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FIT NOTES: CERTIFICATION BY HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

This guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decision according to the circumstances of the individual patient in consultation with the patient and /or carer. Health care professionals must be prepared to justify any deviation from this guidance.

This guideline is for use by the following staff groups:
Senior Registered nursing staff (Band 6 & 7) working within The Elective Surgical Hub at Kidderminster Treatment centre

Lead Clinician(s)

Tammie Mason

Kate Egginton

Ward One and Day Surgery Manager

Approved by Theatres, Anaesthetics and Sterile
Services Governance Meeting on:

19th March 2025

Review Date:

19th March 2028

This is the most current document and should be
used until a revised version is in place

Key amendments to this guideline

Date	Amendment	Approved by:

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Introduction and summary of change

From the 1st of July 2022 the Department for Work and Pensions changed legislation to enable a wide range of healthcare professionals to certify fit notes. The Healthcare professionals who can now certify fit notes in addition to doctors are nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and physiotherapists.

It is generally accepted and there is evidence that good quality work is good for physical health, Mental Health, and wellbeing. Evidence indicates that the longer someone is off work due to ill health, the less likely they are to return to employment. There is also robust evidence that prolonged periods out of work are associated with poor mental and physical health, increased use of health services and poverty. Even if people are not fully fit, engaging with work can deliver health benefits.

Enabling a wider range of Healthcare Professionals to certify fit notes offers benefits for patients and the healthcare system by easing pressures on General practitioners and Primary Care. The changes aim to provide a seamless, faster system for patients; improve continuity of care and fully utilise skills by enabling the senior nurse to conduct health and work conversations and an assessment of a patient's fitness for work, provide advice about the functional effects of their surgery to enable them to return to work safely and manage their own health and wellbeing accordingly.

This guideline is for use by the following staff groups

Senior Registered nursing staff (Band 6 & 7) working within The Elective Surgical Hub at Kidderminster Treatment centre.

Training and Competency guidelines

Healthcare professionals should use the fit note to give advice about the functional effects of their patient's surgery and their fitness for work in general. They are not expected to have specialist knowledge of workplaces or occupational health, and they do not need to suggest changes to their patient's workplace or job.

The purpose of this training is to support the senior registered nurse to develop their confidence and skills to have an effective health and work conversation and use professional judgement to assess impact of a surgical procedure on an individual's fitness for work.

Any Senior registered nurses that will complete Fit notes as part of their role will need to complete the following requirements:

Read the following guidance papers:

- [Getting the most out of the fit note: guidance for healthcare professionals - GOV.UK](#)
- [Who can issue fit notes: guidance for healthcare professionals and their employers - GOV.UK](#)

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Complete the E Learning module via ESR

- 000 The Fit Note

Undertake 5 observed Fit note discussions with Health Care professionals already competent in the skill.

Complete competency statement self-declaration form (Appendix I).

Patients covered

Any patient attending Ward one and The Elective Surgical Hub at Kidderminster Treatment Centre.

Guidance for assessing a patient's fitness for work

If it is assessed that a patient's fitness for work is not impaired by a health condition, they are fit for work and do not need a fit note.

Healthcare Professionals also do not need to issue a fit note for the first 7 calendar days of a patient's sickness absence. Patients can self-certify for this period.

If it is assessed that a patient's health affects their fitness for work, the Healthcare professional should give them a fit note indicating whether the patient is **not fit for work** OR **may be fit for work**.

The following factors may be useful when making this assessment:

Any functional limitations of the patient's health condition. The duration of their health condition and any likely fluctuation and whether doing any work – not necessarily their current job – will make their health condition worse. For example:

- stamina e.g., better in the morning or the afternoon
- mobility e.g., walking, bending, stooping.
- agility e.g., dexterity, posture, co-ordination
- insight or stability e.g., mental state, mood
- treatment e.g., side-effects, duration of
- intellectual e.g., cognitive abilities
- sensory e.g., hearing, vision, touch
- the duration of their health condition and any likely fluctuation
- the impact of any ongoing clinical management
- whether doing any work – not necessarily their current job – will make their health condition worse.

The patient may be fit for work, taking account the healthcare Professional's advice about the functional effects of their condition.

The Healthcare Professional should identify if the patient could do some form of work (not specifically their current job). This gives maximum flexibility to the patient and their employer to discuss ways to accommodate the patient's condition, which may include changing their duties for a while or reducing their hours.

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If the patient is not fit for work of any kind. The Healthcare Professional should identify this on the fit note only if the patient cannot do any form of work at all. Always consider if the patient could do work of some kind. Assessing that the patient is not fit for work when there are still things they can do, risks depriving them of the chance to discuss ways they could do some work with their employer; and increases the long-term health risks of worklessness.

As per the legislation, the Healthcare Professional certifying the fit note can do so based on consideration of a written report by another health professional involved with the diagnosis or care planning of the patient. It is not necessary for the written report to be undertaken by a member of one of the five professions currently listed in regulations as having the ability to certify fit notes. To note, the Healthcare Professional who certifies the fit note is accountable, even when based on the written report of another health professional.

It is recognised there may be challenges for healthcare professionals certifying fit notes when there is disagreement about the best course of action and recommendations on the fit note. Advice on communicating with patients and handling difficult conversations is covered in the fit note training. Healthcare Professionals should not feel pressured to sign a fit note. If there is any ambiguity or disagreement from the patient regarding their fitness to work duration, the senior nurse should seek advice from the responsible surgeon or a second opinion from other healthcare professionals qualified to certify fit notes.

Documentation

Any discussions that have been undertaken between the patient and senior registered nurse regarding their work and health, Occupational activities, Leave and Fit note certification should be documented as part of the patient's episode of care.

Incident Reporting

Every member of staff has a responsibility to report adverse incidents or near misses, including verbal abuse, via the trust's incident reporting platform Datix in accordance with the Trust incident reporting policy. It is essential that staff report incidents regardless of severity. By not reporting there is a possibility of missing a potential pattern forming, and therefore not updating the risks accordingly

Monitoring and effectiveness

This policy will be reviewed in 12 months for compliance and effectiveness

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References

Worcestershire Acute NHS Hospital Trust – Patient safety incident reporting policy (WAHT-CG-008)

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP):

- Fit Note: Guidance for Employers and line Managers - Gov.Uk, July 2022.
- Fit Note: Guidance for Healthcare professionals – Gov.Uk, July 2022.
- Who can issue fit notes: guidelines for healthcare professionals and their employers – Gov.Uk, July 2022.

Contribution List

This key document has been circulated to the following individuals for consultation:

Designation
Tammie Mason – Senior Sister
Susanna Hicks - Matron
James Hutchinson – Consultant Anaesthetist
Julie Stotten – Theatre Manager
James Leedham – Consultant Anaesthetist
Linzi Wright – Senior Sister

This key document has been circulated to the chair(s) of the following committee's / groups for comments:

Committee
Theatres, Anaesthetics and Sterile Services Governance Meeting

Supporting Document 1 - Equality Impact Assessment Tool

To be completed by the key document author and included as an appendix to key document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.



Herefordshire & Worcestershire STP - Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Please read EIA guidelines when completing this form

Section 1 - Name of Organisation (please tick)

Herefordshire & Worcestershire STP		Herefordshire Council		Herefordshire CCG	
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	✓	Worcestershire County Council		Worcestershire CCGs	
Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust		Wye Valley NHS Trust		Other (please state)	

Name of Lead for Activity	Tammie Mason
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Details of individuals completing this assessment	Name	Job title	e-mail contact
	Tammie Mason	Ward One and Day Surgery Manager	tammie.dudley@nhs.net
Date assessment completed	23/04/25		

Section 2

Activity being assessed (e.g. policy/procedure, document, service redesign, policy, strategy etc.)	Title: Fit notes: certification by health care professionals			
What is the aim, purpose and/or intended outcomes of this Activity?	To provide a seamless, faster system for patients and improve continuity of care.			
Who will be affected by the development & implementation of this activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Service User <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patient <input type="checkbox"/> Carers <input type="checkbox"/> Visitors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Communities <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
Is this:	<input type="checkbox"/> Review of an existing activity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New activity <input type="checkbox"/> Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?			
What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment?	Gov.UK guidance papers Who can issue fit notes: guidance for healthcare professionals			

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(Please name sources, eg demographic information for patients / services / staff groups affected, complaints etc.	Getting the most out of the fit note: Guidance for healthcare professionals. Change of legislation in 2022 by the department of work and pensions to enable a wider range of healthcare professionals to certify fit notes (DWP).
Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (e.g. who and how have you engaged with, or why do you believe this is not required)	Discussed through the directorate governance route. Update on practice following change in legislation.
Summary of relevant findings	The new process will enable the provision of a seamless, faster process for Day Surgery patients.

Section 3

Please consider the potential impact of this activity (during development & implementation) on each of the equality groups outlined below. **Please tick one or more impact box below for each Equality Group and explain your rationale.** Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group and this should be recorded. Remember to consider the impact on e.g. staff, public, patients, carers etc. in these equality groups.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Please explain your reasons for any potential positive, neutral or negative impact identified
Age		x		
Disability		x		
Gender Reassignment		x		
Marriage & Civil Partnerships		x		
Pregnancy & Maternity		x		
Race including Traveling Communities		x		
Religion & Belief		x		
Sex		x		
Sexual Orientation		x		

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Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Please explain your reasons for any potential positive, neutral or negative impact identified
Other Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups (e.g. carers; care leavers; homeless; Social/Economic deprivation, travelling communities etc.)		x		
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from the unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions within societies)		x		

Section 4

What actions will you take to mitigate any potential negative impacts?	Risk identified	Actions required to reduce / eliminate negative impact	Who will lead on the action?	Timeframe
How will you monitor these actions?				
When will you review this EIA? (e.g in a service redesign, this EIA should be revisited regularly throughout the design & implementation)				

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Section 5 - Please read and agree to the following Equality Statement

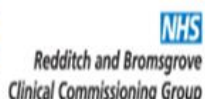
1. Equality Statement

1.1. All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to set out arrangements to assess and consult on how their policies and functions impact on the 9 protected characteristics: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage & Civil Partnership; Pregnancy & Maternity; Race; Religion & Belief; Sex; Sexual Orientation

1.2. Our Organisations will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and aims to design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our service, and population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

1.3. All staff are expected to deliver services and provide services and care in a manner which respects the individuality of service users, patients, carer's etc, and as such treat them and members of the workforce respectfully, paying due regard to the 9 protected characteristics.

Signature of person completing EIA	Tammie Mason
Date signed	23/04/25
Comments:	
Signature of person the Leader Person for this activity	Tammie Mason
Date signed	23/04/25
Comments:	



Supporting Document 2 – Financial Impact Assessment

To be completed by the key document author and attached to key document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

	Title of document:	Yes/No
1.	Does the implementation of this document require any additional Capital resources	No
2.	Does the implementation of this document require additional revenue	No
3.	Does the implementation of this document require additional manpower	No
4.	Does the implementation of this document release any manpower costs through a change in practice	No
5.	Are there additional staff training costs associated with implementing this document which cannot be delivered through current training programmes or allocated training times for staff	No
	Other comments:	

If the response to any of the above is yes, please complete a business case and which is signed by your Finance Manager and Directorate Manager for consideration by the Accountable Director before progressing to the relevant committee for approval.