

Funding the Future

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If you listened to Wes Streeting and the government, the problem with supplying more appointments in the NHS is all down to a shortage of GPs, and they are years away because of the time it takes to train them.

Except that is not true. In fact, it is the exact opposite of the truth. [As a letter from the British Medical Association](#) (the doctor's union, in effect) to Wes Streeting says:

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BMA

Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care

20 May 2025

Sent via email

Dear Secretary of State,

As chairs of the BMA GP Registrars Committee, Sessional GP Committee and GPC England, we are writing to collectively raise our concerns about the increasing unemployment of GPs across England, and how this will be worsened when the next cohort of GPs qualify this summer.

As we are all acutely aware, patients are currently struggling to access timely GP care, and practising GPs are frequently contending with unsafe and unmanageable workloads.

This serious situation is reflected in [our recent survey of GP under and unemployment](#). The findings showed:

- 15% of respondents were unable to find any suitable work at all
- 56% of respondents wanted to work more hours in the NHS, but were unable to find suitable opportunities
- 21% of respondents said they have made definite plans to change their careers.

A 2024 Royal College of General Practitioners' survey showed that GP Registrars are entering a job market so challenging they find themselves applying for 13 jobs on average before a successful appointment. Data from 2022/23 showed the proportion of GP registrars taking up a permanent position within two years of completing training was only 49% - we expect this will be even lower now. Based on feedback from colleagues, many are seeking alternative careers in medicine, outside the NHS, beyond medicine, and some are even considering employment benefits as a direct result of this unemployment crisis.

We are expecting hundreds, perhaps as many as a thousand GP registrars completing their training this August who could be left facing unemployment - hence the urgency of our ask.

What are they calling for? This:

BMA

We are calling on the Government for:

- Ring-fenced, additional, direct-to-practice core funding, to hire newly qualified and currently under/unemployed GPs as practice-based GPs. This would be separate from the 'GPs in ARRS' scheme, as GPs wish to be centred in practices offering continuity of care. PCNs have already been proven to be [disadvantageous to more deprived populations](#);
- A national retention strategy for GPs in England to be factored into the Ten-Year Plan revisions with a commitment to: reducing social inequity, increasing continuity of care and reducing the GP to patient list size ratio as per [GPC England's Patients First](#) manifesto;
- More practice-based opportunities for GPs at all career stages.

We believe that addressing GP underemployment and unemployment, particularly in areas of

That looks eminently sensible in the light of everything that the government says it wants to do. After all, why wouldn't you want to put newly trained doctors to work as GPs, which is what they have trained to be, when that makes the lot of everyone in the UK a bit better?

Who knows what answer Wes Streeting might provide to that question, apart from 'Rachel says no'?

What we do know is that the fear that the BMA highlights is real, and that is a damning indictment of Labour, its budgeting, its ability to prioritise, its ability to deliver on its promises, and its concern for people in the UK, including those it might employ.