



Do you employ staff?

Do you have difficulty understanding
your legal and contractual
responsibilities as an employer?

Do employment problems keep you
awake at night?

Hassle Free HR - Taking the hassle out of your HR and H&S Management

■ [Visit our website](#)

How to work with Fit Notes and make Reasonable Adjustments

What is a Fit Note?

The Fit Note was introduced on 6th April 2010 to replace the more traditional GP Certificate or Sick Note. Previously when a GP provided an employee with a Sick Note the only information the employer would be given would be that the employee was not fit for work and the illness they were suffering from. The Fit Note now provides employers with additional information which includes whether an employee is too ill to attend work, well enough to attend work, or ill but able to attend work with reasonable adjustments. The Fit Note was introduced in an attempt to improve absence management and help employees return to work faster.

Your Responsibility

As an employer you are not bound legally to follow up on the advice given to you on a Fit Note. If it is not possible for you to make an adjustment, or the employee's role is not one which can be easily adjusted, it is perfectly acceptable for you to request that the employee remains on sick leave. However, the Equality Act 2010 does state that an employer is required to make adjustments for employees affected by a disability, and therefore a reasonable employer would be expected to do the same for employees affected by illness. It can be easy to dismiss a Fit Note and request that an employee continue their sick leave until they fully recover from their illness, but it is important for you as an employer to be reasonable and fair.

Working with Fit Notes

The positive thing to be noted about Fit Notes is that they offer the employer a recommendation of what adjustments can be made;

- Phased return to work
- Amended duties
- Altered hours
- Workplace adaptations.

These can be helpful for an employer who isn't sure of the best course of action. The GP should also be willing to provide an employer with more information i.e. the employer may think of another type of adjustment and be able to check with the GP to see if this adjustment is appropriate. Another positive thing about Fit Notes is that they act as a prompt for the employer and employee to have an open and honest conversation about the employees' health. Having strong communication will enable you to manage a situation much more effectively, and you will often find an employee is willing to come up with suggestions of what they think they can do in the hopes of returning to work.

In order to work positively with Fit Notes you need to spend time considering the following;

- What does the illness stop the employee doing?
- What can the employee still do, despite the illness?
- Is it possible for any remaining employees to help with the work load?
- Could certain aspects of the employee's role take a back seat for the short term?
- What would you want to be offered if you were in the employee's position?
- What haven't you thought of?

It can be easy to say "We can't make any adjustments, this is the employee's job!" but you need to remember how you manage an employee absence could be an investment for the future in terms of employee motivation, morale, retention and overall employee engagement etc.

For clarification of any of the above updates or for advice and guidance on any HR and/or Health and Safety Concerns contact us by emailing hradvice@hasslefreehr.co.uk or by calling 02476 664092.

Hassle Free HR Limited Registration Number: 5844301