Benefits for Employers

Fit for Work is a voluntary service that offers the wider working population access to occupational health support. It provides the services of health professionals to people in employment if they have been off for four weeks or more due to sickness. It is aimed at supporting workers by plugging the gap in the provision of occupational health advice and support. This gap was identified in a 2011 report by Dame Carol Black and David Frost CBE.

Recent studies show that being out of work for long periods of time is damaging to health, social and financial wellbeing, and the longer someone is off sick, the harder it is for them to get back to work. An intervention at around four weeks means they are more likely to return to work rather than present a risk of a more lengthy absence or leaving employment altogether.

Who is eligible?
Fit for Work is a service for people who are in employment, not the unemployed. Employees are eligible if they have been off work for four weeks or more due to sickness, and have a realistic prospect of returning to work.

How can I refer someone to Fit for Work?
You can refer eligible employees to the service through fitforwork.org/employer/ (select 'refer an employee'), or by calling 0800 032 6235.

Does my employee have to give consent?
Yes, the service is voluntary. Employees must give verbal consent to be referred, and again to have their Return to Work Plan shared with their employer and/or GP.

What is a Return to Work Plan?
Once a health professional has conducted the assessment looking at factors that may be affecting the employee returning to work, a Return to Work Plan will be agreed with the employee. You can accept the Return to Work Plan as evidence of sickness absence in lieu of a Fit Note, so the employee will not need to return to their GP for a Fit Note.

What are the advantages?
For the Employer: It will mean employees return to work sooner and therefore the cost of sickness absence is reduced. It will also mean employers have access to free work-related health advice and free occupational health assessments for employees who have reached, or are expected to reach, four weeks or more of sickness absence. Additionally, you could also get a tax exemption of up to £500 (per year, per employee) on medical interventions that are recommended.

For the Employee: Fit for Work is beneficial for the employee as those who want help can be supported back to work sooner. Fit for Work can help bridge the gap between employees and employers with independent occupational health advice and support.

Will there be any employer training?
A number of Fit for Work employer roadshows focusing on how Fit for Work can help employers ran across England and Wales throughout Autumn 2015. If you missed the roadshows, you may find the webinars at fitforwork.org/webinars/ helpful, or you can call the freephone advice line on 0800 032 6235 for more information.

My employees are concerned about who will have access to the details I provide to Fit for Work. Who will have access to this information?
The only people who will have access to this information will be the case managers who work with your employee on a Return to Work Plan. Information will be treated as private and confidential (much like GP patient notes). Employees may be asked to give consent for their information to be used for evaluation and audit purposes, however they can decline this.

Q&A – The following covers typical questions employers have been asking

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There are two elements to Fit for Work:
1. Advice: access to health and work advice for employees, employers and GPs through a website and freephone helpline.
2. Assessment: working employees can be referred by their employer for a (45 minute) telephone assessment with an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.
How to make a referral for a Fit for Work occupational health assessment in three easy steps.

If your employee is eligible (off sick for four weeks or more) and gives you their informed consent, follow the steps below to complete a referral.

**Step 1. Visit** fitforwork.org/employer/ and select the ‘Refer an employee’ button

**Step 2. Enter your company/employer details** (These details only need to be entered once)

To find out more about how Fit for Work can help you manage sickness absence, visit fitforwork.org/employer/ or call the freephone advice line on: 0800 032 6235 (English) or 0800 032 6233 (Cymraeg)

For Scotland contact: 0800 019 2211 or visit fitforworkscotland.scot