A vote for health

BMA manifesto 2017
The BMA is the voice of doctors and medical students in the UK

The BMA (British Medical Association) is a voluntary professional association and independent trade union, which represents doctors and medical students from all branches of medicine across the UK.

With a membership of 160,000, we promote the medical and allied sciences, work to maintain the honour and interests of the medical profession and promote the delivery of high-quality healthcare. We are committed to an NHS that remains true to its founding principles — comprehensive, free at the point of care with equal access for all.

The overarching priorities set out in our manifesto are relevant across the UK. However, given that health is a devolved issue, the context of our proposals applies primarily to the health service in England. Our priorities for the Brexit negotiations apply across all four nations of the UK.

Contact us
For more information on issues raised in this document please contact the BMA public affairs team:

T 020 7383 6515
E publicaffairs@bma.org.uk
bma.org.uk
The UK still has one of the best healthcare systems in the world, but years of underinvestment in the face of rising patient demand mean the NHS is now failing too many people – patients and their families – too often. Our hospitals and GP surgeries are full, social care is on its knees, with staff working under impossible conditions.

Simply put, the NHS is at breaking point. And it is against this backdrop that the general election will be fought.

General elections are the point at which the overall direction of the country is set, defining how public services are delivered and funded. It is all too easy for this election to become the ‘Brexit election’ and little else, at precisely the time when the health service needs the unrelenting focus of politicians from all parties.

Whoever leads the next government must address the priorities outlined in this document as a matter of urgency.

Despite the obvious warning signs, consecutive governments have been in denial about the state of the health service, with little or no effective action being taken following elections. All we have seen are successive, wasteful reorganisations. Our health and social care systems can simply no longer cope.

During this short general election campaign, we are calling on all political parties to put healthcare at the forefront of their plans, focusing on the five key areas outlined in our manifesto.

Dr Mark Porter
BMA council chair
The BMA calls on all political parties to:
- bring UK health spending in line with the average spent by Europe’s 10 leading economies: increasing it from the current level of \(9.8\%\) to \(10.4\%\) of GDP.

If funding had matched in 2015 the UK’s health spend would have been \(£10.3bn\) higher

-...enough to provide an extra \(35,000\) hospital beds
-...and recruit an extra \(10,000\) GPs
-...and reverse the cuts made to public health budgets
Politicians must address the pressures across the healthcare system that prevent the delivery of high-quality, safe care

The BMA calls on all political parties to:
— invest in the medical workforce over the long term by creating a supportive working environment, with fair terms and conditions, to attract and keep the doctors we need to deliver the safe and effective care that patients expect
— prioritise high-quality training and education at every stage of a medical career.

The UK population has fewer doctors per person than other leading European economies

- Italy: 4.2
- France: 3.3
- Germany: 4.1
- UK: 2.8

Physicians per 1,000 people

OECD average: 3.3
The BMA calls on all political parties to:
– agree and implement a long-term solution to the funding, capacity and staffing challenges overwhelming the health and social care systems
– stop the routine breach of safe levels of bed occupancy and work with local government to reduce the impact of pressures in social care.

In England, between 2006/07 and 2015/16, the number of overnight beds has decreased by over a fifth.

In Scotland, one in five A&E attendances led to a hospital admission in April 2015.

In Northern Ireland, between 2008/09 and 2015/16, the proportion of patients waiting between 4 and 12 hours for treatment in A&E more than doubled.

In Wales, in March 2016, 23% of patients spent more than 4 hours in A&E. Almost 5% of patients were there between 8 and 12 hours.

The BMA calls on all political parties to:
– ensure STPs (sustainability and transformation plans) in England – which have become a vehicle for delivering cuts – are instead realistic, evidence-based and properly funded, with patient care as the priority, and undergo full consultation with clinicians, patients and the public before changes are finalised.

Funds needed to deliver STPs
The BMA calls on all political parties to:
- give highly skilled EU doctors and medical researchers currently in the UK — on whom the health service relies — permanent residence in the UK
- ensure a flexible immigration system, which meets the needs of the UK health service and medical research sector
- preserve reciprocal arrangements, including mutual recognition of professional qualifications and measures that protect patient safety
- secure ongoing access to EU research programmes and research funding, to maintain the UK’s world-leading science and research base
- ensure Brexit does not hinder the UK’s ability to play a leading role in European and international efforts to tackle global health threats
- address the unique impact Brexit may have on the health service in Northern Ireland.

Survey of doctors from the EU

55% of EU doctors don’t feel the UK government does enough for international doctors

10,000 NHS doctors qualified in the European Economic Area

...that’s 6.6% of the UK medical workforce

42% say they’re considering leaving the UK
4 Politicians must commit to stabilise general practice in the face of soaring demand, a critical shortage of GPs and excessive bureaucracy

The BMA calls on all political parties to:
– ensure the best possible patient experience by putting in place the necessary funding and support to deliver manageable, safe workloads for GPs
– make general practice more attractive as a career option to increase recruitment and retention of the GPs upon whom the health service relies.

A third of GP partners in England are unable to fill vacancies. 84% say their workload is affecting the level of patient care.
5 Politicians must take urgent action to improve the health of the population and reverse cuts to public health

The BMA calls on all political parties to:

- work with health professionals to deliver a public health strategy focused on tackling the causes of ill health over a generation
- deliver on the existing commitment to ensure parity of esteem between physical and mental health services
- prioritise measures to tackle the impact of unhealthy food and drink, tobacco and alcohol on the public’s health.