



# BFM Update



The Association for British Furniture Manufacturers

[www.bfm.org.uk/](http://www.bfm.org.uk/)

[www.greatbritishfurniture.co.uk/](http://www.greatbritishfurniture.co.uk/)

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## BFM Links

### Press links for

- Suppliers to furniture trade
- Discounts on testing furniture
- Trade credit insurance
- Business insurance
- BFM logo

## Business Links

### Press links for

- Procurement - Supply2.gov
- Changes to the law affecting

## New Member

We would like to welcome into BFM membership:

**Feather and Black Ltd**

## New on-line procurement course

A free online public procurement course designed to help smaller firms bid for the £220 billion of public sector contracts awarded each year was recently launched by government. The course, 'Winning the Contract', shows participants how to identify business opportunities to supply goods and services to the public sector, explains the public procurement process, and demonstrates how to submit tenders. It has hints and tips to guide and inform businesses on the bidding process, and where to find public sector contract opportunities. To access the course go to [Winning the Contract](#)



the Belgian Fabric Collection

8 & 9  
March  
2010

business

- Financial support for business



The new BFM commodity spot pricing service is to be launched very soon – this will allow you to regularly access price data on over 60 items – so watch this space

The Naval and Military Club in London will be the venue for an exclusive showcase of upholstery and drapery fabric from the leading mills in Belgium, including:

Acotex  
Annabel  
Beaulieu Fabrics  
Escolys textiles  
Microfibres  
Movelta  
Muvantex-Bekaert-Depla  
Ravel Textiles  
Ter Molst International  
Van Neder  
Tissat  
Verstraete-Verbauwede

[To Register](#)

## The 'Fit Note' Scheme reduced to the 'May' be Fit

The much heralded fit note in its proposed form specifically provided an option for doctor's to declare their patients 'fit for work'. However, with just 2 months to go before the new scheme replaces the sick note, the Government has succumbed to lobbying by the medical profession and removed this option. In its recently published final response to the consultation on the 'fit notes scheme' we are advised that the fit to work option has been removed because doctors felt that they did not have the appropriate knowledge about individuals' work roles and the risks involved to be able to assess this.

Also, the 'may be fit for some work now' option will be replaced with 'you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice'. This we are told acknowledges that it is not the doctor, but the employer, in consultation with their employee, who is best placed to make the decision as to whether they can accommodate any changes to facilitate a return to work. The advice section presents doctors' with a list of changes (e.g. altered hours of work) which could be made to an employee's work environment or job role to help facilitate a return to work. Where a doctor considers that another option other than those listed would be more appropriate, he/she may enter this in a comments box (see below for changes to the originally proposed scheme).

The maximum duration a medical statement can be issued for will be reduced from six to three months during the first six months of a health condition.

If an employer is not able to facilitate a change or an adjustment, a revised statement is not necessary; the existing medical statement is evidence that an individual has a health condition preventing him or her carrying out the current role.

The Government intends that specific guidance for individuals,

## Web Links

Health, Work and Well-being Directorate

[Sample fit note](#)

[Consultation document](#)

employers and healthcare professionals will be available shortly.

The changes are under the auspices of the Social Security (Medical Evidence) and the Statutory Sick Pay (Medical Evidence) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 are intended to come into force on 6 April 2010 despite concerns that this will not allow time for all those involved to familiarise themselves with the system.

Original proposal	Final proposal
you are fit for work	<i>No longer an option</i>
you are not fit for work	you are not fit for work
you may be fit for some work now	you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice:
If available, and with your employer's agreement, you may benefit from:	
A phased return to work	
Altered hours	
Amended duties	
Workplace adaptations	
<i>Space is then given for</i> comments, including functional effects of your condition(s)	
This will be the case for <i>(period of time)</i>	

## ....rules also change on medical reports

Towards the end of last year, the General Medical Council issued new guidance on doctors' patient confidentiality making them subject to enhanced duties when acting as independent medical advisers for employment medical report purposes.

Under the new guidance, doctor's must now:

- be satisfied that the employee is fully informed of the purposes and likely results of disclosing a report to the employer
- point out that relevant information cannot be concealed or withheld
- disclose only facts that are relevant to the employer's request
- offer to show the employee any report on their condition before it is sent (although an employee does not have the

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- right to amend a report)
- obtain the employee's written consent before passing on the report

The rules apply to all doctors and for those responsible for the clinical care/treatment of an employee (such as the GP), will be additional to the requirements laid down by the Access to Medical Reports Act (AMR) – where the employer obtains the written consent from the employee.

The new guidance means that:

- Independent or occupational health doctors who are not responsible for the clinical care/treatment of the employee (and therefore the AMR Act) can no longer supply medical reports to employers without following the above steps - under the previous rules, they could give the employer a report without running it past the individual first
- The report cannot be disclosed if consent is withheld
- The introduction of a sign-off procedure means that employers could face delays in receiving reports, which could in turn prolong the absence management process
- It is now even more important for an employer to set out clearly the issues that medical opinion is being sought upon



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