

**Update for West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel:
Fit for Work Service**

1. Fit for Work is a Government-funded service providing occupational health assessments on referral from the employee's GP or employer, where an employee is absent from work for at least four weeks. It, also, provides advice for employers, employees and GPs on matters relating to health and work. The assessment referral service came into effect on 8th September 2015. The advice service is delivered through a website and telephone helpline.
2. Where an employee is referred to the service, an adviser from the Fit for Work service will carry out an occupational health assessment, usually over the phone. The employee will be provided with a return-to-work plan, with recommendations for steps that could help him or her to return to work. The return-to-work plan will be shared with the employer, unless the employee does not consent to this.
3. The employee will have a case manager at the Fit for Work service, who can arrange a further assessment, if necessary. The employee will be discharged from the service:
 - on returning to work;
 - at the point when the service can no longer provide assistance (if this occurs within the first three months of absence); or
 - if he or she has not returned to work after three months.
4. Essentially, this service is for employers who have a limited occupational health service or no occupational health service at all.
5. The key thing to be aware of as an employer, is that GPs can refer people to the service, and we might not be aware this has happened if the employee is on long term sick leave. We need to make sure that at home visits, when managers are keeping in touch and at return to work interviews, we find out if they have been referred to the service.
6. The guidance states that this service will complement and not replace any existing occupational health services provided by employers. We, therefore, continue in the same way. Any advice from Fit for Work should be taken into account as part of the process, along with the advice we would obtain from WorkFit.