

Briefing & FAQs - Ballot for Industrial Action; Resident Doctors in Scotland

Key Dates and inclusion criteria

The ballot for resident doctors in Scotland is opening on **14th November 2025** and closing at 12 noon on **19th December 2025**. All eligible members will be sent a ballot paper by post and case notes will be added to all records confirming when a ballot paper is sent and to which address. To ensure your ballot is received by 19th Dec, please post by **15th December** at the latest.

Re-send requests: We are asking members to wait until **24th November** before requesting a replacement to allow time for the ballot papers to arrive. For any resend requests email the details to doctorspay@bma.org.uk making it clear this is a resend request. There will also be an online request form for this ballot after 24th. Final re-send requests need to be received by noon on **4th December**, any requests after this date a repost will not be possible.

New joiners: New members have until the **4th of December** to join to be included in the ballot.

You do not need to email doctorspay@bma.org.uk for the ballot papers to be sent to new joiners or anyone updating their grade/POW, the team are running files regularly to send out ballots to new joiners/anyone newly eligible.

Eligible to vote

Must be a member of BMA

Must have valid postal address

All resident doctor members who have a Scottish NHS Employer PoW recorded on their membership record

Primary grade must be:

- In the Resident doctors BoP OR
- Trainee in public health without honorary contract OR
- Trainee in public health with honorary contract OR
- Academic trainee – NHS employed

Not eligible to vote

Locum residents employed by an agency (if no NHS employer)

Resident doctors living in Scotland with a POW in England/Wales/NI

Resident doctors living in Scotland with a POW that is not an NHS employer

Resident doctors with no POW record

Resident doctors with armed forces as a secondary grade.

Members with invalid postal address

Background

Why should we strike?

The Scottish Government narrowly averted strikes in 2023, when 97% of resident doctors voted to take strike action, by promising us credible progress to pay restoration in each financial year (including 25/26 and 26/27). Despite months of negotiations looking at multiple solutions to resident doctor pay erosion, the Scottish Government have refused to make an offer that would meet the terms of our 2023 deal. Breaking this deal leaves us with no choice but to ballot. We need to show that the Government can no longer break promises to us, and that there are consequences to their actions. Without a successful ballot, we will have the lowest uplift of all UK nations this year, and the 2 years combined would take 34 years to achieve pay restoration. This is not credible.

Why would we strike over pay and not for jobs?

The unemployment crisis is a TOP priority for BMA Scotland. However, foundation and specialty recruitment is a UK-wide process, and so the levers to fix this are largely held by the UK Government in Westminster. Whilst this dispute remains about the Scottish Government breaking the 2023 deal on pay + new contract, we continue to pressure both the UK + Scottish Government to fund more training posts. However, we will lose leverage on **all** issues if this ballot fails.

Balloting over our 2023 deal doesn't mean jobs aren't a priority for BMA Scotland. The resident doctor unemployment crisis is a key concern – but we don't see the issue of pay and conditions, and jobs, as competing issues. These go hand-in-hand. It is vital that we continue to make progress in improving the pay and conditions for resident doctors in Scotland, so that we aren't just creating jobs, we are creating high-quality, well-paying jobs. We refuse to let the government divide our membership by trying to play pay & conditions, and jobs, off of each other. If we aren't able to hold government to account on the 2023 deal, how can they credibly expect to deliver on any future commitments surrounding jobs?

As evidence that this is a critical issue for the union, BMA Scotland is already winning on jobs in other areas. The unprecedented 2025 funding deal secured by SGPC includes an investment of over £140million aimed at expanding the GP whole time equivalent workforce, meaning more jobs for GPs and CCTing GP registrars. An increase in the workforce is a battle that can be won on different fronts, such as SRDC pushing to do this through ScotGov's Future Medical Workforce work.

The Ballot

When is the ballot?

The ballot will open on November 14th and close on December 19th. By law, it must be postal vote. The latest date to safely post your ballot and guarantee that it's counted is Monday 15th December 2025.

Will the ballot be online or postal?

The ballot will be postal, as per legal requirements. Your ballot will be sent to your primary address. Ballot papers must be returned by post to Civica

Can I vote in the ballot?

Yes, if you are a BMA member and a Resident Doctor in Scotland. That includes FYs, STs (including GPSTs), Locally Employed Doctors (clinical fellows, FY3s, trust grades, etc.) and RD locum doctors. The last date to join the BMA to vote in the ballot will likely be shortly after the ballot opens but [JOIN NOW](#) to ensure your voice is heard.

****The only Resident Doctors who cannot vote are those directly employed by universities**.**

What are the ballot thresholds?

3 key criteria:

- Overall Yes Vote
- 50% of members return their ballot
- 40% of ALL members vote Yes, including those who do not vote

This means that turnout is the main challenge – an unreturned ballot is more dangerous than a No vote!

If I don't vote does that count as a no vote?

Only ballot papers that are return by post to Civica will be counted. But as many ballots must be returned as possible as we need 50% turnout from the membership for IA to proceed.

When will BMA share the results of the ballot with members?

We will announce the results and next steps as quickly as possible after the result of the vote is known. The ballot closes on 19 December, and it is likely to be early on 20 December before we will have results fully verified and ready to announce.

Industrial Action

What is industrial action and why are we considering it?

- Industrial action is broadly *any concerted action brought to put pressure on an employer in furtherance of a trade dispute*
- SRDC formally entered into dispute with Scottish Government on 7 October to protect the [2023 deal](#) which covered pay restoration, contract negotiations, and new pay review mechanism. For industrial action to be legal, we must follow strict legislation. This includes
 - Appointment of an independent scrutineer
 - Strict balloting rules, including data control of membership details
 - Notice to employers of intention to ballot
 - Postal voting ONLY
 - The ballot will be for STRIKE action

What are the implications for members taking IA?

- If ballot succeeds, we will announce strike dates in advance to all employers
- Form of action will be strike
- Those taking action are protected from victimisation/dismissal if ballot legal (NB – can be asked by employer if you are taking action in advance, but you are not obliged to respond and it is recommended that you do not, in order to maximise the impact of any strikes.)
- Unpaid – can be deduction of 100% even if partial performance

It is likely we will organise some pickets outside main hospitals during a strike, and a larger demonstration somewhere central at a time to attract maximum publicity. Specific guidance and support on picketing has been prepared and will be distributed.

When will the strikes be, what will they look like?

Strikes will not be over Christmas or New Year. Scottish Resident Doctors Committee will decide exact dates after the ballot, but January is likely.

Can I strike as a non-BMA member?

You cannot vote in the ballot, but you can strike if you aren't a member of another union that isn't striking that day. However, the BMA will not be able to support you if you have difficulties with your employer.

Will I Lose Pay if I Go Out On Strike?

You will lose one day of pay for each day that you are on strike action. This is a deduction of 1/29th, 1/30th or 1/31st of your gross pay for each day you are on strike. You cannot be deducted wages for days you were not meant to be at work, or if you are on annual leave or another kind of leave.

The prospect of lost wages can be daunting for some. The BMA operates a strike fund that supports all doctors undertaking strike action that you will be able to apply for support for. In addition, industrial action has successfully won members significant progress towards pay restoration, and effective strike action is the most effective strategy for improving long-term remuneration.

Why Should I Strike As an IMG?

Taking part in strike action is an exemption from the unpaid leave rules under current immigration laws. The rules around unauthorised absences for 10 consecutive days are unlikely to be breached by strike action alone, and considerations around this form part of our industrial strategy. The BMA offer an immigration advice service, and will offer support, to members who are having trouble in this.

Striking has no effect on your eligibility to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

We understand that there is considerable angst in the International Medical Graduate community regarding recent UK BMA policy around UK Graduate Prioritisation. The BMA represents all doctors in the UK, including its IMG members, our priority remains a fair and equitable recruitment system for all doctors working in the UK. BMA Scotland continue to make strides to improve the pay, working conditions, training, and recruitment experience for ALL of our members, and that includes IMGs. Taking part in industrial action is a vital part in giving us the leverage to do that in a way that delivers benefits for all of our members.

Will Striking Affect My Maternity Pay?

This is nuanced (3 types of maternity income) so you should seek individual advice from the BMA

How can I get involved with Activism & Local Organising?

(Use the QR code pack to assist with this)

Any and all contributions to the campaign are welcome and highly appreciated. The best way to get support locally is to sign up as an activist. Message or speak to your local SRDC chair.

If you're able to put up posters or distribute leaflets, these can be ordered via the campaign resource page.

Ward walking is a vital part of our organising operation and will help us map and chart what members have been spoken to and what they think. You can do this independently or with your BMA reps and activists. We can assist with resources to assist with this, and we ask that you update the BMA staff team and your LNCARDS chair about any ward walks you have done.

At the time of any strike, we will need picket supervisors, who will receive specific materials and training from the BMA- no prior experience or knowledge necessary!

No contribution is too small and all of them are valued. The more you contribute, the more opportunity you will have to set the direction of the BMA and strengthen the collective voice of your union.

I am a locum employed by an agency, am I eligible to vote in the ballot?

If you are solely employed by an agency, you will not be able to vote in the ballot.

If you are working as a locum and employed directly by an NHS employer, you will be eligible to vote in the ballot.

How do I access my local Whatsapp strike group?

Whatsapp groups will be created by members of SRDC and information disseminated to members.

Can I work as a locum during the strike?

If you are directly employed by an agency and have already been rostered to work on the day of the industrial action, then you should attend for work as usual. This is to avoid breaching the contract you have in place with your agency.

If you are not directly employed by an agency, then you are regarded as self-employed. The usual legal position regarding self-employed persons is that they are free to accept or reject offers of work as they see fit.

We would suggest you think carefully about doing so as this may undermine the strike action.

I am on maternity leave, sick leave, taking a career break, on OOPE or retiring. Can I vote?

If you are expecting that you will be away from your NHS workplace for the whole of the six months from the close of ballot on 19th December, then you will need to contact the BMA and opt out from voting on the ballot.

I am a BDA member working on the 2002 contract, am I eligible to take part in the ballot?

The BMA ballot is only open to BMA members. The BDA will update their members on how to proceed.

If I chose not to vote for strike action on the upcoming ballot, can I be forced to strike?

You cannot be forced to strike even if the ballot is successful. Each resident doctor must decide whether or not to take industrial action.

Resident doctors 'acting up' as consultants or working elsewhere on strike days

You can take industrial action if you have a resident doctor contract with an NHS employer, provided your action does not impact on any other contract you hold. You cannot take action if you are employed as a locum consultant.

You cannot take action if you are due to be working for a non-NHS employer at the time of the strike action.

Is there a reason you are doing the ballot via post rather than online?

The law requires a statutory industrial action ballot to be postal and not electronic.

If I ask for replacement ballot paper and then find the first one, does it matter which one I use? What happens if I send back both?

All returned ballots will include a number that would prevent double counting, as you could only have the one numbered ballot count.

How long does it take for someone to get a replacement ballot paper?

We are sending files to Civica every Monday and Thursday and they will process the following day so please allow at least a week for replacement to come through. The last date to request a replacement is noon on 4th December 2025.