



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

**Rt Hon Frank Field MP**  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Sent Via email [REDACTED]

Tuesday 23 April 2019

Dear Mr Field,

RE: Concerns regarding the wording of the DWP Letter ESA65B

Thank you for your letter of March 26th.

The College has sent representatives to stakeholder meetings with the DWP on a variety of topics, and we are aware that the Department claims that 'The British Medical Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners agreed to the revised wording of the ESA65B on 4 August 2016'. However, there is some ambiguity about what was said in the referenced meeting with the DWP. Since the DWP did not keep any written records of what was said at this meeting, we are unable to provide further clarity.

Since these changes were made, significant evidence has come to light about the negative impact that these changes have had in relation to patient care, leading to some patients being denied fit notes by their doctors. We are concerned that the current wording of ESA65B does not sufficiently clearly indicate that there are circumstances in which GPs may need to continue to issue fit notes for their patients. It is essential that communication with GPs is as clear as possible, to uphold the high levels of trust that exist between GPs and their patients.

As a minimum we would want to see the wording of the ESA65B letter urgently changed to its previous wording which stated:

*This means you do not have to give your patient any more medical statements for benefit purposes.*

*But you may have to give your patient new medical statements if*

- they decide to appeal against our decision*
- their condition gets significantly worse*
- they have a new medical condition*

In the light of this, we have written to Amber Rudd to outline our concerns around the ESA65B letter. Please see the letter attached.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard**  
**Chair of Council**