

Fact sheet for media and public on junior doctors' industrial action in England

Key Facts:

- Junior doctors have seen a 26% real terms pay cut in the last 15 years
- Newly qualified junior doctors earn £14 per hour, they are saying that should rise to £19 per hour
- The NHS is in a workforce crisis:
- There are 8,700 medical posts vacant in England
- There are 124,000 NHS staff vacancies in England
- 7.2m patients are on waiting lists
- We have 2,078 fewer fully-qualified, full-time GPs than we had in 2015.
- Four in ten (40%) of junior doctors **say that they will leave** the NHS as soon as they can find another job
- Pay restoration is essential to the future of the NHS

What is a junior doctor?

A junior doctor is a qualified doctor who has graduated medical school and is on a training pathway to become a specialist or a GP. Junior doctors can be in training programmes anywhere from five to 11 years, if they are training full-time, or longer if training less-than-full-time or with breaks.

What is the starting salary of a junior doctor?

The basic pay of a foundation year 1 doctor in England is £29,384 a year. This reflects the minimum basic salary expectation for full time (40 hours) weekday working. Junior doctors may receive varying amounts of additional pay to reward working unsocial (evening and weekend) hours, additional hours, being on-call, and to incentivise certain training programmes/patterns and further academic qualifications.

What does that equate to in hourly pay?

Split across a 40-hour week, basic pay is £14.09 per hour.

How far has junior doctor pay fallen?

Junior doctors have experienced real terms cut of 26.1% to their salaries since 2008/09. The BMA's calculations show that pay awards for junior doctors in England from 2008/9 to 2021/22 have delivered a real terms (RPI) pay cut of 26.1% even accounting for total investment secured through the 4 year pay deal agreed in 2019. This is also before the high levels of inflation seen this financial year, which will mean further real-terms cuts.

What is in the junior doctors' multi-year pay deal?

In the multi-year deal, agreed in 2019 before the pandemic, junior doctors in England were guaranteed a 2% increase each year for four years.

What is the BMA asking for?

The junior doctors committee (JDC) of the BMA is asking the Government to commit to restoring junior doctor pay in England to its 2008/09 levels. As of the beginning of 2023, that means an uplift of around 35 %.

What is the Government's response?

Earlier this month at a meeting the Health Secretary told the chairs of the JDC he did not have a mandate from the PM to negotiate with them. This means the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are wilfully allowing these strikes to go ahead without even trying to negotiate.

What form will strikes take?

This is a 72 hour walkout, from 7am 13 March to 7am Thursday 16 March.

Will emergency cover be provided?

Senior doctors and other staff will be there to provide cover while junior doctors are on strike in areas like A&E. Non-emergency appointments may have to be cancelled or rescheduled to ensure that there are doctors available to provide the same level of emergency care that patients would receive on any other day.

Do junior doctors have an independent pay review body?

Yes, it's called the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) and is intended to be an independent body that makes recommendations each year on what to pay doctors and dentists.

For the last two years the DDRB has been imploring the government to raise its offer for juniors from 2 per cent. It has told the government retention and morale would suffer. Each time this government has ignored it.

In any case the medical profession has long lost faith in the fairness or independence of the pay review process. Neither junior doctors nor consultants have submitted evidence in the past two years, knowing the process is rigged from the start. The NHS staffing crisis cannot be resolved without wholesale reform of the pay review process.