

Dear Primary Care Colleagues,

Re: Pathology staff Industrial Action

This is to inform you that industrial action by our pathology Biomedical Scientist workforce will significantly reduce laboratory processing capacity from **Monday 27 April 2026 at 00:01 to Friday 1 May 2026 at 23:59 (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 80% on 27, 28, 29, 30 April 2026 and 1 May 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 1 May 2026.
- **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 80% on 27 April – 1 May 2026.**
- This reduction in available phlebotomy capacity is required because samples that cannot be processed due to the reduced capacity will be stored. Even when stored safely under optimal conditions, samples will deteriorate over the five-day period. To avoid producing erroneous results and to ensure patient safety, these samples will not be processed, and affected patients will therefore need to be re-bled.
- To avoid overwhelming post-strike capacity, **please avoid scheduling large-volume “catch-up” clinics** on the weekend of 2–4 May or Tuesday 5 May. If high-volume clinics are unavoidable, please coordinate with us in advance so we can plan staffing appropriately.
- BHRUT Pathology are looking to increase phlebotomy capacity for the weekend of 9-10 May to mitigate the impact on patients.



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.

Imran Ellahi

Operations Director, Cancer and Clinical Support, BHRUT

