



Royal College of
General Practitioners

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard MBBS, PhD FRCGP
Chair of Council

Rt. Hon. Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Tuesday 23 April 2019

Dear Secretary of State,

RE: Concerns regarding the wording of the DWP Letter ESA65B

I am writing to you regarding the RCGP's concerns about the Department for Work and Pensions communications with General Practitioners (GPs).

Our concerns relate to letter ESA65B, which is sent to a claimant's GP to notify them of the outcome of the claimant's medical assessment. Letter ESA65B instructs the claimant's doctor that *'you do not need to provide any more fit notes to [select] relating to [select] disability/health condition for ESA purposes.'* However, this wording does not clearly indicate that there are exceptions to this wording, including if a claimant is appealing against the decision.

Without a fit note from their GP, claimants who are awaiting the outcome of their appeal will not be able to receive ESA. They would therefore have to seek Universal Credit or Jobseekers Allowance, and subsequently try and meet the work-seeking requirements of those benefits, potentially endangering their health in the process. As such the College is deeply concerned about the potential impact of this on doctors and their relationships with potentially vulnerable patients.

The RCGP is therefore calling for the wording of letter ESA65B to be updated to clearly reflect that there are circumstances in which GPs can continue to issue fit notes, including when a claimant has decided to appeal against the Department for Work and Pensions' decision.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard
Chair of Council

CC: Frank Field, Chair of Work and Pensions Select Committee.