

You may be seeing news reports talking about “industrial action” by GPs and the partners would like to to update our patients.

The British Medical Association (BMA - the registered trade union for doctors) recently undertook a ballot of all GPs who hold a contract to provide GP services to patients - the vast majority of GP practices are independent partnerships holding an NHS contract. The ballot asked if GP partners were prepared to participate in joint (“collective”) action with the BMA. An overwhelming majority across Cornwall and the UK said yes, including Carnon Downs Surgery.

This is NOT about pay but about General Practice receiving the amount of funding needed to employ enough doctors, nurses and other staff to provide sufficient appointments and for our staff to work safely.

As GPs, we have for years been doing work that is not funded and not contracted due to gaps in commissioned services and pressures in secondary care services; we have been doing so out of concern for our patients and to ensure that you continue to receive the care you deserve. However, with chronic underfunding and increased demand it is no longer sustainable for us to continue working in this way.

Across the country, since 2015, we have seen 1600 Practices close or merge, there are 6 million more registered patients and 2000 fewer full time equivalent GPs. Our funding levels are significantly lower than 2018 levels.

The joint action across the country is hoping to force the government to look at General Practice and urgently reconsider the amount of funding it receives. You may remember seeing in the media a few weeks back that GP surgeries get 30p per patient per day to provide services – this is woefully inadequate.

Though you may have heard this referred to in the press as industrial action; this is factually incorrect.

This is not industrial action. We are not on strike. This is “collective action” which is about working legitimately within our contracts. We will not be doing anything that compromises your safety, and we will not currently be going on strike. But we are fighting to be able to provide better services to you.

Please continue to use our services as normal and rest assured that patient care is still our priority.

We hope you understand that we are taking this action to ensure that general practice locally, in Cornwall and across England is there for our patients in years to come.

Yours faithfully

Dr Cook, Dr Teff, Dr Embling and Dr Cuff