BMA

Guidance for GP Practices

Please note this guidance relates to doctors in England only.

What would industrial action involve?

The BMA is recommending that industrial action initially follows the emergency care only model, with the possibility of adopting other forms of action subsequently. For GP trainees in the general practice part of their training, this would involve not attending their practice on any days of action.

How would it impact on my practice?

Only GP training practices that have a GP trainee on a placement during the time of action would be directly affected. Trainees who are planning to take action should discuss this with the practice in advance.

According to the terms of the framework for a written contract of employment for GP specialty trainees, GP trainees are supernumerary within the practice for the period of their placement.

This means that the effective running of practices should not be dependent on the attendance of the GP trainee in the practice. Practices should take any steps necessary to ensure that their practice continues to run effectively in the absence of the trainee taking industrial action. We would encourage practices to be supportive of action taken by trainees working within their practice.

Is the action being taken against my practice?

The rules on industrial action mean that technically speaking, any industrial action taken by individuals has to be against their employer. For those GP trainees directly employed by practices, which is the case for the majority of GP trainees in their practice placement, they would therefore be technically taking action against the practice. Trainees directly employed by their hospital trust in a single lead employer arrangement would be taking action against the trust.

It is important to remember, however, that the reason for the action would be the dispute with the government on the imposition of a new contract for doctors in training, rather than any problem with you as a practice.

Would my GP practice be picketed during industrial action?

It is possible for your GP practice to be picketed during industrial action. This is because an employee is allowed to peacefully picket at or near their place of work on the basis that they are taking Protected Industrial Action. It would not be possible for GP trainees in a GP practice placement to join their colleagues in picket lines at hospitals as they would no longer be picketing at or near their place of work.

However, there is no prohibition on persons joining lawful marches or demonstrations at other places of work providing that they do not personally and specifically attempt to dissuade anyone from attending at work at such workplaces.

How can I show my support for junior doctors?

The most important thing you can do is show moral support and not to obstruct or discourage junior colleagues in their legitimate right to take industrial action, but without in any way compromising your own position as a professional not directly affected by the dispute.

You will be informed of any further guidance as this situation develops. If you have further questions, please call 0300 123 1233.

British Medical Association
BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP
bma.org.uk

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