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GP collective action – patient information

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The NHS is asking the public to come forward as usual for care during collective action.

If you have an appointment with your GP practice, you should attend as usual, unless you are told otherwise.

Practices will still be open and see patients and you can book appointments through your GP practice. However, some GPs may direct patients to other local services.

GPs are contracted to provide primary medical services via the GP contract (either the General Medical Service Contract, Personal Medical Services Agreement or Alternative Provider Medical Services Provider Contract).

Government has accepted the recommendations of the the [Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration of 6% increase for doctors](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/review-body-on-doctors-and-dentists-remuneration>), including GPs, and dentists, in its report for 2024. This includes a consolidated uplift of £1,000 to the pay points for doctors and dentists in training from 1 April 2024.

More than 1,000 newly qualified GPs will be recruited thanks to government action to remove red tape currently preventing surgeries from hiring doctors.

The British Medical Association (BMA) GP Committee England (GPCE) is held a non-statutory ballot of their members to seek support for collective action and has indicated that should they achieve a mandate, they would expect collective action to begin on 1 August 2024.

Collective action would mean GPs taking action that, in this initial phase, may stop or reduce certain work. This means staff would still be working and practices would still be open to see patients.

Collective action is not the same as industrial action and does not require a formal notification period, nor is it confined to specific dates. The NHS has a duty to provide the best care possible for patients with the resources we have.

The NHS and government are working to avert collection action.

During collective action practices are still required to fulfil their contracts, this essentially means:

- practices are required to be open between 8am and 6:30pm Monday to Friday
- practices should provide reasonable care to patients this includes:
 - making appointments available
 - providing advice or care to patients by another means
 - give advice on alternative services
 - providing access to prescriptions, long terms condition management, vaccinations, diagnoses and referral (including where clinically urgent)
- practices also need to take into account:
 - the needs of a patient to avoid risks to patient safety
 - the benefits to patients of providing continuity of care

We anticipate that this action will cause disruption across the NHS.

The NHS is working hard to plan for disruption and to mitigate this where possible. The nature of the collective action means that the impacts will vary at different GP practices and from area to area.

NHS England will be closely monitoring any action taken and will work with local commissioners to make sure that practices continue to fulfil their contractual requirements and that patient care is safely delivered.

Practices will still be open and see patients. However, some GPs may direct patients to other local services.

Your GP practice will be able to explain the impact on you and what you need to do.

If you have an appointment with your GP practice, you should attend as usual unless you are told otherwise.

Patients can use [111 online \(https://111.nhs.uk/\)](https://111.nhs.uk/) for health needs, and only using 999 if it is a serious or life-threatening emergency. For more information on [when to call 999 \(https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-call-999/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-call-999/) and [when to go to A&E \(https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-go-to-ae/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-go-to-ae/), you can visit the NHS UK website.

Questions and answers

What is happening?

The BMA has announced that GPs will take collective action should their ballot outcome support this course of action. This means that GPs may choose to make changes to some aspects of how they work. Practices will still be open and will still see patients. However, some GPs may operate differently. Where this happens, patients may be directed to other local services to make sure that safe provision of care remains.

This is a non-statutory ballot for collective action, which means GPs should not be taking any action that would breach their contract.

I thought GPs were the NHS?

GPs are independent contractors who are contracted to provide NHS services. During collective action, GPs will still be working and will still be providing the NHS services that they are contracted to provide.

What is the impact of collective action?

During collective action practices are still required to fulfil their contracts, this essentially means:

Practices are required to be open between 8am and 6:30pm – Monday to Friday.

Practices should provide reasonable care to patients this includes:

- making appointments available
- providing advice or care to patients by another means
- give advice on alternative services
- providing access to prescriptions, long terms condition management, vaccinations, diagnoses and referral (including where clinically urgent)

Practices also need to take into account:

- the needs of a patient to avoid risks to patient safety
- the benefits to patients of providing continuity of care

The NHS is working hard to plan for disruption and to mitigate this where possible. GPs are choosing to take this action but the nature of the collective action means that the impacts will vary at different GP practices and area by area. We anticipate that this action will cause disruption across the NHS as patients may need to attend other services, this could mean appointments for some services not being at your usual GP practice and instead being somewhere else.

When is this happening?

The nature of collective action means that it does not need a formal notice period, the BMA has indicated that this could mean action starting on 1 August 2024. As the action does not involve a breach of contract and practices will remain open, it could potentially continue for an unspecified but potentially significant period of time.

Is this safe?

Patient safety is a priority and the usual rules and considerations around safety continue to apply. GPs should not take any action that puts patient safety at risk.

Can I still get an appointment at my GP?

Yes, practices will still be open and you can book appointments through your practice. If you have an appointment, you should attend unless your GP practice tell you otherwise. Your GP practice should inform you of any changes to services.

What is NHS England doing about this?

The NHS and government is working hard to avert collective action and to plan for disruption and to mitigate this where possible. The nature of the collective action means that the impacts will vary at different GP practices. NHS England is working closely with government to review options for providing additional funding to further support general practice, subject to funding availability constraints.

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