



Medical Interview Preparation Addresses Selection Pressures as NHS Consultant Strike Mandate Persists

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Consultants in England retain a live mandate for industrial action almost two months after their ballot closed, with the British Medical Association confirming it has begun active preparations for strike action while negotiations with the Government continue. The developing situation has drawn attention to how the next generation of doctors is being prepared for the selection process that leads toward senior clinical posts.

The ballot, which closed on 6 July 2026, returned a vote in favour of industrial action. Of 35,067 eligible members, 18,069 cast a vote, a turnout of 51.53 per cent, with 13,695 voting yes and 4,369 voting no. The mandate runs for 12 months, and no strike dates have been announced. BMA representatives met the Health Secretary, Yvette Cooper, on 13 August.

The dispute centres on pay erosion and working conditions rather than a single pay award. The association states that consultant pay in England remains around a quarter lower in real terms than it was 17 years ago, and that the 3.5 per cent uplift announced in March 2026 made little progress towards reversing that decline. Further demands include a shorter standard working week, improved recognition of out-of-hours work, and a contractual minimum of three supporting professional activities, the protected time consultants use for

teaching, supervision and service improvement.

The association has warned that sustained workload pressure is prompting some consultants to withdraw discretionary effort, declining teaching and leadership roles and focusing on contractual obligations alone. It argues this leaves fewer senior clinicians available to support trainees preparing for specialty selection.

Specialty training is the route by which doctors progress towards consultant or general practitioner posts, and selection typically combines a scored application with a structured panel interview. Government figures published in January 2026 recorded more than 47,000 applicants across the first two rounds of the 2026 cycle. The Medical Training (Prioritisation) Act 2026 has since altered how offers are allocated, and the agreement that ended the resident doctors dispute in June commits to a minimum of 4,000 additional specialty training posts over three years, at least 1,000 of them by August 2027, with 250 roles starting in February 2027. Applications for the next cycle open in the autumn.

Dr Nalin Wickramasuriya, a retired consultant paediatrician and founder of Medical Interview Preparation, stated that additional posts do not remove the selection interview, and that many applicants are now preparing without the informal coaching consultants once had time to offer. "When candidates arrive with comparable portfolios, the difference is made by how clearly they reason aloud and structure answers under pressure," he said.

Wickramasuriya added that the same pressures shaping trainee preparation extend to those seeking senior appointments. "An NHS Consultant Interview places demands on clinical reasoning and communication that reward structured, well-rehearsed preparation, and fewer trainees now have ready access to that support within their departments," he said.

Medical Interview Preparation provides one-to-one coaching and mock interviews for doctors applying to UK specialty training posts. The company works with candidates to develop structured responses, clinical reasoning skills and interview technique across the range of stages within the medical selection process.

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Medical Interview Preparation

We coach doctors, mainly based in the UK, to improve their interview technique when aiming to progress their careers by getting into a specialist training program, or onto a fellowship or to obtain a consultant position in an NHS hospital.

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