

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
- Statements from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, outlining the government's position on pay and industrial action

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 industrial action](#)

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO THE PUBLIC?

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

- The NHS is making significant progress against its elective recovery plan, with the number of people waiting over 18 months cut by over 9,000 in January compared to the previous month – and down almost two thirds on its peak in September 2021. However, strikes by junior doctors will cause major disruption and thousands of patients may face postponements to their treatment.
- During strike action we will prioritise resources to protect emergency treatment, critical care, neonatal care, and trauma, and ensure we prioritise patients who have waited the longest for elective care and cancer surgery. We will only cancel appointments and procedures where it is necessary and will reschedule immediately, where possible.
- Regardless of any strike action taking place, it is really important that patients who need urgent medical care continue to come forward, especially in emergency and life-threatening cases – when someone is seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk.
- If we have 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.

- Please continue to attend your GP and dental appointments, unless you are contacted and told otherwise.
- GP services are not impacted by this strike action. Please continue to attend your GP appointments, unless you are contacted and told otherwise.
- The NHS is asking patients to use services wisely 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 continuing to only use 999 if it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Patients should only call 999 if it is a medical or mental health emergency (when someone is seriously ill or injured and 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.
- Ambulances will still be able to respond in these situations, but this may only be where there is an immediate risk to life.
- 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.
- There will be fewer ambulances on the roads during industrial action, with the NHS prioritising those with life-threatening needs. As a result patients whose conditions are not life-threatening may not get an ambulance on strike days.
- During strike days, there is an expectation 999 services will be exempt; however, 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 needs 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.

For more information on [when to call 999](#) and [when to go to A&E](#), you can visit the NHS UK website.

What do strikes mean for NHS services in my area?

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 - [GMB](#), [Unite](#), [BMA](#), [BDA](#), [HCSA](#), [Royal College of Nursing](#), [Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#), [UNISON](#)

- 13 March – BMA, HCSA, BDA (junior doctors and junior hospital dentists) and GMB (healthcare workers at small number of NHS Trusts)
- 14,15,16 March – BMA, HCSA, BDA (junior doctors and junior hospital dentists)
- 20 March – GMB and Unite (ambulance staff)
- 24 March – GMB (healthcare workers at small number of NHS Trusts)
- 17 April - GMB (healthcare workers at small number of NHS Trusts)

How long will services be impacted?

The junior doctors strike by members of the British Medical Association, BDA and HCSA will last 72 hours. Ambulance service strikes will last for up to 26 hours.

Scheduled appointments/ procedures

What will this mean for appointments?

During strike action we will prioritise emergency treatment and patients seeking urgent treatment will be seen. Unfortunately, this means we 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 we have 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 we have 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.

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.

Should I cancel my appointment on the day of strikes?

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

Will GP services be affected on strike days?

GP services will be running as normal on strike days. Please continue to attend scheduled GP appointments.

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.

Will dentists be impacted?

The British Dental Association has advised that some of their members who work in hospitals on trainee contracts will take action on the same days as junior doctors. However, the vast majority of dentists will continue to work. Please continue to attend any dental appointments unless you are contacted and told otherwise.

Emergency Care

What should I do if I need an ambulance?

On strike days, patients should only call 999 if seriously ill or injured, and there is risk to life. Ambulances will be dispatched where clinically appropriate.

For all other health care needs support will be available through [NHS 111 online](#), via the NHS 111 helpline or at your local GP or pharmacy.

The NHS.UK website has more information on [when to call 999](#) and [when to go to A&E](#).

What if I need urgent or emergency care?

Anyone who needs urgent care should use NHS111 online or call NHS 111 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 or attending A&E.

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 is considered an emergency?

Patients should only call 999 if seriously ill or injured, or there is risk to life. Ambulances will be dispatched where clinically appropriate.

QUOTES AND STATEMENTS

Last updated: 13.03.2023

Statement issued from Health and Social Care Secretary on junior doctor strikes (13.03.23)

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

"It is incredibly disappointing the British Medical Association (BMA) has declined my offer to enter formal pay negotiations on the condition strikes are paused.

"I hugely value the hard work of junior doctors and urge unions to come to the negotiating table and cancel strikes which risk patient safety and impact efforts to tackle the backlog. I want to find a fair settlement which recognises the crucial role of junior doctors and the wider economic pressures facing the UK.

"I've been having constructive and meaningful talks with unions representing nurses, ambulance workers and other non-medical staff, which have agreed to pause strike action, and negotiations will continue this week.

"We have been working closely with NHS England on contingency plans to help protect patient safety during strikes, prioritising emergency, urgent and critical care – but there will inevitably be some disruption for patients."

Statement issued on talks between the government and BMA junior doctors (11.03.23)

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said:

"We have invited the BMA to enter formal talks covering pay for this current financial year and next, with new investment in pay for doctors and dentists in training.

"As with other health unions, in order for talks to start, all planned strike action must be called off with immediate effect.

"Whilst the BMA have yet to accept this offer, it remains on the table."

Statement issued on talks between the government and NHS Agenda for Change unions (09.03.23)

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said:

"The government, NHS employers and unions representing the Agenda for Change workforce have been holding constructive and meaningful discussions over the past few days, covering pay and non-pay matters. These talks will continue into next week."

Statement issued in response to BMA consultants ballot result (06.03.23)

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said:

"We hugely value the work of NHS consultants and they received a pay rise of 4.5% this financial year, increasing average earnings to around £128,000.

"The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous available and we have taken steps to address the pension tax implications for senior clinicians. We have increased the annual

allowance taper so that the amount of tax-free pension savings only reduces for individuals who earn over £200,000.

“We have submitted evidence to the independent Pay Review Body for the next financial year and we want to continue discussing with the BMA how we can make the NHS a better place to work.”

Statement issued in response to pause in strikes during talks (05.03.2023):

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said:

“We’re pleased that unions representing the majority of ambulance workers, nurses, physiotherapists, porters, cleaners and other non-medical staff have agreed to pause strikes and enter a process of intensive talks.

“We want to find a fair and reasonable settlement that recognises the vital role of NHS workers, the wider economic pressures facing the UK and the Prime Minister’s priority to halve inflation.”

Background:

The offer of intensive talks was made on the basis that strikes be called off while talks take place. The talks will focus on pay, terms and conditions, and productivity enhancing reforms.

Statement issued in response to junior doctors’ industrial action plans (24.02.2023):

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

“We hugely value the work of junior doctors and it is deeply disappointing some union members have voted for strike action.

“As part of a multi-year deal we agreed with the BMA, junior doctors pay has increased by a cumulative 8.2% since 2019/20. We also introduced a higher pay band for the most experienced staff and increased rates for night shifts.

“I’ve met with the BMA and other medical unions to discuss what is fair and affordable, as well as wider concerns around conditions and workload. I’ve written to the BMA to arrange a meeting and want to continue discussing how we can make the NHS a better place to work for all.”

Background:

- People should continue to access the services they need – attend appointments unless told otherwise by the NHS, use 999 in a life-threatening emergency and use NHS 111 online services, GPs and pharmacies for non-urgent health needs.
- DHSC has published a fact sheet on NHS industrial action here: [NHS industrial action - media fact sheet - Department of Health and Social Care Media Centre \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)
- NHSE has published advice to the public on strikes days here: [NHS England » Information for the public on industrial action](#)

BACKGROUND - INDUSTRIAL ACTION

For the latest information on the Department of Health and Social Care position on industrial action see - [NHS industrial action - media fact sheet - Department of Health and Social Care Media Centre \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

What is happening?

- 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.
- 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. As a result, members of the following unions are striking on the dates listed below:
 - members of BMA are striking on 13, 14, 15, 16 March
 - members of HCPSA are striking on 13, 14, 15, 16 March
 - members of BDA are striking on 13, 14, 15, 16 March
 - members of GMB are striking on 13, 20, 24 March and 17 April
 - members of Unite are striking on 20 March

Talks

- The government and unions representing the majority of ambulance workers, nurses, physiotherapists, porters, cleaners and other non-medical staff have agreed to pause strikes and enter a process of intensive talks.
- The government has stated that it will talk to unions who are willing to discuss what is fair reasonable – recognising the vital role public sector workers play but also the wider economic pressures facing the UK.

What are your contingency plans to protect patient safety 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.
- This includes derogations, which are agreements between trade unions and employers that certain staff members or groups of staff will be exempted from strike action, in order to provide working cover for essential services during industrial action.

What contingencies are in place on ambulance strike days?

- Derogation discussions for ambulance strike days happen at a local level and can vary from provider to provider.
- Military personnel have been trained and deployed to meet the requests for support made by ambulance trusts.
- Ambulance trusts have made assessments of potential gaps in service provision. Trusts have then assessed where military personnel driving alongside NHS paramedics / clinicians might be able to meet any gap.
- The number of military requested will differ by strike date and region depending on a range of factors. These include which unions are taking action, number of staff taking action, strength of derogations, proportion and severity of anticipated 999 calls.

- As military personnel cannot drive under blue light conditions, they are used to less urgent calls.
- The NHS is also working with Community First Responders, who are volunteers trained to provide treatment until ambulances arrive.

What has been the impact of strike action so far?

- NHS England has published data on their website on the impact of industrial action. This sets out the number of staff absent as a result of industrial action, and the number of procedures and appointments rescheduled. The data is available here: [NHS England » Preparedness for potential industrial action in the NHS](#).

What is your plan to address pressures across urgent and emergency care?

- The pandemic, Covid and flu cases have put huge pressure on the NHS and cutting waiting times is one of the government's top five priorities.
- As part of this the NHS and government have published a [plan](#) to rapidly reduce waiting times for urgent and emergency care, building on action taken by the NHS this winter.
- For more information, see the [urgent and emergency care](#) factsheet

What is the proposed Minimum Service Level Bill?

- The government is consulting on the adequate level of coverage from ambulance service that should be guaranteed at a time of strike.
- The consultation is open to the public and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/minimum-service-levels-in-event-of-strike-action-ambulance-services>
- The consultation launched on 9 February and will run for 12 weeks, closing 9 May 2023.