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Employment Law Update

Fit For Work Service – Autumn 2015

In autumn 2015 the Fit For Work service, which was previously known as the Health and Work Service, will be fully implemented by the Government. In some areas of the country this scheme is already operational (for more details please see www.fitforwork.org) but it is yet to be implemented nationwide.

The purpose of the Fit For Work service will be to assist employers in managing employee absence, and to also help in assisting employees to return to work faster and manage their illnesses better. By helping people return to work sooner, and manage their illnesses better, the government is hoping that both employees and employers will benefit from a more present and healthier workforce, as high levels of absence can be both costly and demotivating.

This Fit For Work service will be comprised of two services:

1. An Informative Website Portal and Telephone Helpline

Both of these are available already to employers, employees and GPs. They exist to provide information and advice on health issues.

1. Occupational Health Referral System

This is the service coming into operation in autumn 2015. This free referral system will apply to qualifying employees who have been absent from work for a period of four weeks or more. Both employers and employees will be provided with a confidential and comprehensive health assessment and a detailed return to work plan that will be designed with the objective of removing possible obstacles.

This new scheme will not replace the Occupational Health Therapists that already exist, but rather it will work alongside them and make them more accessible to employers. It will now also be possible for GPs to suggest an occupational health referral, something which they could do before but was rather uncommon. Under this new scheme it will become the role of the GP to suggest the involvement of the Fit for Work service if they feel that their patient would benefit from it. However, if the GP has not done this within four weeks of managing the employee, the employer can request that the Fit For Work scheme be applied to the case.

As always, if any advice provided by an exterior body to the company i.e. the informative website portal, telephone helpline, or occupational health referral system, is not appropriate for the company or not something the company can achieve, then there will be no legal obligation for the company to comply with the advice given.

How Can We Help?

If you have any queries relating to any of the subjects raised within this newsletter then please do not hesitate to contact us at hradvice@hasslefreehr.co.uk

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.

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