

Press release

Better access to GPs with same-day appointments for urgent care

Patients to benefit from improved access to GP appointments under new contract backed by nearly £500 million.

From: Department of Health and Social Care
([/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care](#)), NHS England
([/government/organisations/nhs-england](#))
and The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
([/government/people/wes-streeting](#))

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This was published under the 2024 to 2026 Starmer Labour government



- New GP contract to improve access to primary care with same-day appointments for urgent cases
- Almost £500 million investment to improve capacity, as part of ongoing action to recruit GPs
- The government has placed GPs at the heart of the 10 Year Health Plan, with a pivotal role in the shift from hospital to community

Patients across the country will see better access to appointments and general practice services thanks to a new GP contract, backed by a £485 million uplift in government investment - a real terms increase in GP funding for the second year in a row.

This brings the total increase in spending on primary care under this government to £1.6 billion in total in 2 years, following through on the government's commitment to fix the front door of the NHS and shift the focus of the NHS out of hospital and into the community.

Separately, nearly £300 million of existing funding will be ringfenced and diverted into GP practices as part of plans to recruit additional GPs, or increase sessions undertaken by GPs already hired at the practice, as government continues to tackle both GP unemployment as well as underemployment. This is equal to around 1,600 (full-time equivalent) GPs across England, boosting access.

In a boost for the workforce, experienced GPs will be able to be recruited through the Additional Roles and Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS), rather than just newly qualified doctors.

The new contract requires all patients with urgent needs to have access to a same-day GP appointment - so that everyone can get the urgent care they need when they need it.

The funding and measures are part of the new GP contract for 2026 to 2027, which will come into force from 1 April.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting said:

“Through this government’s investment and modernisation, we’re fixing the front door to the NHS.

“We’re giving practices the flexibility to hire more GPs and backing them with extra funding to do so. As a result, many more patients with urgent needs will be able to get an appointment the day they contact their practice.

“Taken together, our changes will help patients stay healthy and out of hospital, whether it’s jabs for children, screening for lung cancer, weight loss support or continuity of care - we’re backing our GPs to build a healthier nation.”

The changes build on this year’s GP contract, which introduced new incentives to bring back the family doctor and made offering online booking requests mandatory to help end the 8am scramble for appointments.

Since coming into office, the government has:

- supported GPs by cutting red tape so doctors spend more time caring for patients
- recruited 2,000 extra GPs
- invested over £100 million into vital upgrades to surgeries
- rolled out online requests

Thanks to the steps the government has taken, patient satisfaction is on the rise after a decade of decline, and ease of access is improving, with ONS data from December 2025 showing 75.1% reporting contacting their GP as “easy”, up from 61% in July 2024.

Amanda Doyle, National Director for Primary Care and Community Services, NHS England, said:

“While GP teams are already delivering over 1.4 million appointments every working day, ringfencing £292 million will allow practices to recruit more GPs and strengthen the care they provide.

“We’ve also upgraded thousands of practice phone systems and introduced online request forms, making it easier for people to contact their surgery in

a way that suits them, while keeping phone lines free for those who need urgent care.”

The new GP contract for 2026 to 2027 sets out the terms, conditions and funding for providing general practice and is backed by a £485 million uplift, which is a real terms increase and a 3.6% cash increase - bringing the total to £13.863 billion. The new contract builds on the record £1.1 billion funding boost for 2025 to 2026.

The government consulted with the BMA general practitioners committee in England, as well as wider stakeholders including the Royal College of General Practitioners, National Voices, the Institute of General Practice Management, Healthwatch England, NHS Confederation and the National Association of Primary Care.

Other key measures from the contract include:

- more babies and children to be protected from deadly viruses with incentives for GP immunisations
- GPs will help identify thousands of patients for referral through better data sharing with the lung cancer screening programme
- patients with severe obesity and comorbidities will be supported by their GP to access weight loss support programmes and jabs, under £25 million programme
- in addition to telephone and walk-in access, online consultation systems will be required to continue staying open throughout core hours (from 8am to 6:30pm, Monday to Friday) so patients can contact their GP digitally during working hours
- Advice and Guidance (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/elective-care/best-practice-solutions/advice-and-guidance/>) to be embedded in GP contract so patients are referred to the right place and the right time
- GPs will be required to identify and prioritise patients for continuity of care

From October 2025 the government rolled out online requests at GP practices across England, allowing patients better access to contact their GP online during core hours.

NHS data for December 2025 shows that nearly 7.4 million patients submitted their GP request online (<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/submissions-via-online-consultation-systems-in-general-practice/december-2025>)

Craig Beaumont, Executive Director at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

“We know that health conditions are now more prevalent in the working age population. The NHS should meet the healthcare needs of today’s workforce, so making it easier to see a GP is an important way to help people get back to work. This also counts for small business owners themselves, whose roles are often stressful and time-pressured.”



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