



# eMed 3 Fit Notes in Secondary Care

## Implementation Guidance

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# Data Alliance Partnership Board

The Data Alliance Partnership Board (DAPB), which holds delegated authority from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has approved a new information standard for publication under [section 250 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012](#).

Assurance that this information standard meets the requirements of the Act and is appropriate for the use specified in the specification document has been provided by the Data Standards Assurance Service (DSAS) and endorsed by the Data Alliance Partnership Sub Board (DAPSB).

This information standard comprises the following documents:

- Implementation Guidance
- Requirements Specification
- Technical Specification

An Information Standards Notice (DAPB4011 Amd 34/2021) has been issued as a notification of use and implementation timescales. Please read this alongside the documents for the standard.

The controlled copies of these documents can be found on the [NHS Digital website](#). Any copies held outside of that area, in whatever format (e.g. paper, email attachment), are considered to have passed out of control and should be checked for currency and validity.

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## Glossary of Terms

See Requirements Specification.

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# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to describe the high-level implementation guide which supports Statement of Fitness for Work (the MED 3 form, also referred to as 'fit note') to be completed and issued digitally (eMED3) in secondary care.

## 1.2 Background and context

The [Statement of Fitness for Work](#) was introduced in April 2010 across England, Wales and Scotland. In 2012 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) enabled GPs to produce computer-generated fit notes. Healthcare professionals issue fit notes to people to provide evidence of the advice they have given about their fitness for work. They record details of the effects of their patient's condition so the patient and their employer can consider ways to help them return to work where relevant.

The standard seeks to remove the current inefficient, manually signed paper pad-dependent process, saving clinical time, and leading to an improved patient experience. Replacing the clerical process will result in electronic fit notes that can, by default, be sent digitally to patients, or if required printed and handed to the patient. All associated data is recorded on the patient record allowing the fit note to be easily duplicated if necessary.

From April 2022, DWP amended regulations to improve the process for completing and receiving a fit note by removing the obstacles to digital completion and issuing of fit notes by removing the requirement for fit notes to be completed and signed in ink. A further change in legislation from July 2022 means that fit notes can be certified and issued by nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists in addition to doctors. While the legislation enables all those registered as one of these professions to technically certify and issue a fit note, additional [guidance](#) and [training](#) was issued alongside the legislation to clarify that healthcare professionals must be operating within their scope of practice and in relevant settings in order to issue fit notes.

This will also provide the ability to analyse and publish data derived from the issuing of fit notes in hospitals, adding to the existing data analysis undertaken on those issued in primary care. Data flow will be facilitated from version 6.3 of the Commissioning Data Sets (CDS), due to commence submission from April 2022. In line with [national strategy](#) this proposal utilises [SNOMED CT](#) for recording various data elements relating to return to work advice and the reason for issuing the fit note. If this is not available, ICD-10 may be submitted to represent the diagnosis prior to the transition to local utilisation of SNOMED CT.

Development and implementation of this standard should start in November 2022.

## 1.3 Supporting documents

See Requirements, and Technical Specification

## 2. Summary

Standard	
Standard Number	DAPB4011
Standard Title	eMED3 Fit Notes in Secondary Care
Description	<p>The Statement of Fitness for Work (fit note) was introduced in April 2010 across England, Wales and Scotland<sup>1</sup>. In 2012 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) enabled GPs to produce computer-generated fit notes (eMED3). Healthcare professionals issue fit notes to people to provide evidence of the advice they have given about their fitness for work. They record details of the effects of their patient's condition so the patient and their employer can consider ways to help them return to work where relevant.</p> <p>The duty to provide a fit note rests with the Healthcare Professional who at the time has clinical responsibility. The need for a fit note following delivery of a secondary care service should be issued by the secondary care provider (<a href="#">NHS Standard Contract 22/23</a>, section 11.12) not by referring the patient back to primary care. Currently this is done via paper pads of fit notes ordered directly from <a href="#">DWP</a>.</p> <p>From April 2022, DWP amended regulations to improve the process for completing and receiving a fit note by removing the obstacles to digital issuing of fit notes by removing the requirement for fit notes to be completed and signed in ink. A further change in legislation from July 2022 means that fit notes can be certified and issued by nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists in addition to doctors. While the legislation enables all those registered as one of these professions to technically certify and issue a fit note, additional <a href="#">guidance</a> and <a href="#">training</a> was issued alongside the legislation to clarify that healthcare professionals must be operating within their scope of practice and in relevant settings in order to issue fit notes.</p> <p>Fit notes are only required if a period of sickness absence lasts longer than 7 days. The first 7 days is known as the self-certification period. If the period of sickness absence is expected to last 8 days or more a fit note may be issued if the patient's condition impacts on their ability to work. During the first six months (26 weeks) of a condition a fit note may only be issued for a maximum of 13 weeks with a very small number of exceptions.</p> <p>After six months it can be issued for any clinically appropriate period, up to, and including indefinite.</p> <p>This Information Standard requires in scope NHS funded secondary healthcare providers to enable functionality within IT systems allowing the completion and issue of eMED3 fit notes. This requires auto population of a defined digital template, supplemented by clinical input to ensure correct content. The fit note must then be issued, by default, digitally to the patient, or if requested printed and issued to the patient. Access to the functionality to complete a fit</p>

	<p>note must be limited to the professions in <a href="#">scope</a>, as set out in the legislation. Other users, such as other professions and administrative staff, must be able to view and issue duplicates of completed fit notes without having the ability to amend or complete the template. All associated data must be stored electronically.</p> <p>eMED3 fit notes can be issued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>immediately following completion</li> <li>as a duplicate of a fit note already issued, utilising data already recorded and stored electronically clearly marked DUPLICATE.</li> </ul> <p>A requirement also exists for in scope providers to submit data for central analysis utilising the Commissioning Data Sets (CDS) version 6.3 submissions (<a href="#">DAPB0092</a>)</p>
Scope	<p>This Information Standard is <b>mandatory</b> (MUST implement the requirements described in this document) for secondary care NHS funded healthcare providers in England.</p> <p>Issuing of a fit note is required in situations as described by Department for Work and Pension (DWP) guidance <a href="#">Fit note - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>.</p> <p>Data extraction to support national analysis of secondary care provider use of fit notes will be facilitated by the Commissioning Data Sets (CDS), from version 6.3. This will be merged for publication with the existing extraction of fit note data from GP practices in England <a href="#">Fit Notes Issued by GP Practices - NHS Digital</a>.</p> <p>DWP will work with NHS Digital on the next version of the Mental Health Services, and Maternity Services datasets standard to include the appropriate fit note data collection.</p> <p>The transfer of information relating to the issuing of a fit note between secondary care and primary care using the Transfer of Care standard is not in scope at present. However if local solutions exist that facilitate this exchange then they can be used.</p>
<b>Release</b>	
Release Number	Amd 34/2021
Release Title	Initial release
Description	<p>This initial release establishes the eMED3 template electronically to allow its completion and issuing to the patient in secondary care. Fit notes are completed by the issuing Registered Medical Practitioner, Nurse, Pharmacist, Physiotherapist, or Occupational therapists. Data submission for central analysis is facilitated by the CDS, from version 6.3.</p>
Implementation Date	<p><b><u>System Conformance</u></b></p> <p>Development and implementation of this standard should start in November 2022.</p>

	<p><b><u>Health and Care Organisations</u></b></p> <p>From November 2023, providers of NHS-funded secondary care activity, as defined in this Information Standard, <b>MUST</b> be fully conformant.</p>
Full Conformance Date	30 November 2023, which caters for establishing processes to issue eMED3, SNOMED CT conformance and alignment with CDS version 6.3 submission timetable.

### 3. Implementation plan and timetable

The following is a sequence of steps to help understand the implementation process, including suggested engagement activities within your organisation.

It is important to read all the steps first to understand required actions. Each organisation may require a different implementation approach to the order of steps below.

#### Step 1: Read the information standards notice (ISN)

This is the official DAPB notification of the Information Standard. It provides an outline of the approved standard and timeframe for compliance. Compliance with ISNs will normally be included in contracts between NHS Providers and their system suppliers.

#### Step 2: Read DWP guidance regarding the use of fit notes

Ensure a clear understanding exists regarding the use and issuing of fit notes. Detailed guidance is available at [Fit note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

#### Step 3: Read the Requirements and Technical specification

This provides an overview of the standard, its requirements and measures for assessing conformance. This document is published by DAPB.

#### Step 4: Read the supporting technical specification

This provides a detailed description of the technical implementation requirements needed to allow eMED3 to be used as intended. This document is published by DAPB.

#### Step 5: Identify and discuss with stakeholders

It is essential to engage with those who are involved in issuing and management of fit notes within your organisation. This will probably include, but is not restricted to (local descriptions of roles may vary):

- doctors
- nurses
- occupational therapists
- pharmacists
- physiotherapists
- clinical teams (multi-disciplinary teams)
- multi-disciplinary team (MDT) coordinators
- service managers
- informatics/IT departments
- software suppliers

- human resources

DWP are expected to commission NHS Digital to provide communication and change management materials alongside baseline benefits to assist organisations with local adoption of this ISN. Supporting material can be found on the [Future-NHS](#) site.

## **Step 6: Talk to your software supplier**

If you have a commercial system, you will need to speak with your supplier to confirm the timescale for any necessary changes to the patient management system you use. These changes may be part of your maintenance Service Level Agreement.

If an in-house system is used, start discussions early to ensure all changes can be incorporated within the required timetable.

DWP will commission NHS Digital to provide:

- a. A number of supplier awareness sessions to brief your suppliers
- b. Centralised coordination of Trust requirements by supplier where requested.

Further details can be found on the [FutureNHS](#) site.

## **Step 7: Plan how you will implement within required timescale**

Implementation of the standard is required to meet the contractual requirement of November 2023. Undertake planning needed to achieve conformance from 30 November 2023, including for example establishing a project team(s).

## **Step 8: Check your current state of readiness**

Review your systems (software) to ensure alignment with requirements and conformance criteria. Ensure understanding exists of any work needed to allow the full end to end process to be available by 30 November 2023 checking:

- if there are any changes to process required?
- If there are additional training needs?
- If there is additional clinical system access required for health care professionals?

Guidance on identifying that issuing fit notes is within a healthcare professional's cope of practice and guidance for professionals is available at [Fit note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). A specific fit note training module for issuers is available through [The Fit Note - elearning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](#).

DWP will commission NHS Digital to perform First of Type assurance with each supplier before full rollout. Supplier status will be available on the [FutureNHS](#) site.

DWP will commission NHS Digital to provide communication and change management which will include contacting trusts and suppliers to discuss plans for implementation including any issues with meeting the full conformance date.

## **Step 9: Put use of digital fit notes, eMED3, on the agenda**

Make sure that clinical colleagues are aware of eMED3 by raising it at any local or network meetings. This could include meetings, or any other relevant clinical or Trust event.

DWP have commissioned NHS Digital to ensure that Integrated Care Board senior stakeholders are aware of the publication of this ISN and the anticipated benefits.

## Step 10: Attend engagement events

Events are organised by DWP and NHS Digital to explain the use of eMED3 dates for these events and recordings can be found on the [FutureNHS](#) site.

## Step 11: Check for updates

DWP website ([Fit note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) will also publish information and updates on the use of eMED3. We will communicate any changes to the location of these documents.

You can sign up to NHS Digital's Data Standards Assurance Service distribution list to maintain ongoing awareness of developments by emailing: [standards.assurance@nhs.net](mailto:standards.assurance@nhs.net).

## 4. Supporting Implementation Documentation

Further guidance and implementation materials can be found on the [FutureNHS](#) site.

## 5. Issues and Maintenance

To support the implementation of this information standard supporting documentation, including the requirements specification and technical specification are available. Any persistent issues should be fed back to the standard's developers. Feedback will be used by the developers for future development and to improve implementation of the standard. Send feedback to [fitnote.team@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:fitnote.team@dwp.gov.uk) (please include 'eMED3' in subject line).