

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.

## 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.

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

### 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/](https://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/](https://fitforwork.org/webinars/) helpful, or you can call the freephone advice line on 0800 032 6235 for more information.

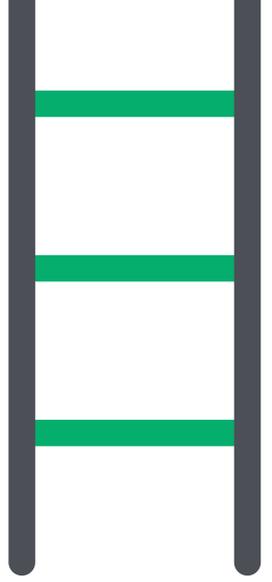
### My employees are concerned about who will have access to the details I provide to Fit for Work. Who will have access to this information?

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.

# Fit for Work

## 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/](https://fitforwork.org/employer/)  
and select the 'Refer an employee' button

**Fit for Work** GP EMPLOYER EMPLOYEE

From today, all employers across England and Wales can refer employees who have been off work for four weeks or more for a free Fit for Work referral. Read our guide for employers for more information, or make a referral now.

Employees who consent to being referred to Fit for Work will be invited for a telephone assessment by a Fit for Work occupational health professional. This assessment aims to identify all potential obstacles preventing employees from returning to work (including health, work and personal factors). Where appropriate, a Return to Work Plan will be agreed between the advisor and employee.

While aiming to plug the gap in occupational health advice and support for SMEs, Fit for Work can also work alongside existing occupational health provision as it focuses on many different aspects preventing an employee's return to work, including social and financial factors.

- Browse our library of health and work topics
- Chat online to a specialist advisor
- Call our advice line on 0800 032 6235
- Email us a question

How to prepare for making Fit for Work referrals

- Clarify what existing support you already have in place for employees on long-term sick leave. Update your HR policy to accept the Fit for Work Return to Work Plans. (For help with updating your absence and HR policies, see the CIPD guidelines.)
- Invite eligible employees in for a discussion about Fit for Work, and refer employees (with their consent) using the employer referral form.
- Spread the word about Fit for Work within your organisation or on your website using some of our online resources (see the employer toolkit for a collection of useful materials available for your use).

[Refer an Employee](#) [View the Toolkit](#)

### Step 2. Enter your company/employer details

(These details only need to be entered once)

**Fit for Work**

Create a Referral

Fit for Work referrals are made by GPs and Employers, to enable Fit for Work to contact the employee to develop a Return to Work Plan. With the employee's consent we will share aspects of the Return to Work Plan with the GP or Employer. Please provide your own contact details below.

1 Employer Details 2 Employee Details 3 GP Details 4 Referral Reason 5 Declaration

Title \* Please Select... First Name \* Job Title \* Language Preference \* English

Surname \* Company Name \* Return to Work Plan Delivery Preference \* Email

Postcode \* Please enter a numerical 6 digit code which you will use to view and retrieve referral documents. Postal Address \* First Address

Hard of Hearing Preference \* None

Save Details Yes No

Confirm Email Address \* Telephone Number Mobile Number

### Step 3.

Check all the information on the referral form is correct and click submit to refer your employee to Fit for Work

**Declaration**

I have consent from the person I have referred to make this referral and pass on their information to Fit for Work. You may be contacted in relation to your satisfaction with Fit for Work and evaluation of the service. Please contact us on 0330 221 0280 or 0203 425 5000 if you prefer not to take part.

The information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

On submission of the referral you will have the option to download or print the completed referral forms to provide to the employee (patient).

Please enter the words you see in the box, in order and separated by a space. Doing so helps prevent automated programs from abusing this service.

[Privacy & Terms](#) [GDPR](#) [GDPR](#)

**Submit**

**Next steps for the employee (patient)**

One of our experienced case managers will be in touch within the next 24 hours. It would be helpful if you can have the following information available when we call you:

- Your most recent fit note
- The date your absence started
- Employer or GP contact information.
- If you would like to share your Return to Work Plan or if we could help in discussing any workplace matters with your employer

The Return to Work Plan we issue will serve as a Fit Note and can also be used for Statutory Sick Pay claims. You can find out more at [www.fitforwork.org](https://www.fitforwork.org)

To find out more about how Fit for Work can help you manage sickness absence, visit

[fitforwork.org/employer/](https://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](https://fitforworkscotland.scot)