

# Resident doctors in England oppose BMA sellout deal with government

Our correspondents  
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Resident doctors have been speaking out against the “new offer” they are being balloted on by the British Medical Association (BMA) in a referendum running from June 18-26.

The snap vote follows the cancellation by the BMA’s Resident Doctors Committee (RDC) of the four-day strike in England by around 50,000 doctors in the National Health Service (NHS) which was due to start on Monday, June 15. After a year of threats by the Starmer government and media smears, resident doctors were preparing to take their sixteenth round of strike action since March 2023, demanding full pay restoration and action to resolve the mounting jobs crisis.

The RDC leadership, headed by Dr. Jack Fletcher, called off the walkout before members had any opportunity to examine the proposed agreement. Doctors were informed by email on Saturday evening, barely 24 hours before the scheduled strike action and only provided highlights. The RDC executive had spent a week in closed-door discussions with Labour Health Secretary James Murray.

The WSWs article stated in its call for a mobilisation of resident doctors against the RDC sellout: “As a matter of principle, no offer should be used to call off mandated strike action before BMA members have been given time to scrutinise its contents and determine whether it meets their demands.”

Rather than a “new offer”, the proposals are a repackaging of a deal already rejected that led to six days of strike action in April. It offers nothing meaningful on real-term wages, still down 21 percent compared with 2008. It accepts the 3.5 percent award imposed by the government for this year and combines this with a reform of the pay progression structure to dress up an average increase of 6.6 percent by April

2027. The new “nodal points” are linked to productivity demands, meaning more work with less staff.

The deal recycles the government’s earlier promise of 4,500 specialty training places spread over three years. This does nothing to address the immediate crisis facing the profession, with around 20,000 doctors currently unable to secure specialty training posts.

The RDC spin of a “new offer” has met a scathing response by resident doctors who have taken to social media in support of a No vote. Replying to the BMA’s video announcement from Fletcher on X, one doctor wrote: “Pack your bags, this is an embarrassingly bad offer. It speaks volumes that you would try and trick the membership into taking it.”

Another said: “Jack, you have forgotten to mention that this offer screws LEDs [Locally Employed Doctors] especially IMGs [International Medical Graduates], left, right and centre. I know you are a shameless creature so do the right thing and resign. Along with your stooges Arjan, Shiv, Haseena, etc.”

Resident doctors have responded to WSWs reporters. One doctor in Birmingham said: “I’ll be real; the way things are going, I’m not at all happy. I’ve been feeling quite down about the whole BMA and the state of the NHS right now, and even reading the modernisation bill makes me feel so shit. I think I’m going to vote no for the offer.”

A colleague in London said: “Even after all those strikes the government is seeing what the bare minimum we’ll agree to is.”

A medical student added: “No, that’s not on! Such sellouts. It’s not nearly enough jobs still!”

On WhatsApp groups in London, one doctor criticised the unaccountability of BMA leaders: “It’s because the current RDC were censured at today’s

RDC conference, so it is them throwing toys out of the pram.”

Another slammed the deal: “So essentially the 3.5% from April that everyone was getting anyway, another 3% in October as part of this biannual pay rise and then potentially another 3% by April 2027? Plus a load of stuff that really isn’t about FPR [full pay restoration]. This is in the context of an upcoming inflation spike that will be like COVID + Ukraine war combined...”

One responded saying: “Regardless, I am voting no. Tremendous damage to the profession and to the trade union movement has already been done. Disgraceful.”

The RDC leadership called off the strike action to try and bounce BMA members into accepting the deal on the same day that a motion of censure had been passed against them by delegates at an RDC policy conference for withholding information from members and failing to use the strike mandate.

A resident doctor in Wales was critical of the divisive approach by the BMA conducting separate campaigns for pay restoration in the constituent parts of the UK. This has led to a myriad of settlements all below the core demand and undermining parity across the NHS.

“I’m disappointed but not at all surprised! They’ve [BMA] done a very good job splitting the union and alienating our international colleagues, which ultimately undermines any improvement of our working conditions. Exhausting.

“I’m also sat tired, waiting for the Welsh BMA to please call strikes. I’m not super convinced about FPR with the BMA in its current state.

“It’s very annoying to watch us all fight for scraps when we still have slammed A&Es due to shortages in primary care, and we are all fighting to use the one functional computer on the ward.”

The BMA’s support for the Medical Training (Prioritisation) Act, which favours UK graduates over IMGs for jobs, was also criticised. “We should all have jobs. I feel that a lot of the rhetoric surrounding IMGs is drenched in very polite racism. They are literally poaching and stealing healthcare workers from abroad, and saying ‘oh then they can all go back home’ is also deeply wicked because their countries are heavily exploited by the UK two-fold.”

One doctor produced a mock up BMA poster on their X account stating: “Myth: Jack Fletcher is an unbiased leader, Fact: He is a Labour Party boy and don’t give a

flying fig about doctors pay”.

The RDC has hashed out a deal with the Labour government in a bid to quash resistance. Health Minister James Murray described the attempt to shut down the struggle as a “welcome development” and used this to ramp up the rhetoric against “unnecessary strikes”. He made clear that government austerity remains intact, stating that “all the necessary funding is coming from existing budgets”.

The RDC leadership has driven the struggle into a dead end because it fully accepts the government’s “affordability” mantra. While ministers claim there is no money for doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, hospital beds or patient care, billions are being found elsewhere. The NHS is bearing the brunt of cuts, job losses and “efficiency savings” while the Starmer government ramps up military spending and private corporations’ profit from further outsourcing.

NHS FightBack calls on resident doctors to deliver an emphatic No vote in the referendum. They should demand a motion of no confidence in Fletcher and the RDC executive and fight to establish rank-and-file control over their dispute.

New democratic organisations, independent of the union bureaucracy, are required to place decision-making power in the hands of resident doctors.

Such a struggle must unite with nurses, consultants, ambulance workers, healthcare assistants and the entire NHS workforce in opposition to austerity, privatisation and job cuts and against the sellouts by their own union leaders.

Only a movement based on the independent mobilisation of all healthcare workers can secure full pay restoration, guarantee jobs for all doctors and defend the NHS as a fully funded public service.

Send in your testimony to NHS FightBack to expose staffing shortages, corridor care, bed shortages and the impact on patients and staff and help end the cover-up over the dismantling of the NHS and build a movement independent of the government, management and union bureaucracies.



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