



DAPB4011 eMED3 Fit Notes in Secondary Care Implementation Guidance

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Glossary of Terms

See Requirements Specification.

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1 Overview

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the high level implementation guide which supports Statement of Fitness for Work (the MED3 form, also referred to as 'fit note') to be issued electronically (eMED3) in secondary care.

1.2 Background and Context

- 1 The Statement of Fitness for Work was introduced in April 2010 across England, Wales and Scotland¹. In 2012 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) enabled GPs to produce computer-generated fit notes (eMED3). This standard builds on this work and planned legislation changes in 2022 in allowing fit notes to be issued electronically in secondary care.
- 2 A further planned change in legislation means that in addition to registered medical practitioners, other eligible Health or Care Professionals may also be able to issue a fit note in the future. Solutions will therefore need to build in the potential to widen access to the eMED3 fit note to allow these Health or Care Professionals to issue fit notes whilst continuing to restrict access to all other professions.
- 3 This removes the current inefficient, manually signed paper pad-dependent process, saving clinical time and leading to an improved patient experience. Patients requiring a fit note in response to a secondary care episode should not normally (in the first instance) be referred back to primary care.
- 4 Replacing the clerical process will result in electronic fit notes that can, by default, be sent electronically 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.
- 5 In addition, there will be the ability to analyse and publish data derived from the issuing of fit notes in hospitals, adding to the existing data analysis undertaken on issued primary care fit notes. 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 strategy² this proposal utilises SNOMED CT³ 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.
- 6 We are expecting the development and implementation of this standard to start in April 2022 with full conformance to the standard in April 2023.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-note>

² <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-standards/information-standards-and-data-collections-including-extractions/publications-and-notifications/standards-and-collections/scci0034-snomed-ct>

³ <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/terminology-and-classifications/snomed-ct>

1.3 Supporting documents

See Requirements Specification.

2 Summary

Standard	
Standard Number	DAPB4011
Standard Title	eMED3 Fit Notes in Secondary Care
Description	<p>Statements of fitness for work (fit notes) are issued to employers to support their decisions around payment of statutory sick pay or for social security purposes. During the medical consultation, the secondary care doctor will consider the impact of the patient's health condition on their fitness for work. The fit note provides return to work advice for the patient and their employer. The duty to provide a fit note rests with the secondary care registered medical practitioner 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, not by referring the patient back to primary care.</p> <p>Amended regulations will be in force to allow digital certification of fit notes from April 2022.</p> <p>Fit notes are not required if a period of sickness absence is not expected to exceed 7 days. This 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 except in 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>Replacing the existing manual system with electronic fit notes allows for efficient completion and issuing of a clear document which is readily accessible, part prepopulated using the existing patient record, stored electronically and available for future reference and reissue, if needed. The use of a fit note using a paper pad is still possible, such as if the electronic system was not available.</p> <p>This Information Standard requires in scope NHS funded secondary healthcare providers to issue eMED3 fit notes. This requires auto population of a defined digital template, supplemented by clinical input to ensure correct content and robust audit to establish and record the identity of the issuer. The fit note must then be issued, by default, electronically to the patient, or if requested printed on plain white paper and issued to the patient. All associated data is stored electronically. eMED3 fit notes can be issued:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. immediately following completion

	<p>2. as a duplicate of a fit note already issued, utilising data already recorded and stored electronically.</p> <p>A flow chart describing the issuing of eMED3 is shown in Section 7 of the Requirement Specification.</p> <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 (DAPB0092).</p>
Scope	<p>This Information Standard is mandatory (MUST implement the requirements described in Requirements Specification) for secondary care NHS funded healthcare providers in England.</p> <p>Issuing of a fit note will be required in situations as described by Department of Work and Pension (DWP) guidance Fit note - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p> <p>Primary care NHS funded health care providers are not in scope of this standard. Electronically generated fit notes are already in use in this setting, with an update planned to align with this standard in allowing use of digital certification.</p> <p>Informing primary care that a fit note has been issued in secondary care is not in scope of this standard but may be introduced in a future release.</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.</p>
Release	
Release Number	Amd 34/2021
Release Title	Initial release
Description	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. Data submission for central analysis is facilitated by the CDS, from version 6.3.
Implementation Date	<p><u>System Conformance</u></p> <p>We are expecting the development and implementation of this standard to start in April 2022 with full conformance to the standard by 1 April 2023.</p> <p><u>Health and Care Organisations</u></p> <p>From April 2023, providers of NHS-funded secondary care activity, as defined in this Information Standard, MUST be fully conformant.</p>
Full Conformance Date	1 April 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.

Documents published by DAPB are available here [this will be updated post DAPB approval]. The Requirements Specification describes the high-level requirements to be implemented, supported by the Technical Specification which gives additional detail.

Guidance from DWP is available¹.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/fit-note).

Step 3: Read the requirements 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
- Health Care Professionals
- clinical teams (multi-disciplinary teams)
- multi-disciplinary team (MDT) coordinators
- service managers
- informatics/IT departments
- software suppliers
- human resources

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-note>

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 SLA.

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

Step 7: Plan how you will implement within required timescale

Implementation of the standard is required between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, a period of 12 months. Undertake planning needed to achieve conformance from 1 April 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 full end-to-end process to be available before 31 March 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?

A specific fit note training module for issuers will be available through e-learning for health in the spring 2022.

Step 9: Put use of electronic 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.

Step 10: Attend engagement events

Events are organised by [TO BE CONFIRMED] to explain the use of eMED3.

Step 11: Check for updates

NHS Digital and DWP websites will publish additional information and updates on the use of eMED3.

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.

4 Possible implementation challenges

[TO BE ADDED – ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM CONSULTATION]

5 Supporting Documentation

A specific fit note training module for issuers will be available through e-learning for health in the spring of 2022.

6 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 (please include 'eMED3' in subject line).

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