



Position Statement: NHSE Winter Support Plan 22 October 2021

Last week we articulated our utter dismay having read NHSE's latest 'Winter Support' plan. This plan was supported by government but not negotiated with BMA GPC. Rather than addressing our increasing workload it promised money for our current broken workforce to work more, which is not fair or possible. In addition, it seeks to penalise 1/5 of our neighbouring practices using flawed methodology, when practices need nothing but support. A Practice's presence or absence on that list of the 'bottom' quintile has absolutely nothing to do with the quality or magnitude of patient care offered; indeed, however well practices perform there will always be a 'bottom 20%'.

Over the past 7 days the plan has been fiercely debated across the country, with LMCs throughout England united in their opposition to the harmful, demoralising and frankly dangerous behaviour of NHSE. In addition, in a [BMA snap poll](#) of **3500 GPs, 93% said that the plan was an unacceptable response to the crisis.**

Yesterday an emergency meeting of BMA GPC England was held. Our nationally elected officials rejected the plan outright and is now seeking to ballot the profession on what action, including industrial action the profession has an appetite to take. Full details of the press release and motion can be seen on this [link](#).

We appreciate this is hugely controversial and not a step any of us in general practice want to take; we want sufficient staff who are able to provide high quality patient care to all who need it. However, this plan is the final straw for a profession that is **being** broken by NHSE and a Secretary of State that shows utter contempt for general practice. That same SoS who appears to prioritise bullying, coercion and media manipulation above quality patient care and the wellbeing of staff. It remains our belief that on the back of years of underfunding, unrelenting workload pressures and a diminishing workforce **this plan does nothing but harm you and our patients.**

WHY HAS IT COME TO BALLOTING ON INDUSTRIAL ACTION (IA)?

For industrial action (IA) there needs to be a trade dispute. Simply put GPC feel that all avenues of meaningful dialogue have been exhausted and NHSE/SoS are simply refusing to listen and are instead continuing with their harmful anti-GP, media-fuelled plans. A dispute with SoS or NHSE is therefore now possible given the conditions that general practice is currently working in.

IA includes both striking (which is NOT being proposed) and contract breaches. The latter is what has been concentrated on, and moreover breaching or withdrawing from parts of contracts which should NOT HARM PATIENT CARE.

Although the GP Pay Transparency and the PCN DES may seem odd areas to highlight as a dispute to some, these are the areas whereby dispute is possible without direct patient harm, or harm to our colleagues in secondary care who are similarly working flat out.

The BMA, as our Trade Union, is the only organisation that can call for IA and support those workers who take IA. The LMC is not a trade union. Our responsibility is to inform, collate your views and support practices and PCNs in their decision making. We cannot, nor will we call for IA.





WHAT NOW?

Whatever your views are on the nature of any action, from what we are hearing, **there is a huge amount of agreement that the Winter Support Plan is not fair, not safe and will harm practices and staff and introduce further inequality.**

We hope Practices will feel supported by us and GPTF to focus their attention on what is best for patients and practice teams.

Whilst appraising our advice, please consider: -

- The contents of the plan are not contractually binding, and this includes the performance management aspects.
- You are free to ignore any parts of the plan which you feel will not support the delivery of safe and effective care for your patients.
- The terms of your contract state that you must “meet the reasonable needs of your patients” in ways “which are delivered in the manner determined by the contractor’s practice in discussion with the patient”.
- DDCCG are obliged to follow the directives from NHSE however much they may disagree.
- Practices should protect the welfare, safety, health, and security of their staff and take a zero tolerance to abuse approach.

THE ASK FROM YOUR LMC

1) As per the BMA, it is our advice to you that we as Derbyshire’s practices, PCNs and LMC unite and **do not engage** with any local or national planning or communication in regard to this Winter Support plan.

2) We need to hear from you, our constituents about the NHSE Winter Support Plan and the latest update from the BMA, so we can appropriately represent your views.

We will be looking to organise a webinar locally and imminently to discuss this further and to hear your views.

It is with great disappointment that we find ourselves having to write this letter; particularly with the hard work we have done across Derbyshire in collaborating with partners to improve patient health care. However, we are increasingly aware of the impact of negative media and low morale within our practice teams, and we feel that engagement with this plan will encourage more staff members to seek employment elsewhere or reduce their hours at a time when we desperately need to retain staff.

We remain here to support each and every person working in GP Practices across Derbyshire. We will continue to engage in dialogue at both local and national level, collating and representing your views to get the improvements that we and our patients deserve.

Dr Kath Markus
Chief Executive
Derby & Derbyshire Local Medical Committee

Dr Susie Bayley
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