

Dear Primary Care Colleagues,

This is to inform you that industrial action by our pathology Biomedical Scientist workforce will significantly reduce laboratory processing capacity from **Wednesday 4 February to Friday 6 February 2026 (inclusive)**. To maintain a clinically safe service across the Trust, we must prioritise urgent and critical patient testing.

We therefore request that **all GP practices reduce phlebotomy and pathology requesting activity by 40% on 4, 5, and 6 February 2026**.

What this means for Primary Care

- **Only clinically critical tests should be requested during this period.**
Please defer all routine and non-urgent monitoring (e.g., stable long-term condition surveillance, medication monitoring where a short delay is clinically safe) until after 6 February.
- **Mark all clinically critical requests clearly as 'URGENT/CRITICAL' in the electronic order and include a brief clinical justification to support triage.**

Turnaround times

- Turnaround times may be extended for all non-urgent samples.
- To safeguard capacity for urgent and inpatient pathways, we may need to **hold or return non-critical primary care samples** if demand exceeds available staffing levels.

Clinic scheduling

- Please **reduce available phlebotomy appointments by approximately 40%** on 4–6 February.
- To avoid overwhelming post-strike capacity, please **avoid scheduling large-volume "catch-up" clinics** on the weekend of 7–8 February or Monday 9 February. If high-volume clinics are unavoidable, please coordinate with us in advance so we can plan staffing appropriately.

Escalation and advice

- For **urgent clinical queries about individual patients**, please follow the usual clinical escalation pathways to the relevant specialty.
- For **pathology service queries** (including what constitutes clinically critical in borderline situations), please contact the **BHRUT main switchboard** and request transfer to the appropriate pathology subspecialty (Haematology, Biochemistry, Microbiology, etc.).

We will provide further updates if circumstances change.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in maintaining patient safety throughout this period.

