Dear Professor Stokes Lampard,

Thank you for your letter of 23rd April conveying the RCGP’s concerns about the current wording of the ESA65B letter.

I can reassure you that we are alive to the concerns you have raised and can advise that we are updating the ESA65B letter to make it clear that, subject to a doctor’s clinical discretion, they may continue to issue fit notes if:

- their patient appeals against their Employment and Support Allowance decision;
- their patient’s condition worsens significantly; or
- they develop a new condition or disability.

We plan to introduce the new ESA65B in the summer.

We shared the draft revised ESA65B with representatives from the BMA and RCGP at the DWP GP Forum on 27th March and following the meeting have written to both organisations on 9th April requesting formal comments on the draft.

We would appreciate a prompt response from your organisation to help us make the required system changes. In the interim, the BMA have helpfully issued a reminder to GPs on 25th April regarding the circumstances in which it is appropriate to issue fit notes.

We have good engagement from your colleague who acts as the RCGP appointed representative to the GP Forum, but if you would like to discuss this issue in more detail, senior officials would, of course, be happy to meet with you.

I hope this is helpful and please do not hesitate to make contact if you would like further information. I am copying this response to Frank Field MP.

Best wishes,

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS