

# Patient information on plans for collecting anonymous fit note data

## Glossary

**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions

**HSCIC** Health and Social Care Information Centre. The national provider of information, data and IT systems for health and social care. Also referred to as 'the NHS data centre'.

**CCG** Clinical Commissioning Groups. NHS organisations set up by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to organise the delivery of NHS services in England. They are led by GPs and represent local geographical areas.

## DWP's proposals for the extraction of anonymous Statement of Fitness for Work (fit note) data in England

You may want to know more about the collection of fit note data.

### What are fit notes?

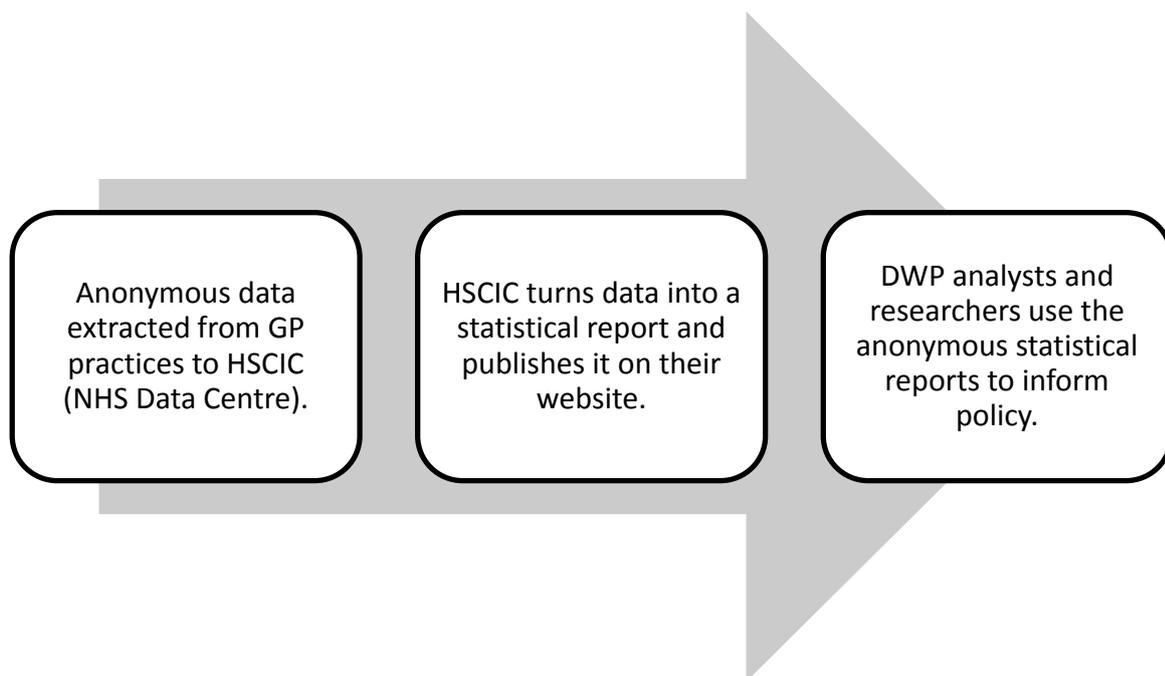
Fit notes are issued to patients by doctors following an assessment of their fitness for work. They may be shown to an employer for sick pay purposes or to claim sickness related benefits from DWP. They can be written by hand or produced by computer.

### Why we are collecting the data

DWP will use the data to inform policy development. We know that work is good for health and want to ensure the government can provide the right level of support when someone is unable to work because of sickness. We will also use the anonymised statistics to evaluate the new service, [Fit for Work](#) for employed people who develop health conditions.

### How the anonymous statistics are produced

The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC), the NHS's data centre, will receive anonymous data using software already within GPs computers. The software uses the information that GPs themselves have input when issuing fit notes to patients.



## **How the anonymous statistics will be used**

Statistics derived from fit notes will be used to gain a better understanding of sickness absence across England in order that policy can be developed to provide support where it is needed most, helping people with health conditions to return to work earlier.

## **What data we will collect and publish**

Data shared with DWP and all published data will be completely anonymous to protect patient privacy. The information will include:

- how many computer-generated fit notes are issued
- how many patients are recorded as 'unfit' or 'maybe fit' for work
- fit note duration
- gender
- health condition (less common health conditions will not be published to ensure patients cannot be identified)
- location, including Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) areas
- whether workplace adaptations are recommended

We will not be able to identify individual patients at any stage.

## **Additional safeguards to protect patient confidentiality**

DWP analysts will only have access to anonymous statistics - not to any information that could identify a patient. As an additional security measure, we will group

diagnosed conditions recorded in the fit note into more general condition descriptions. Less common conditions will not be published to ensure that patients cannot be identified (for example less common eye diseases such as chronic conjunctivitis could be recorded under the more generic term 'diseases of the eye').

## **Who will collect the data?**

HSCIC will collect the data from GP practices in England on behalf of DWP.

## **Where we will publish the data**

We will publish the anonymous statistics on HSCIC's website from spring 2016.

## **Who will be able to look at the data?**

The anonymous statistics will be available publically on the HSCIC website. No individual patients will be identifiable.

## **When this will start**

We will start to collect fit note data from GP systems across England in January 2016 and will start to publish the data from spring 2016.

## **What data will be included?**

The first data collection will include fit notes issued from December 2014 but this will exclude data about patients who have objected to identifiable data about them leaving the GP practice for purposes beyond their direct care prior to the time this first collection is made. Data collection for any patient who registers an objection subsequently will be excluded from the point this is registered.

## **Where to get more information about the use of my personal information**

Get information on use of personal data and the options available to patients on the [HSCIC website](#)

## **Additional general information**

[Information Commissioners Office](#) – UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.

**HSCIC**, the NHS's data centre's pages about:

- the types of data they collect: [www.hscic.gov.uk/article/4963/What-we-collect](http://www.hscic.gov.uk/article/4963/What-we-collect)
- how they look after information: [www.hscic.gov.uk/article/3388/How-we-look-after-information](http://www.hscic.gov.uk/article/3388/How-we-look-after-information)