PATIENT NUMBERS AND FP69

GP lists are shrinking. Here is why, and what it means for Cheshire.

NHS England is removing patients it believes no longer live in England. This page explains how that works, why the numbers behind it are less certain than they look, who is being hit hardest, and what your practice can do.

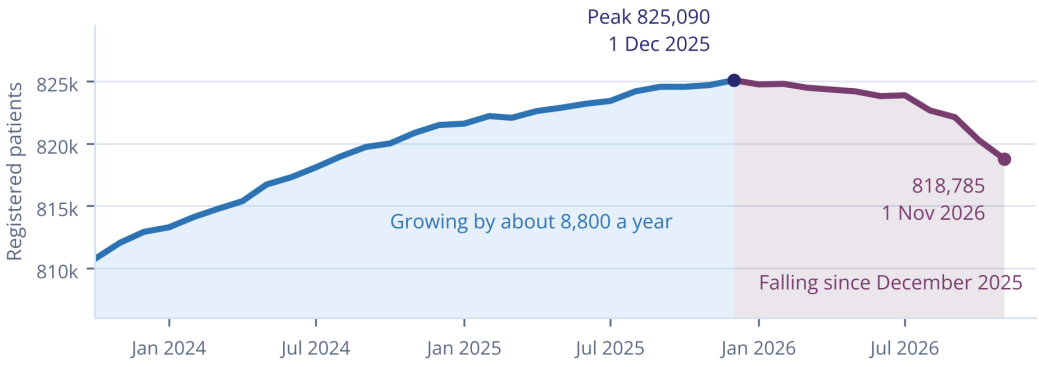
IN BRIEF

An **FP69** is a flag saying a patient's address is in doubt. If nobody confirms it within three months, the patient is removed from your list. NHS England is now raising far more of them, using a computer model to pick out patients it thinks have left. Practices should not be paid for patients who have gone. But the model is unpublished, the population figure behind it is uncertain, and the falls are steepest in the poorest communities.

-5,914
Cheshire patients, Nov 2025 to Nov 2026. The year before, the list grew by about 8,800.

-1.02m
Fewer registered patients in England than in January 2026

29 of 74
Cheshire practices still grew last year, while 19 others fell by more than 2%



Patients registered with Cheshire practices (sub-ICB 27D), October 2023 to November 2026. Source: NHS England, Patients Registered at a GP Practice.

Where GPs stand

General practice does not want to be paid for patients who have died, moved away or registered elsewhere. We support accurate lists. Our concern is how this exercise is run: the target, the model that chooses who is contacted, and what happens to patients who are still here but do not answer a letter.

YOUR PRACTICE

How has your list changed?

Every Cheshire and Merseyside practice and PCN, month by month, against its own 2022 to 2024 average.

Open the list size tracker →

cheshiregplistsizetracker.netlify.app

What your practice should consider doing now

FP69 flags arrive in batches, and the practice has three months from the day each flag appears. The steps below protect patients who are still here, and your list. They are also a significant amount of work: staff time spent on FP69s is time not spent on other work. Consider logging that time, so it can be shared with the wider system.

Day 0
NHS England contacts the patient by message, then letter

Day 30
No reply from the patient

About day 60
FP69 appears in your clinical system. **Your three months start here.**

About day 150
Patient removed, and not told

Patients under 18 are not removed when a flag expires, but their address still needs checking.

1. **Log every flag and its deadline.** Name a lead, with cover for leave, to check for new flags at least weekly. Record each one and the date it expires.

2. **Check the whole record first.** Look at prescriptions, results, hospital letters and online contacts, not just appointments. If seen in the last six months, respond "patient seen, remove FP69". Use the dropdowns, not free text. NHS England's checks cannot see GP appointments; your record can.

3. **Protect vulnerable patients.** Check flags against frailty, safeguarding, mental health, care home and housebound lists, and take extra care before letting any of these patients go.

4. **Contact everyone else, and keep trying.** Text or email, then phone at different times, then a letter, then a relative or carer. Try again after two to three weeks and record each attempt.

5. **Protect patients who cannot get post.** For patients who are homeless, or live on boats or in caravan parks, write "unable to receive mail at this address" in the GP message field.

6. **Tell your patients to reply.** Use your website, screens, a text to all patients, your PPG and local pharmacies; Londonwide LMCs' poster and video are free to use. NHS England's texts come from "NHSdetails" and are genuine, so reception can reassure patients who ask.

7. **Check removals already made.** Look back over the last three to six months. Re-register anyone removed wrongly. If you had responded in time, use PCSE's online form ("Incorrect patient deduction – retrospective list amendment request") and ask for the date to be backdated. Record any harm as a significant event.

8. **Watch your numbers.** Use your usual methods, and tools like the list size tracker, to follow your list each month against your own usual pattern.

Tell us about your FP69s

The government says fewer than 5% of patients referred to practices turn out to be still at their address. To test that, we need a fair sample, not just the cases that stand out. Please take your next batch of flags, or every flag over one month, and tell us how many were:

- still at their address, or seen recently;
- confirmed as having left;
- impossible to trace;
- still being checked.

Tell us separately about any patient removed in error and what happened to them (no identifiable details), and roughly how much staff time FP69s take. Email jhughes@cheshirelmc.org.uk with the subject "FP69".

The evidence behind this, including why NHS England is doing it, how patients are chosen, the population figures and what has happened in Cheshire, is set out in the full paper.

Prepared by Cheshire LMC for Cheshire GP practices. Please credit Cheshire LMC if quoting. Practices are welcome to share it with their staff, PPG, MPs and local councillors.