U.K. National Health Service Launches Online Isolation Notes to Help Employees Provide Proof of Coronavirus Work Absences

On March 20, 2020, the U.K. National Health Service (NHS) launched online isolation notes to enable employees to provide evidence to their employers that they have been medically advised to self-isolate due to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

For the first seven days of absence from work, an employee can self-certify and does not need to provide medical evidence to his or her employer. After that time, an employer may ask for medical evidence of ongoing sickness. Whether the absence is related to the employee having symptoms of COVID-19 or living with someone who has symptoms, an isolation note can be used to provide evidence of the medical advice to self-isolate.
The majority of people infected with COVID-19 will experience symptoms for about seven days; however, according to scientists, 15 percent of those infected will have symptoms for longer than that. Coupled with the social-distancing measures in place, isolation notes can ease the pressure on the NHS.

An isolation note can be obtained without having to contact a doctor, which will eliminate the need for people to leave their homes. The isolation note service can be accessed via the NHS website or the 111 online coronavirus service, as well as the NHS app.

An employee will be required to answer some personal questions before the isolation note is activated and sent to him or her via email. If the employee does not have an email address, the note can instead be sent to a family member, a friend, or directly to his or her employer. The service can also be used in order to generate an isolation note on behalf of someone else.

U.K. Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said, “Digital isolation notes will provide reassurance to those self-isolating and their employers while also reducing the pressure on our NHS, so they can continue doing all they can to protect the people of this country and save lives.”

People who need to claim the U.K. social benefits of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit because of COVID-19 will not need to provide medical evidence via a doctor’s note or an isolation note. More information on how to claim social benefits can be found here.


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