**Advice on Welfare Reforms**

We are aware that a high number of patients are asking their GP for a report to support their appeal against the decision to withdraw their Incapacity Benefit.

We would advise Practices to put up a sign at the desk / in the waiting room stating that patients should not make an appointment for a report to support their appeal but should instead contact Jobcentre Plus or the Appeals Service who will request a report if they feel one is needed.

We realise that it is difficult for practices to turn patients down, especially when the ruling seems unreasonable and the patient is desperate. On the other hand, this is a potentially large and increasing amount of unresourced work, especially for practices in deprived areas. Having a displayed policy directing patients elsewhere initially may help reduce at least some of this workload. As always, practices should discuss among themselves to decide on a policy that they are happy to work with.

Please see advice below which came from a query received from a Practice.

**A patient has asked for a report to support his appeal after having his Incapacity Benefit withdrawn. Does their GP have to provide a report?**

**No.**

Under the NHS contract there is no requirement for GPs to provide reports or offer an opinion on incapacity for work to anyone else unless requested to do so by Jobcentre Plus.

Claimants should contact Jobcentre Plus or the Appeals Service, where appropriate, if they think that further medical evidence is necessary to support their claim or appeal. They should state clearly their reasons for believing that further evidence is necessary.

If Jobcentre Plus or the Appeals Service consider that further medical evidence is necessary, they will seek it. They will be responsible for paying any fee to the doctor providing the report.

**NHS GPs are under no obligation to provide such evidence to their patients nor to provide it free of charge. If a GP does not agree to provide additional evidence for their patient then it is a private matter to be resolved between the GP and their patient.**