

General Election 2024: Questions to ask your local PPCs (prospective parliamentary candidates)

Healthcare is a key election issue for political parties and so the PPCs in your area will want to be fully informed about both local and national health issues. The lead up to a General Election is an ideal opportunity for doctors to try to influence the views of the person who may become their next MP, and to ask questions about what priorities the candidates and their parties would have if they are elected on 4th July 2024.

The following questions are based on the **BMA's 2024 manifesto** in which we have set out our priorities for any incoming government. The manifesto can be read on our website [here](#).

What would you and your party do to ensure that there is fair remuneration for doctors to improve recruitment and retention in the NHS?

Since 2008, doctors have experienced the largest drop in earnings of all professions subject to pay review bodies. Fair remuneration and terms and conditions for all doctors will save money in the long run and provide staffing solutions that improve recruitment and retention, reduce absence, and lead to happier, more productive staff.

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- Restore doctors' pay by addressing the years of sub inflationary uplifts; deliver pay increases which truly value our medical workforce.
- Deliver a reformed and truly independent pay review body (DDRB) process able to address historic underpayments for doctors.

How would you and your party ensure that doctors are not penalised for taking on extra work to tackle the unacceptable waiting lists?

Doctors trying to reduce waiting lists must not face punitive financial penalties in the form of tax charges – we need to remove the financial penalties in the form of taxation.

The BMA is calling on next government to:

- Guarantee that the punitive impact of the Lifetime Allowance (LA) and the Annual Allowance (AA), which has forced thousands of doctors to retire early or reduce their working commitments to the NHS, will not return.
- Remove the personal, childcare, and annual allowance tapers to ensure that doctors are not penalised for taking on additional overtime.
- Cut red tape to allow practices to hire GPs and reduce GP locum unemployment.

What would you and your party do to improve patient safety?

The expansion of medical associate professions (MAPs), including Physician Associates, must not come at the expense of skilled and expert doctors. MAPs are not doctors and cannot take on the role of doctors. The patient safety risk this is causing must be addressed immediately.

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- Regulate MAPs by the Health and Care Professions Council; amend the legislation which regulates them by the General Medical Council (GMC), the doctors' regulator. Legislate to protect the titles 'assistant' and not 'associate'. Halt the unsafe substitution of doctors by

other professionals in medical care and pause any further recruitment of MAPs until the medical profession's patient safety concerns are fully addressed.

- **Halt the unsafe substitution of doctors by other professionals in medical care and pause any further recruitment of MAPs until the medical profession's patient safety concerns are fully addressed.**

When services are understaffed, patient safety, and doctors' wellbeing is compromised. Safe staffing levels are vital to protect both patients and doctors.

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- **Legislate to enshrine government accountability for safe staffing levels across UK health services.**

How would you help create a learning culture in the NHS where staff feel able to raise concerns without fear or blame, knowing they will be acted on to improve patient care?

Raising concerns about services, safety or discrimination should be welcomed in the NHS but too often this is not the case. Openness and transparency must start at the top and doctors should never be targeted for raising concerns.

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- **Enhance legislative whistleblowing protections for NHS and health service staff who raise concerns, prevent the misuse of the GMC processes, and regulate NHS managers to better hold them to account.**
- **Establish inclusive environments for doctors and medical students ensuring they do not face disadvantages due to background or protected characteristics.**
- **Address sexual misconduct, ensure fair career progression, and strengthen legal protections against discrimination.**

What would you and your party do to ensure there are enough doctors and resources to meet increasing demand?

In the face of an increasingly sick population, the resources, capacity, and academic doctors required to train more doctors, to meet this increased demand, is lacking.

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- **Expand the number of doctors by increasing their undergraduate training places and postgraduate jobs for doctors.**

The health and care system is under significant financial pressure; overall investment must be increased to meet rising demand across all health and care services so that doctors can deliver the services they so desperately want to provide..

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- **Provide the additional staff and services the public deserve by increasing funding for primary, secondary, community and public health services across the UK, including respective Barnett formula increases, via a multiyear settlement at least in line with historical averages, alongside additional funding for pay restoration.**
- **Deliver new GP contracts for England, Northern Ireland and Wales that safeguards sustainable NHS GP partnerships to deliver better services for patients. Governments must**

work in partnership with GPs across the UK in securing GP contract reform where mutually required.

- Invest in NHS infrastructure, with a capital funding injection to fix the maintenance backlog, improve community and GP estates, upgrade digital and IT systems, invest in research, innovation and new technology, and invest in hospitals.

What would you and your party do to promote wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, and increase life expectancy for constituents?

Public health funding has been repeatedly cut despite hospital admissions relating to obesity, smoking, and alcohol misuse remaining high. Putting prevention at the heart of healthcare system would significantly decrease health service uptake and reduce system pressure. Prioritising prevention is not only the right thing for the public and their health outcomes, but also for the NHS and the Treasury.

The BMA is calling on the next government to:

- Increase the public health grant in England to at least 2015/16 levels, with equivalent funding for each other UK nation, and increase numbers of public health specialists, to give local public health teams the means to provide vital preventative services.
- Tackle health inequalities across the UK by implementing robust public health and preventative measures to address harms caused by smoking, climate change, obesity, alcohol use, drugs and gambling.
- Prioritise preventative mental health policies to meet the increasing needs of the public, including investing in mental health services and staff.
- Guarantee resources to improve pandemic preparedness, resilience, and response, implementing the UK and Scottish COVID-19 inquiries' recommendations.
- Ensure access to occupational health services for all workers to ensure staff wellbeing is supported in all workplaces, including the NHS.