

### **Ambulance FAQs**

**October 2014**

#### **What industrial action is planned for the ambulance service?**

UNISON members have voted for strike action and action short of strike action. UNISON's national ambulance committee decided that the action short of strike action would be in the form of an overtime ban.

#### **Why are ambulance staff taking different action short of strike action to the rest of the NHS?**

UNISON's national ambulance committee believed that an overtime ban would be more effective as many ambulance trusts rely on overtime to function on a daily basis.

#### **Strike Action**

##### **When does the strike action start and finish?**

Ambulance members will be called upon to take a 4 hour stoppage which will commence on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October starting at 07.00am and finishing at 11.00am.

##### **What happens if I start before 07.00am?**

You will need to get advice from your branch about how this will work in operation but we would expect that you would return to your place of work as soon as possible to 07.00am where you can then join the strike until 11.00am.

##### **What happens if I start after 07.00am but before 11.00am?**

You should attend work at your normal time to take part in the strike action and start your shift at 11.00am.

##### **Who is covered by the industrial action?**

All UNISON members covered by the ballot have the right to take strike action and action short of strike action. This includes operational staff, PTS, control, admin, fleet and support services employed by the ambulance service.

##### **I have only just joined UNISON will I have to take action?**

All UNISON members will be asked to take action.

##### **I am not a UNISON member can I still take part?**

If you are a NHS worker you can join UNISON now and take part in the action.

##### **Do I have to take strike action or action short of strike action?**

We would expect that all our members would abide by the majority decision and take part in industrial action. However, in order to keep patients safe, some members will be asked to work so that we can provide emergency cover during the 4 hour stoppage on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

## **What about the risk to patients?**

Ambulance staff have the right to take industrial action but we do need to organise our action in a way which does not maliciously or wilfully endanger life and limb. Employers have a duty to put in place emergency cover arrangements. UNISON has issued guidance for branches to discuss emergency cover arrangements with your employer.

## **How will emergency cover arrangements work?**

Your UNISON branch will issue guidance on how these will operate for staff who will work under these arrangements.

## **Action Short of Strike Action – Overtime Ban**

### **When does the overtime ban start and finish?**

The overtime band will run from 00:01 on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October to 23:59 on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October inclusive.

### **What does an overtime ban mean?**

UNISON's national ambulance committee decided that we would ask our UNISON members working in the ambulance service not to undertake any voluntary paid or unpaid overtime.

### **What do you mean by voluntary unpaid overtime?**

This is where you work above your normal contracted hours. Most ambulance staff are contracted for 37.5 hours per week but we know that our members frequently come in early and leave late. UNISON is asking you to keep to your normal hours. In the case of members on reduced hours (less than 37.5hrs) we are asking that those members would also maintain their contracted hours for the duration of the action.

### **What do you mean by voluntary paid overtime?**

UNISON is asking you to not undertake extra voluntary overtime shifts above your normal contracted hours. Some people work contractual overtime, which is not voluntary, and this is not included in the action short of strike action.

### **What about shift overruns?**

If you get an emergency just before your shift ends we believe that this is unavoidable and members should complete the call in line with normal working arrangements. You should be paid for shift overruns in line with your normal arrangements. This applies to both control and operational staff.

### **I work in the Patient Transport Service, how does this apply to me?**

Your employer should organise planned work in a way which enables you to finish within your normal contracted hours. If due to unforeseen circumstances you are responsible for a patient when your shift is due to finish you should complete the journey including all aspects of handing over the patients(s) and claim overtime in line with your normal arrangements.

### **I work in a fleet, admin or support role, how does this apply me?**

We would expect you to work your contracted hours (normally 37.5hrs per week).