

Industrial Action - Stakeholder Information Pack

This pack is for:

- Patient groups and health charities representing audiences potentially impacted by industrial action.

This information pack contains:

- Key messages to the public on the continuity of care during strike days.
- Information for the public on industrial action and practical guidance for accessing care on strike days.
- The government's position on strikes by NHS workers.

The purpose of the information in this pack is:

- To enable you to communicate with your audiences about the possible impact of industrial action on services and provide clear guidance to patients on accessing services on days where strikes are taking place.
- To ensure you have the most up to date information and lines on the government's position on pay, industrial action, and the operational impact on services in one place.

QUICK LINKS

Please note, some of the information in this document will change subject to ongoing developments. Therefore, please ensure you check the following links where information is updated regularly:

- [NHSE information for the public on industrial action](#)
- [Department for Health and Care media factsheet on Government's position on strike action](#)

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC ON INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The advice in this section is from NHS England's website which is updated regularly: [NHS England » Information for the public on industrial action](#).

What is happening?

Trade unions representing some NHS staff are in dispute with the government over the 2022/23 pay award. A number of the unions have balloted their NHS members to take part in industrial action.

The British Medical Association (BMA), British Dental Association (BDA) and Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA) have announced 96 hours of continuous junior doctors' strike action from 7:00 am on Friday 11 August until 7:00 am on Tuesday 15 August.

The BMA has announced that consultant doctors will be taking strike action for 48 hours from 7:00 am on Thursday 24 August until 7:00 am on Saturday 26 August. During the two days of action, BMA has advised that consultants will provide Christmas Day cover, meaning they will continue to provide an emergency care only level of service.

- Junior doctors make up around half of all doctors in the NHS. Junior doctors are qualified doctors who have anywhere up to eight years' experience working as a hospital doctor, depending on their specialty, or up to three years in general practice.
- Consultants are senior doctors who not only see patients but are responsible for supervising junior doctors and other staff. When consultants take strike action they stop delivering care directly or providing supervision of the work of junior staff. Without supervision it may not be possible for some care delivered by junior doctors or other staff to take place safely.
- When consultants go on strike they have committed to ensure that emergency services remain in place with staffing levels in line with that in place on Christmas Day. This will ensure that emergency care would continue to be provided, but elective or non-emergency work may be significantly impacted. NHS England and the BMA both wish to ensure that patients remain safe while junior doctors and consultants are taking lawful industrial action.

Who is striking – when and where?

Members of the following unions are striking on the dates listed below:

- 11 August – from 7:00 am, BMA and HCSA Junior Doctors and BDA hospital dental trainees* out on strike across England
 - 12 August – all day, BMA and HCSA Junior Doctors and BDA hospital dental trainees* out on strike across England
 - 13 August – all day, BMA and HCSA Junior Doctors and BDA hospital dental trainees* out on strike across England
 - 14 August – all day, BMA and HCSA Junior Doctors and BDA hospital dental trainees* out on strike across England
 - 15 August – until 07:00, BMA and HCSA Junior Doctors and BDA hospital dental trainees* out on strike across England
24 August – from 07:00, BMA and BDA consultants ** out on strike across England
 - 24 August – from 07:00, BMA and BDA consultants ** out on strike across England
 - 25 August – all day, BMA and BDA consultants ** out on strike across England
 - 26 August – until 7:00 am, BMA and BDA consultants ** out on strike across England
- * BDA dental trainees will be taking place in 29 trusts
 ** BDA consultants action will be taking place in 40 trusts

Not every hospital and ambulance service will be affected by strike action. You can check which trusts are affected on each trade union's website:

- [Unite](#)
- [Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association \(HCSA\)](#)
- [British Medical Association \(BMA\) junior doctors](#)
- [BMA consultants](#)
- [British Dental Association \(BDA\) junior doctors](#)
- [BDA consultants](#)
- [Society of Radiographers](#)

The NHS is working hard to prioritise resources to protect emergency treatment, critical care, neonatal care, maternity, and trauma, and ensure it prioritises patients who have waited the longest for elective care and cancer surgery.

The NHS will only reschedule appointments and procedures where necessary and will rebook immediately, where possible. Unfortunately, these strikes will have a significant impact upon planned and routine care.

What is your advice to the public?

- The NHS is asking patients to choose services appropriately during industrial action and take simple steps to help ensure care is available to patients who need it most. This includes using 111 online as the first port of call for health needs, and only using 999 if it is a life-threatening emergency.
- If the NHS has not contacted you, please attend your appointment as planned. The NHS will contact you if your appointment needs to be rescheduled due to strike action.
- GP practices will continue to be open during the junior doctors strike. Please continue to attend your GP and dental appointments unless you are contacted and told otherwise.
- Ahead of the industrial action, the advice for anyone that is travelling to other areas is to:
 - If you're staying in England for your holiday this summer and need a GP appointment, please call your surgery back home. Your own surgery is used to helping by phone, video and email. And if you need a prescription, they can send it to any pharmacy you choose.
 - Make sure you have enough of your prescribed medications. You can easily order repeat prescriptions via the NHS App, though your GP practice website or, if you do not have access to GP online services, by calling your GP practice.
 - Ensure you have a fully stocked first aid kit at home or with you. Find out what you need on the [NHS.uk website](https://www.nhs.uk).
- Regardless of any strike action taking place, it is really important that patients who need urgent medical care continue to come forward as normal, especially in emergency and life-threatening cases – when someone is seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk.
- If you need medical help or advice, or you are unsure about whether you should go to hospital, go to NHS 111 online unless it is a life-threatening emergency when you should still call 999.
- For more information on [when to call 999](#) and [when to go to A&E](#), you can visit the NHS UK website.
- Patients should take advice from 111/999 call-handlers on whether there are circumstances where it is suitable for them to make their own way to hospital. During strike days, it is likely 999 call handlers will be very busy. NHS 111 call centres will have fewer staff, with longer call response times expected across the system. As a result, we are urging anyone with non-urgent care need to first seek help from [NHS 111 online](#).
- The NHS is also asking the public to play their part by taking simple steps during industrial action to look after themselves, loved ones and checking in on vulnerable family members and neighbours.

Emergency Care

What is considered an emergency?

Patients should only call 999 if seriously ill or injured, and there is risk to life. Ambulances will be dispatched where clinically appropriate. For more information on [when to call 999](#) and [when to go to A&E](#), you can visit the NHS UK website.

Will emergency care be affected on strike days?

Emergency care will continue to be available across all parts of the country. It is really important that in emergency and life-threatening cases – when someone is seriously ill or their life is at risk patients continue to come forward as normal.

What if I need urgent or emergency care?

Anyone who needs urgent care should use NHS111 online to be assessed and directed to the right care for them. If you do not have internet access then the 111 helpline is available. When someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk, you should seek emergency care in the normal way, by calling 999.

If staff are out on strike, what does it mean for emergency care?

In advance of strike action, we work with unions to agree which members of staff can continue to work to ensure safe levels of care. These agreements are called derogations and often mean that some health union members will continue their work in line with an agreement between employers and unions. Where derogations have not been agreed we may have to move staff from other departments within a hospital to ensure we can continue to provide emergency care.

Unfortunately, this could mean disruption to some routine appointments and procedures.

Can the NHS provide safe services during strikes?

The NHS is working hard to minimise the risk to patient safety. This means we will prioritise resources to protect emergency treatment, critical care, neonatal care, maternity, and trauma, and ensure we prioritise patients who have waited the longest for elective care and cancer surgery.

BMA has said that during consultant strikes a Christmas day level of service will be provided, meaning emergency care will continue to be available.

The NHS will only reschedule appointments and procedures where it is necessary and will rebook immediately, where possible. Unfortunately these strikes will have a significant impact upon planned and routine care.

Scheduled appointments/ procedures

What will this mean for appointments?

During strike action the NHS will prioritise emergency treatment and patients seeking urgent treatment will be seen. Unfortunately, this means it may have to prioritise emergency care over some routine appointments and procedures. Everyone who has an appointment should attend as planned, unless your local NHS provider has contacted you to reschedule. If the NHS has not contacted you, please attend your appointment even if your Trust is affected by strikes.

When will I find out if my appointment is rescheduled?

The NHS will contact you if your appointment needs to be rescheduled due to strike action. This is likely to be a text, phone call or a letter, and you should be offered an alternative date for your appointment. If the NHS has not contacted you, please attend your appointment as planned.

If my appointment is rescheduled, will I be put back to the bottom of the waiting list?

Any appointments that need to be rescheduled will be done so as a priority.

Should I cancel my appointment on day of strikes?

No, if the NHS has not contacted you, please attend your appointment as planned.

Is there anything I should do now?

To avoid delays in getting your medicines or the risk of running out of medicines during strikes please order prescriptions in good time.

I have a loved one who will be a hospital inpatient on strike day – how will their care be affected?

All hospital inpatients will be informed of how their care will be impacted on a ward-by-ward basis by the staff involved in delivering their care.

Services affected

Will GP services be affected on strike days?

Junior doctors strikes may impact some appointments. Please continue to attend your GP appointments, unless you are contacted and told otherwise.

Will dentists be impacted?

The British Dental Association has advised that some of their members who work in hospitals on trainee contracts or as consultants will take action. However, the vast majority of dentists (those not based in hospitals) will not be impacted. Please continue to attend any dental appointments unless you are contacted and told otherwise.

Will emergency care be affected on strike days?

Emergency care will continue to be available across all parts of the country. It is really important that in emergency and life-threatening cases – when someone is seriously ill or their life is at risk patients continue to come forward as normal.

How long will services be impacted?

The junior doctors strike by members of the British Medical Association, BMA and HCSA will last for 120 hours.

The BMA and BDA consultants strike will last for 48 hours.

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON STRIKE ACTION BY NHS WORKERS

Information taken from DHSC's online media factsheets which are updated regularly:

- [NHS strikes 2023: Government's position on strike action by NHS workers - Department of Health and Social Care Media Centre \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Government accepts recommendations from NHS pay review bodies - Department of Health and Social Care Media Centre \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Statement in response to further BMA strike action (11/08/23)

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

“Patients are bearing the brunt of the impact of continuous strikes across the NHS, and further action by the BMA will cause more appointments and procedures to be postponed.

“As recommended by the independent pay review body, we are giving first year doctors in training a 10.3% uplift, and an average annual pay rise of 8.8% worth between £3,000 and £4,700 depending on the stage of training. Our award balances the need to keep inflation in check while recognising the incredibly important work they do.

“My door is always open to discuss how to improve doctors' working lives, but this pay award is final so I urge the BMA to end its strikes immediately.”

BACKGROUND

NHS staff across a number of unions are undertaking industrial action.

More than one million NHS workers on the [Agenda for Change contract](#) have already received a pay rise after reaching an agreement with the government.

The government has also [accepted the recommendations of the pay review bodies in full](#) giving eligible doctors and dentists a pay rise.

NHS Agenda for Change pay deal

Agenda for Change is the system which governs pay across all non-medical NHS staff - including nurses, midwives, ambulance workers, porters and cleaners – covering more than 1 million workers. It aligns pay scales and career progression across all groups, meaning pay rises apply to everyone under this contract.

The NHS Staff Council is responsible for the Agenda for Change pay system and has representatives from both employers and trade unions.

In May, the NHS Staff Council accepted the government's pay offer for eligible Agenda for Change staff in England.

What is the deal which has been accepted by the NHS Staff Council?

- The deal accepted by the NHS Staff Council includes steps on pay as well as measures to improve working conditions. The deal covers:
- A one-off award of 2% for 2022/2023 on top of at least £1,400 already received for this year. The one-off 2% award is worth between £405 and £2,189 depending on their pay band.
- A one-off NHS Backlog Bonus worth between £1,250 and £1,600 depending on how much experience staff have and their pay band. The average nurse in pay band 5 with at least four years of experience, for example, would receive £1,350.
- A 5% pay rise for 2023/2024, worth at least £1,065. In addition, the lowest paid staff will see their pay matched to the top of band 2, resulting in a pay uplift of 10.4%, or £2,113.
- Non-pay reforms to make the NHS a better place to work. This includes a drive to tackle violence against staff, measures building on existing safe staffing arrangements, amendments to terms and conditions to support NHS staff to develop their careers through apprenticeships, and a consultation to make the suspension of the pension 'retire and return' rules introduced during the pandemic permanent.

When will the government implement the pay deal?

- The government is now working with the NHS Staff Council on implementing this deal.
- Both the 2022-23 additional payment and the implementation of the new 2023-24 pay rates (including back-pay to 1 April) were received by eligible staff as part of their pay in June.

Recommendations from the NHS pay review bodies

The government has accepted the recommendations of the Independent Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration's (DDRB).

The decision means that doctors in training (junior doctors) will receive a permanent pay increase of on average 8.8% - between 8.1% and 10.3% depending on where they are in their training

Pay scales for consultants will also increase by 6%, meaning starting basic full-time pay will increase from more than £88,300 to £93,600. Full-time equivalent basic pay for consultants will increase by around £6,300 on average.

What contingencies are in place on strike days?

- The priority is to keep patients safe during any industrial action.
- The NHS makes every effort through rigorous contingency planning to minimise disruption and its impact on patients and the public during industrial action.
- NHS England works with providers, professional bodies, trade unions and other bodies to agree safe levels of cover in advance of strike action.
- The NHS is working hard to prioritise resources to protect emergency treatment, critical care, neonatal care, maternity, and trauma, and ensure it prioritises patients who have waited the longest for elective care and cancer surgery.
- Where necessary, trusts will also cancel non-urgent appointments in order to prioritise urgent and emergency care.