



GP collective action in England: Current situation and public messaging

Stakeholder briefing

What is happening?

On 1 August 2024, the British Medical Association (BMA) General Practitioners Committee England (GPCE) announced that General Practitioners (GPs) in England have voted to take collective action in their dispute with NHS England over the national 2024/25 GP contract.

Collective action means that GPs may stop or reduce certain work but will continue to see patients.

Patients should continue to contact their practice for their health needs.

What actions are GP going to take?

The duties of GPs are set out in a national contract. The dispute raised by the BMA centres on tasks they believe go beyond the obligations funded through this contract.

The BMA has proposed ten potential actions that GPs could take as part of the collective action. These actions are designed to ensure that GPs do not breach their contractual obligations.

It is likely that collective action **will be different across local areas and the impact will vary from area to area.**

The ten suggested actions that GPs could take are:

- **Cap appointments:** Limit patient contacts to 25 per day. Once the limit is reached, then patients could be direct to urgent care or other healthcare services.
- **Only use e-Referral Advice and Guidance** if it's clinically helpful.
- **Stop any unpaid services** that fill gaps in local commissioning and prioritise your practice's needs.



- **Refer as needed:** Make necessary referrals investigations, and admissions based on clinical need. Use professional letters instead of local forms.
- **Switch off GPConnect Update Record function** which allows third-party providers to update GP records.
- **Withdraw from data sharing agreements** that don't directly benefit patient care in primary care.
- **Avoid signing up for new data-sharing deals.**
- **Turn off Medicines Optimisation software:** Disable any software that focuses on cost-saving rather than patient care.
- **Delay signing off on new digital systems** like better phone systems or online request tools until further guidance is provided.
- **Avoid joining new NHS England pilot programs** during this action period.

What impact is it GP collective action having in Somerset?

Somerset GPs have been working hard to manage a 25% increase in appointments since 2019. They continue to see many patients on the same day (currently 43% of appointments take place on day of booking), with 54% of appointments being face-to-face.

As of August 13, 2024, NHS Somerset has not seen any major changes in the usual service provided by our GPs. We are keeping a close eye on the situation, with daily updates on urgent care and frontline healthcare services in our area.

We have established an incident co-ordination group with representatives from the whole healthcare system.

Currently we hold bi-weekly meetings with Somerset Local Medical Committee, the representative committee for GPs and GP practices in Somerset. This ensures that we can work collectively, in an open and honest way, to discuss any issues and actions local GPs might take and what mitigations might need to be put in place. This could include bolstering the workforce in other areas of the system, such as our Urgent Treatment Centres.

How long will this action go on for?

Collective action is not the same as industrial action and does not require a formal notification period, nor is it confined to specific dates.

It is likely that collective action will be different across local areas and the impact will vary from area to area. It is unlikely to be short term and may last for a long period of time.

What is being done to resolve the dispute?

General Practice in Somerset is very much valued and appreciated. However, this is a national dispute and is not something that NHS Somerset can resolve at a local level. We know the pressures on practice teams are immense, and we have acted locally to support primary care through an additional £1.5m investment this year through the New Funding Framework.

At Government level, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced that it has accepted the recommendations of the [Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration of 6% increase for doctors](#), including GPs, and dentists. This includes a consolidated uplift of £1,000 to the pay points for doctors and dentists in training from 1 April 2024.

The DHSC has also announced that 1,000 newly qualified GPs will be recruited by removing red tape currently preventing surgeries from hiring doctors.

Supporting our patients - how you can help

You can help patients understand what the GP collective action means for them and remind them about the range of other healthcare service on offer in Somerset by:

1. Sharing our social media content

NHS Somerset will be posting regular updates about the GP action, and signposting other NHS services in the area that are open and here to help. Follow us on:

- **Facebook:** [NHS Somerset | Facebook](#)
- **X (Twitter):** [@NHSSomerset](#)

2. Signpost our website

For updates and to signpost patients to the range of local healthcare service please signpost our website.

nhssomerset.nhs.uk/gp-collective-action/

3. Key messages for patients

- GP services remain open, **please contact your practice as normal if you have a healthcare need.**
- Unless you are contacted by your GP surgery, you should still attend any planned GP appointments.
- If you think you need medical help right now, 111 online can tell you what to do next. This service is available 24/7. Visit [NHS 111 Online](#) or call 111.
- Collective action means that the impacts will vary at different GP practices and area by area. Please check your GP surgery website or social media channels for any updates.

- For details of all the other healthcare services in Somerset that are also here to support you please visit: nhssomerset.nhs.uk/gp-collective-action/
- NHS Somerset is working hard to plan for disruption and to mitigate this where possible.

4. Articles for newsletters

GP collective action – information for patients

The British Medical Association (BMA) and GPs have voted to take national collective action, which started on 1st August 2024.

GP services will remain open, and **patients should continue to contact their practice as usual for healthcare needs.**

It is important to attend any planned GP appointments, unless notified otherwise by your GP.

Collective action means that the impacts will vary at different GP practices and area by area. Please check your GP surgery website or social media channels for any updates.

If you think you need medical help right now, 111 online can tell you what to do next. This service is available 24/7. Visit [NHS 111 Online](https://111.nhs.uk/) or call 111.

To ensure you have access to the care you need, please check NHS Somerset's website for other healthcare services that are also here to support you: nhssomerset.nhs.uk/gp-collective-action/

NHS Somerset is working hard to plan for disruption and to mitigate this where possible.

5. Patient frequently asked questions signposting local NHS services

Please use the following FAQs and signpost local NHS health services where patients can get the treatment they need at the right place.

Frequently asked questions

What is happening?

The British Medical Association (BMA) has announced that GPs will take collective action from 1 August 2024. This means that GPs may choose to make changes to some aspects of how they work.

Practices are open and **patients should continue to contact their practice as usual for healthcare needs.** It is important to attend any planned GP appointments, unless notified otherwise by your GP.

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.

What should I do if I need to see my GP?

GP services remain open, **please contact your practice as normal if you have a healthcare need.**

Unless you are contacted by your GP surgery, you should still attend any planned GP appointments.

If you think you need medical help right now, 111 online can tell you what to do next. This service is available 24/7. Visit [NHS 111 Online](#) or call 111.

For details of all the other healthcare services in Somerset that are also here to support you please visit: nhssomerset.nhs.uk/gp-collective-action/

What is the impact of collective action?

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

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)

The collective action means some GPs may stop or reduce certain work and the impacts will vary at different GP practices and area by area. NHS Somerset is working hard to plan for disruption and to mitigate this where possible.

How long will this go on for?

Collective action is not the same as industrial action. Since the action doesn't break any contracts and GP practices will stay open, it could go on for some time, but it's unclear for how long exactly.

6. Signpost local NHS services

To ensure you have access to the care you need, below is a reminder of other healthcare services in Somerset that are also here to support you.

NHS 111

If you think you need medical help right now, 111 online can tell you what to do next.

This service is available 24/7.

Visit [NHS 111 Online](#) or call 111.

Pharmacies

Local pharmacies are a great resource for minor illnesses and medication advice.

Pharmacists are trained to offer guidance on common health issues such as colds, flu, minor infections, and skin conditions. They can also help with medication queries and provide certain over-the-counter treatments.

You can also get treatment for seven common conditions directly from your local pharmacy, under the [Pharmacy First scheme](#), including prescription-only medicines like antibiotics and antivirals, without needing to see a GP.

Patients registered with a Somerset GP can have a free consultation, receive clinical advice, and get NHS medicines for:

- sinusitis (12+ years)
- sore throat (5+ years)
- earache (1-17 years)
- infected insect bite (1+ years)
- impetigo (1+ years)
- shingles (18+ years)
- uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women (16-64 years)

To find your nearest pharmacy visit <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy>.

Repeat prescriptions

For repeat prescriptions, you can use the following services and nominate a pharmacy local to you to collect it. Some online and high street pharmacies also deliver.

- **Your GP online service and NHS App:** Use your GP practice's online portal or the NHS App to request repeat prescriptions.
[Find out more about using the NHS app to order prescriptions](#)
- **Pharmacies:** Many local pharmacies offer repeat prescription services. Contact your pharmacy directly for assistance.
[View an A-Z of online pharmacies](#)
- **GP Practice:** If you cannot use online services, contact your GP practice directly to arrange your repeat prescription.

Please ensure you request your repeat prescription in advance to avoid any delays.

HANDi App for common childhood illnesses

Unsure what to do when your child is unwell? Download the free HANDi Paediatric App for expert advice on common childhood illnesses and treatments.

This app boosts your confidence in handling minor conditions at home by guiding you through symptoms and advising on the best course of action.

Download the HANDi App at:

- [Google Play](#) for Android phones
- the App Store or [iTunes](#) for iPhone/iPad (search for 'HANDi App')

Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) (formerly known as minor injury units)

For minor injuries, visit your local Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs). They treat both children and adults.

In Somerset, UTC's are located in Bridgwater, Chard, Frome, Glastonbury, Minehead, and Shepton Mallet. Using an UTC instead of A&E can reduce wait times. If unsure where to go, visit 111.nhs.uk or call NHS 111 for advice. Burnham on Sea has a Minor Injuries Unit.

UTCs can help with emergency contraception and non-life-threatening conditions like:

- chest, throat, and eye infections
- urinary infections
- sprains, strains, and broken bones
- wounds

[Find Somerset's UTCs](#)

Emergency treatment

For serious and life-threatening emergencies, such as severe chest pain, difficulty breathing, severe bleeding, or sudden weakness, you should go to the nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department or call 999 immediately.

Mental health support

Mental health support in Somerset is available for everyone.

[Where to find mental health services in our area.](#)

Sukeina Kassam

Director of Primary Care

NHS Somerset