

Supplementary file 1:

PICO table

Population	Adults of working age in the UK
Intervention	Fit note
Comparison	Sick note
Outcomes	1) may be fit for work option selected 2) work solutions advised 3) long term sickness absence 4) return to work
Study design	Quantitative or mixed methods with quantitative output
Year	After 2010
Language	English
Exclusion criteria	Guidance, non-quantitative studies

Supplementary file 2:

Study search terms

OID Search history	
1	"fit note" .mp. [mp=ti, ab,hw,tn, ot, dm,mf, dv,kw,fx,nm,kf, px, rx, an, ui, sy, tc, id, tm, pt]
2	Limit 1 to yr="2010-current"
3	"fitnote" .mp. [mp=ti, ab,hw,tn, ot, dm,mf, dv,kw,fx,nm,kf, px, rx, an, ui, sy, tc, id, tm, pt]
4	Limit 2 to yr="2010-current"
5	"fit-note" .mp. [mp=ti, ab,hw,tn, ot, dm,mf, dv,kw,fx,nm,kf, px, rx, an, ui, sy, tc, id, tm, pt]
6	Limit 3 to yr="2010-current"
7	2 or 4 or 6

Supplementary file 3:

Data extraction form

**UK studies of fit note use:
a systematic review of quantitative research 2010-2017**

Title of paper:

Authors:

Name of reviewer:

Date of data extraction:

Number of FNs	
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Study details

Publication: Full report Short report Abstract Thesis
Funding: Non-commercial Commercial Not stated

Do any authors have industrial affiliation? Yes No Unclear

Country of origin:

Statement of ethical approval from appropriate authority: Yes No Unclear

Cross sectional Yes No Unclear

Longitudinal Yes No Unclear

Aim(s) of the study:

Participants

Population studied:	Number
GPs	
GP practices	
Occ health professionals	
HR professionals	
Employers	

FFW schemes	
Patients	
Patient episodes	
Other:	

Start date of recruitment period (MM/YY):

End date (MM/YY):

Were the eligibility criteria specified? Yes No

What are the eligibility criteria?

Study setting

Centres: Single-centre Multi-centre Not stated

Type(s) of centre: Primary care Occupational health Employer
 Inpatient Outpatient / clinic
 Community Other

Results

Outcomes :

Fit note use 1) Maybe fit for work selected 2) Adjustments suggested based on MFW	y/n y/n
Patient occupational outcomes 1) Return to work 2) Long term sickness absence	y/n y/n

Supplementary file 4:

Newcastle Ottawa Scale

Newcastle-Ottawa Scale adapted for cross-sectional studies and cohort studies.

Modified for Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Fit Note use 2010-2017

Selection (max 5 points):

- 1) Representativeness of the sample:
 - a) Truly representative of the average of GPs/ employers / working age adults using the FN, in population. (2)
 - b) Somewhat representative of the average GPs / employers / working age adults using the FN, in the target population. (1)
 - c) Selected group, non representative eg GPs trained in occupational health
 - d) No description of the sampling strategy.

- 2) Sample size:
 - a) Justified and satisfactory. (1)
 - b) Not justified.

- 3) Non-respondents:
 - a) Comparability between respondents and non-respondents characteristics is established or the response rate is satisfactory. (1)
 - b) The response rate is unsatisfactory, or the comparability between respondents and non-respondents is unsatisfactory.
 - c) No description of the response rate or the characteristics of the responders and the non-responders.

- 4) Ascertainment of the exposure (fit note provision/requiring a fit note):
 - a) The tool is available or described. (1)
 - b) No description of the measurement tool.

Comparability: (Maximum 2 points)

- 1) The subjects in different outcome groups are comparable, based on the study design or analysis. Confounding factors are controlled.
 - a) The study controls for the most important factors (mental health, SES, gender). (2)
 - b) The study control for any additional factor. (1)
 - c) The subjects in outcome groups aren't comparable and the study doesn't control for confounding factors

Outcome: (Maximum 3 points)

1) Assessment of the outcome:

- a) Fit notes or patient data made available (2)
- b) Structured interviews (1)
- c) Self report questionnaires / other
- d) No description.

2) Statistical test:

- a) The statistical test used to analyze the data is clearly described and appropriate, and the measurement of the association is presented, including confidence intervals and the probability level (p value). (1)
- b) The statistical test is not appropriate, not described or incomplete.
- c) There is no statistical test used

Overall score out of 10

Additional questions for Cohort studies (max 2 points):

1) Length of follow-up:

- a) Follow up long enough (1)
- b) Follow up not long enough

2) Adequacy of follow up population, percentage retained

- a) Adequate follow up (1)
- b) Inadequate follow up
