# BMA warns of patient safety risks as NHS pushes ahead with online GP access



The British Medical Association (BMA) has issued an urgent ultimatum to Health Secretary Wes Streeting, demanding action within 48 hours to prevent a looming dispute over new online access requirements for GP surgeries in England. Set to take effect on October 1, these regulations will compel GP practices to keep online consultation tools open during working hours for non-urgent appointment requests, medication queries, and administrative matters. The BMA warns that this policy could have severe consequences for both patient and staff safety, as general practice faces an increased workload from managing a surge of online requests.

The BMA cautions that the mandated online access is likely to produce "hospital-style waiting lists in general practice," a scenario that could erode the availability of face-to-face appointments with GPs. Doctors will be tasked with triaging a vast backlog of patient requests, a process which, according to the association, will jeopardise patient care by making it harder to promptly identify urgent cases. This triage challenge is expected to stem from what the BMA describes as a "barrage" of unmet patient need manifesting through the new online channels.

The Health Secretary, according to the BMA, is fully aware of these risks but is pressing ahead with the changes regardless. This face-off highlights persistent tensions within the NHS frontline services, where the balance between expanding digital access and maintaining quality clinical care remains delicate. The concerns raised by the BMA reflect broader issues in general practice, including workforce shortages and increasing patient demand, which have been widely documented across health service reports.

While the government aims to modernise access and reduce pressure on frontline telephone lines through these online portals, critics argue that the policy overlooks the practical constraints and human resource limits in many GP surgeries. The BMA's call for intervention underscores the urgent need for a more considered approach that protects patient safety without overburdening healthcare professionals.

As the October deadline approaches, it remains unclear whether the Health Secretary will adjust the policy in response to the BMA’s warnings or proceed with implementation, potentially triggering a dispute that could further strain the already pressured general practice environment.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html)
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1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/bma-wes-streeting-gps-nhs-england-health-secretary-b1250174.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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