at risk group become unwell, government advice would, mean points 1 and 2 apply. There is no need to contact GP services under these circumstances.
5. Students in full time education – There is no NHS requirement for GP’s to supply certification to schools or colleges to verify periods of sickness. Such organisations are required to cooperate with students and parents to ensure that absences are appropriately logged. There is no requirement to contact a GP under these circumstances.