

Fighting for fair pay for NHS staff

Ambulance FAQs

November 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 the following:

1. all members (excepting operational road staff) taking the breaks to which they are entitled
2. all members not working voluntary overtime unless either payment or time off in lieu, is agreed in advance
3. members employed as operational road staff will observe shift start and finish times, save in the case of life threatening (i.e. Red 1 and 2) calls, which shall be the only types of calls responded to during the last hour of a shift.

Why are ambulance staff taking different action short of strike action (ASOS) to the rest of the NHS?

Non-operational road staff will be taking the same ASOS as the rest of our members in the NHS i.e. not working voluntary overtime and taking their breaks. UNISON's national ambulance committee believed that having a specific ASOS in the form of observing shift start and finish times would be a more effective form of action for operational road staff.

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 24th November 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?

Three simple ways to
join UNISON today:

 Join online at
joinunison.org

 Call us on
0800 171 2193

 Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form

WORTHit

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 24 November.

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

What Action Short of Strike Action are ambulance members taking?

From 00:01 on Tuesday 25 November to 23:59 on Sunday 30 November UNISON members working for the English ambulance Trusts will be taking part in action short of strike action that will take the form of:

4. all members (excepting operational road staff) taking the breaks to which they are entitled
5. all members not working voluntary overtime unless either payment or time off in lieu, is agreed in advance
6. members employed as operational road staff will observe shift start and finish times, save in the case of life threatening (i.e. Red 1 and 2) calls, which shall be the only types of calls responded to during the last hour of a shift

Are will still doing the overtime ban?

This time we are asking members to not work voluntary overtime unless either payment or time off in lieu, is agreed in advance. This is aimed at members who normally work in excess of their contracted hours without getting paid.

What does the taking breaks part mean?

This is about encouraging members who normally work through their breaks to take them. This is more difficult for front line staff so they are not included in the action, however we would expect ambulance employers to work within the spirit of their operational meal break policy.

How will the only doing life threatening calls work in practice?

Your UNISON branch will discuss how this will work for the 6 days of action short of strike action. We would expect that, in the last hour of shifts, ambulance services will only pass life threatening calls to crews (i.e. Red 1 and 2 calls). Your branch and employer will agree protocols that will set out how this will work in operation.

Does this mean I can refuse to take a call which isn't life threatening?

Local protocols should make this clear but our advice is not to refuse any calls. You should contact your control room and calmly inform them that you are working under the agreed protocols as part of the action short of strike action. If you feel the incident you were sent on was inappropriate you should report this via your branch or adverse incident system.

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

You should take your breaks and not work unpaid overtime.

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

You should take your breaks and not work unpaid overtime.