

Fit for Work Service

In 2015 the Government introduced an occupational health assessment service called “Fit for Work” with the aim of reducing the current levels of long term sickness absence within the UK workforce. It is meant to provide GPs with an alternative to the Fit Note' enabling more support to be provided for the employee to return to work without burdening the GP further, and providing more information to the employer (with employee consent). Both the GP and the employer can refer to the service. The service was designed to supplement the country's existing commercial Occupational Health provision for the many smaller and medium sized businesses who may not access occupational Health due to cost concerns and knowledge of the services available. It is restricted to employees who have been off, or who are expected to be off work, for 4 or more weeks.

Occupational Health Services vs Fit for Work Service

In a small number of cases, the Fit for Work service may be able to assist in getting an employee back to work if they have experienced an extended period of absence due to illness. However it is a fairly basic service and does not offer the range of services available from a commercial Occupational health provider such as Heales Medical. We provide a full-range of flexible OH services supported by a secure online referral and management system with a team of dedicated experienced staff to ensure that cases you refer are proactively managed from referral to conclusion.

Take a look at the table below for a comparison.

Service	Fit for Work Service	Heales Medical
Online pre-employment/commencement clearance	X	√
Pre-employment/commencement health assessments	X	√
Online and face to face Health Surveillance	X	√
Vaccination and Immunisation (including flu)	X	√
Travel advice and immunisation	X	√

In work referrals	X	√
Short term absence referrals	X	√
Long Term Absence referrals	After 4 weeks (Telephone only)	√ (Face to Face or Telephone)
Specialist assessments (e.g. functional capability, psychiatric, psychological etc.)	X	√
Health Promotion & education	X	√
A range of lifestyle assessments and executive medicals	X	√
Ill-Health Retirement	X	√
Capability Assessments	X	√
Work Station Assessments	X	√
Drug & Alcohol testing	X	√
Physiotherapy, Osteopathy and Chiropractic assessment & treatment	X	√
Counselling & Psychotherapy	X	√
Employee Assistance Programmes	X	√
Secure management of you paper and electronic medical records	X	√
Dedicated contract management and OH team for OH services provided to you	X	√

Advantages of using Heales Medical

As a commercial Occupational Health Provider, Heales Medical offers a health service covering the entire employment cycle from engagement through to termination. The services we offer are proactive with the aim of helping you to maintain a healthy workforce. By contrast, the Fit for Work service only offers a reactive service once an employee has already been off sick for an extended period of time.

When a new employee starts with your organisation, Heales Medical will make an assessment of your employee's health to ensure that they are fit to undertake the job you have employed them to do. At this time we can advise you of any adjustments you could make to ensure an employee is able to work with you effectively. We will also recommend and can provide specific assessments for those undertaking jobs with additional risks, such as food handlers, working at heights, driving heavy machinery or passengers, working at night, working with vibration machinery, working with asbestos etc.

Once an employee has settled into their role with you, Heales Medical offers a range of Occupational Health services to ensure that your employees remain fit and healthy and able to work at maximum efficiency. These services can include the provision of Health information, vaccinating against seasonal flu, employee assistance programs or even conducting random tests for drugs and alcohol.

Early intervention is the real key to Occupational Health. Having access to our team of highly qualified and experienced clinicians as soon as an employee starts to experience health issues helps to prevent them turning into bigger and longer term problems. There is no doubt that the cost of long term absence on a business far outweighs the cost of early intervention. There are often tell-tale signs of building issue, such as a number of frequent short term absences. Where the Fit for Work service is not able to see an employee until they have been off work for 4 weeks, Heales Medical can start addressing the problem as soon as you become concerned.

If an employees does become unwell and is off work for an extended period, we believe that there are only a limited number of situations where a telephone assessment is the most appropriate method of assessing the situation. In most cases, we believe that a face to face appointment with one of our qualified clinicians is the best way to ensure that an accurate and comprehensive assessment can be made taking all factors into account. Our clinicians can also arrange for follow-up reviews to make sure that the return to work plan is having the maximum effect.

In cases where a return to work is unlikely to be possible, Heales Medical can help ensure that you have a clear and comprehensive assessment of the employees capability on which you can make the most appropriate decisions for both your organisation and the employee. This includes ill-health retirement assessments.

Summary.

When the Government introduced the “fit-note” system, it was a step in the right direction to help employers to reduce sickness absence in some cases. Although there has been very mixed reviews as to the effectiveness of the system, it has certainly been a help in some cases. Heales Medical sees the Fit for Work service in a similar way. The service will be able to offer basic reactive assistance in a small number of cases. We believe that working with a comprehensive Occupational Health Service is by far the best method of ensuring that your staff are fit to do the job you have employed them to do and remain that way throughout their employment. We also help you remain compliant with current and future regulations where the health of an employee is concerned.

More information.

If you would like more information about the Occupational Health Services provided by Heales Medical, please call our sales team on 08448421755 or email sales@heales.com