Primary Care Directorate

General Practice Division

**Addresses**

**Policy Enquiries to:**

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**For Action**

GP practices

**For Information**

Scottish General Practitioners Committee

Primary Care Leads NHS Boards

17 December 2021

Dear Colleagues

**Introduction**

1. The rapid expansion of the vaccine programme and the role general practice will play in this has been recognised by departments across government and a number of changes are being made to help free up general practice teams. These changes are unprecedented, time limited, and are being taken in recognition of the extraordinary challenge general practice is facing to deliver the accelerated Covid-19 booster campaign.

**Fit Notes**

1. The Department of Work and Pensions are making legislative changes meaning that from Friday 17th December 2021 self-certification for sickness will be extended from 7 to 28 days for people accessing Statutory Sick Pay, and there will be no requirement for a fit note to access other benefits. This time limited change will end on 26th January 2022. Further guidance on this will be available shortly.
2. Whilst we expect this to cover the vast majority of fit note requests, GPs may continue to receive some for access to occupational sick pay depending on individual contractual arrangements. DWP will issue guidance strongly urging all employers to be flexible and seek alternative forms of medical evidence if required at all during this period.
3. GPs will still be required to supply fit notes for periods of absence that are longer than 28 days.

**DVLA checks**

1. The Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) has suspended requests for medical information for the provision of drivers licences until the 12th January (excluding essential workers e.g. bus and lorry drivers).

**Firearms licenses**

1. The Home Office has written to the main shooting organisations to request where possible, that firearms certificate applicants who are about to submit a request wait until January before requesting the relevant medical information from their GP or from an independent doctor. We anticipate the vast majority of applicants (for example new applications for non-work purposes) will be able to wait.
2. The Home Office would be grateful, if a person has a particularly urgent application, for example, because of work commitments or the imminent expiry of their certificate, if practices could still consider providing the information.

**Enquiries**

1. Any enquiries resulting from this letter should be raised with David Rudden.