

24 February 2023

All Junior Doctors and Dentists
MFT

Dear Colleagues

Re: Junior Doctors' Industrial Action – planning cover for strike action

You will be aware of the forthcoming junior doctors' industrial action in response to the UK Government's failure to engage over junior doctor pay restoration. Junior doctors in England will begin their action with a 72-hour full walkout starting on the morning of 13 March and concluding at 7 am on Thursday 16 March 2023.

Other healthcare professions have previously been balloted, and the Trust fully supports the rights of any of our staff to take lawful industrial action.

As an organisation, we will always recognise and value the tremendous contribution made by our junior doctors and dentists – both those employed directly by MFT and those hosted here during their postgraduate training. We know you are highly skilled and expert professionals who deliver the bulk of our urgent and emergency care, as well as a vast amount of elective care, working with our senior doctors.

Withdrawal of this care for 72 hours will constitute a hugely significant incident during which it will not be possible to deliver 'normal' services and business continuity. As senior doctors we all recognise this because we know that you, our junior doctor workforce, are indispensable; when the industrial action goes ahead, the whole country will know it too.

Our junior doctors are highly conscientious professionals and we know you do not want to see patient harm due to industrial action – therefore we believe it is our duty as senior doctors to support you and our non-medical colleagues by ensuring patient safety during the strike action. This will take a massive effort, which is why we are now accelerating our planning by asking our senior staff for their help to provide cover. Across all our Sites, we are creating rotas of senior doctors to cover junior doctor duties working alongside other healthcare professionals whose support is greatly valued; we will be arranging refresher training for seniors and planning what activity will need to be stood down. We attach more detailed FAQs which will be updated.

Your Consultants and other seniors will be working with their clinical and operational directors to ensure plans are in place. As we plan, we will value your advice and guidance to ensure we have taken account of the full scope of the junior doctor roles. Providing such advice and guidance would be purely voluntary and there is no obligation to do so; but we hope that some of you will be able to support us in this way to ensure we do the very best for our patients. When we issue the detailed plans for senior cover, we will also ask for your support with handover at the start and end of the 72-hour period.

We would like to make a personal request to you all. It is really important that we, the doctors and dentists of MFT, employ our strong professional bonds to work together in support of patient safety, in collaboration across all grades and with other colleagues at MFT. We must all respect the rights of individuals to take strike action or decline, understanding that personal circumstances will influence those choices; we need to be compassionate towards one another at a time of great challenge; and we need to uphold our professional integrity at all times.

We know this is a stressful time. Employee support is available through our organisational structures and of course through the Lead Employer for colleagues whose contract is with St Helens & Knowsley.

Thank you very much for your great support and professionalism, as always.

Yours sincerely



Miss T S Onon
Joint Group Medical Director /
Responsible Officer



Professor J M Eddleston
Joint Group Medical Director /
Caldicott Guardian
Honorary Clinical Professor, MAHSC

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