# Industrial Action

# Messages for the public

**Last updated: 22 February 2024**

**Our crisis and single point of access services are open and running as normal. If we have not contacted you, please attend any planned appointments as normal. We will contact you if your appointment needs to be rescheduled for any reason.**

The British Medical Association (BMA) has announced junior doctors will take strike action from 07:00 on Saturday 24 February to 23:59 on Wednesday 28 February. Ahead of the latest action, The BMA has advised their members that shifts that start on Wednesday 28 February and end on Thursday 29 February should be completed in full, including starting the shift on Wednesday 28 February.

Hospital Consultants and Specialists Assoc (HCSA) has announced that their junior doctor members will be on strike from 06:59 on Saturday 24 February until shifts starting after 0700 on Thursday 29 February

This is part of an ongoing dispute between junior doctors and government. During these strikes, other doctors (including consultants and other specialist doctors) will still be working. The NHS is working hard to ensure adequate staffing through the entirety of urgent care pathways, urgent elective cases, and other critical services.

However, the disruption to staffing will cause a significant reduction in elective (planned) activity and this may mean some appointments and procedures may need to be rescheduled. We will only reschedule appointments and procedures where necessary and will rebook immediately, where possible. The BMA and HCSA have stated junior doctors will undertake a full withdrawal of labour. The NHS will be working closely with unions to discuss any patient safety concerns and ensure safe staffing for emergency care continues to be available.

If you need urgent care please continue to come forward as normal regardless of any industrial action taking place. 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.

The NHS is asking patients to choose services wisely during industrial action and take simple steps to help ensure care is available to patients who need it most. This includes using [the NHS 111 online service](https://111.nhs.uk/) as the first port of call for health needs. Patients without access to the internet can call 111. People should call 999 if it is a life-threatening emergency.

If you’re worried about your child’s health, you can find online healthcare advice recommended by local healthcare professionals at [wyhealthiertogether.nhs.uk](https://wyhealthiertogether.nhs.uk/)

You can also call into your local pharmacy for expert advice on many common illnesses such as headaches, sore throats and aches and pains, and there is no need to book an appointment.

Easy read: Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has created [this one page easy read guide](https://www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/news/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/01/Industrial-action-poster-easyread.pdf) to help reassure people about attending hospital.

#### Frequently asked questions

**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. As a result, members of the following unions have advised of plans to take strike action on the dates listed below:

The BMA has announced that from 07:00 on Saturday 24 February to 23:59 on Wednesday 28 February junior doctors will be taking strike action.

Hospital Consultants and Specialists Assoc (HCSA) has announced that their junior doctor members will be on strike from 06:59 on Saturday 24 February until shifts starting after 0700 on Thursday 29 February.

**What do strikes mean for NHS services in my area?**

The strikes announced cover junior doctors across the NHS. This means action will impact every hospital in England. For more details, please see the union websites:

[Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA)](https://www.hcsa.com/)

[British Medical Association (BMA) junior doctors](https://www.bma.org.uk/)

**What does this mean for care?**

During these strikes, other doctors (including consultants, GPs and other specialist doctors) will still be working. However, The NHS is working hard to ensure adequate staffing through the entirety of urgent care pathways, urgent elective cases, and other services. However, the disruption to staffing will cause a significant reduction in elective activity and this may mean that some appointments and procedures may need to be rescheduled. We will only reschedule appointments and procedures where necessary and will rebook immediately, where possible. The BMA and HCSA have stated junior doctors will undertake a full withdrawal of labour. The NHS will be working closely with unions to discuss any concerns around patient safety and ensure that safe emergency care continues to be available.

**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 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.

**What does this mean for elective activity?**

This level of disruption to staffing will cause a significant reduction in elective activity. Where appropriate, urgent elective surgery (P1 and P2), Cardiac, Organ and Corneal transplant, cancer care (particularly for patients who have already been waiting over 62 days, or who are likely to pass day 62 if their appointment needs to be rescheduled), and long waiters should be the final cohorts to be rescheduled.

**What about discharge for patients ahead of Christmas?**

The NHS and partners are already working hard to discharge patients who are clinically fit and reduce occupancy levels to the extent possible ahead of the Christmas and New Year. The NHS is doing all it can to discharge anyone who is clinically fit. This not only helps patients avoid being in hospital over Christmas and the New Year, it also helps support urgent and emergency care during strike days.

**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. We 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Should I cancel my appointment on the day of strikes?**

No, if we have 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.

**What should I do if I need an ambulance?**

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 NHS111 online (if you do not have internet access then 111 helpline is available) or at your local GP or pharmacy.

**Will GP services be affected on strike days?**

Consultant 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 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.

**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.

**How long will services be impacted?**

The strike action by BMA junior doctors in February will last for 113 hours.

**Could union members still go out on strike in a trust that has no official industrial action mandated?**

Action can only be taken where the employer has been notified of strike action by the union after a ballot authorising such action at that employer. It’s unlawful to take part in ‘secondary action’ (going on strike in sympathy with people who work for a different employer). Information is [available here](https://www.gov.uk/industrial-action-strikes/your-employment-rights-during-industrial-action) on the rights of staff around taking industrial action.

**Can staff working in a derogated area still strike?**

Union members in derogated areas can still take strike action and will be protected against dismissal. Derogations are an informal agreement between unions and employers, and are not legally enforceable.

However, derogations are negotiated for areas providing critical patient care. Those refusing to work in derogated services can be advised they may be committing a criminal offence if their strike action has the potential to endanger human life or cause serious bodily injury and that they should seek advice from their union.

**What rights do non-union staff have who take industrial action?**

Non-union members who take part in legal, official industrial action at their employing organisation have the same rights as union members not to be dismissed as a result of taking action.

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