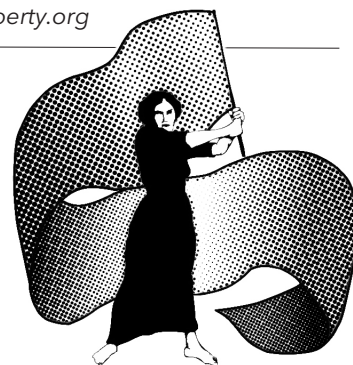


NHS Workers: Co-ordinate and Escalate the Strikes



Our strikes so far have been strong and well supported by the public. We need to ensure the picket lines in this round of action are full of talk about a strategy that can win. That means co-ordination between the unions and escalating strikes.

Going forward, the unions must co-ordinate strikes on the same days, making it clear this is a cross-union, cross-NHS fight. So far the two biggest unions, RCN and Unison have called strikes on separate days. All the strikes are over NHS pay and we are stronger if we stand together.

Alongside co-ordination we need escalation. The RCN needs to name more sustained dates for action. Unison needs to confirm dates to replace the 22nd. The intransigence of Sunak and Hunt is a reason to increase action, not to pause and step back.

Work needs to be put into building up the

strike funds for escalation and in increasing organising amongst members to lead the action. Currently the RCN executive is insisting on strike committees and picket lines being under strict supervision and control of RCN staff, although in practice that's not happened in many places. Strike committees, picket lines, recruitment and the organisation between strikes can all be better handled by members present in workplaces. We should not have to wait to be told what to do from above.

Winning

If this strike is going to grow and have the industrial and political impact needed to win, rather than roll from strike day to strike day, members need to have their say and the unions need to facilitate that activity, instead of keeping it in check. Strikers pushing forward their voices about the tactics and gaining some level of control of the dispute is key to our success.

Escalation also means pushing for re-ballots, especially in trusts where UNISON missed the thresholds. Currently RCN strikes are being weakened where Unison members have been instructed by their branches to cross picket lines. There should be support for Unison members who decide not to cross RCN picket lines. Beyond this, the best way to achieve solid action in a workplace is for all the unions to win legal mandates and strike together. Winning second ballots shouldn't be taken for granted, but with improved membership data and focussed resources it is possible in many more places. RCN members should help Unison branches in their workplaces with organising for ballots, even if the leadership guards against it. There is no time for division or competition between unions. 🐾

Defend the Right to Strike

Rishi Sunak's government are further threatening our right to strike. The minimum service requirements have been extended beyond the rail industry, to health, education, fire, ambulance services, and nuclear commissioning, giving employers the right to punish trade unions and dismiss employees who refuse to work if designated as part of the minimum service complement during strikes.

We are already providing emergency cover during these strikes. These arrangements should be decided by strikers, not dictated by the government.

The proposal entrenches a dictatorship of the bosses. It means that even workers who have voted, via the onerous and arbitrary balloting procedures set by the state,

to go on strike can be ordered to work by the employer. All restrictions on the right to strike are not only an affront to workers' rights, but an affront to democracy and civil liberties. 🐾

About Workers' Liberty

We are a socialist group active in the labour movement and in campaigns in Britain, fighting for a revolutionary alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and workers' democracy.

To find out more about our ideas and activity visit workersliberty.org, email awl@workersliberty.org, or phone

020 7394 8923. 🐾

Our Fight is to Save the NHS

The Tories have purposefully run the NHS into the ground in order to pave the way for further privatisation and the ending of any meaningful public health provision. They have presided over years of below inflation pay awards. Waiting lists are soaring, staff are leaving and there are 132,000 vacancies in NHS England alone. The daily reality for NHS staff is working in a system that is chronically underfunded with the constant fear that patients' safety is being put in jeopardy.

Our strikes are about all of this.

The money exists to pay NHS workers and rebuild the NHS. The wealth of billionaires has grown by over 2 billion a day. But almost 2/3 of new wealth in the 2 years up to the end of 2021 went to the richest 1%. Our strikes must be part of a political campaign to claw back this wealth for society's needs. Tax the Rich to rebuild the NHS! 🐾



No Pause for Negotiations

In Scotland and Wales the RCN have paused strike action for negotiations. There is an new offer of an additional 3% in Wales, still way below inflation. The Scottish government have proposed negotiations on the basis of accelerated talks for 23/24, 3 additional months of 23/24 pay, and a review of Agenda for Change (the NHS pay scheme) to 'ensure nursing is rewarded properly.' The Scottish government have agreed to support extension of the mandates to allow for negotiations, but still stopping strikes for negotiations is a tactical misstep by the RCN leadership. Negotiations should be conducted under pressure of active, mobilised membership who are in control of the dispute.

The review of A4C listed in these terms suggests that the RCN have been pushing for a 'nurses' solution. This type of sectional approach will not solve the crisis that lies at the heart of this dispute. Many workers have organised for re-banding within A4C over the years, so this would be nothing new, but any solution that breaks up the pay scales into different sections for different groups of workers would be a very different and negative step and could play into the Tory government's agenda. A united demand for fully funded pay increases across the A4C scales is what all unions should be fighting for. 🧡

Refusing to cross picket lines

To win our demands health workers need unity between our trade unions.

At a local level and national level we need to work together, across trade unions, to make our action effective. Open joint TU strike committees should be set up to co-ordinate emergency cover, picketing and campaigning on strike days.

If a mandate for strike has been achieved in a particular Trust by one union but not another our action will be stronger if we don't cross each others pickets lines.

The Guidelines for Managing Industrial Action 'NHS Organisation,' states *"Everyone whether in a Trade Union or not has the right to decide whether they will cross a picket line and they would not be subject to disciplinary action should they choose not to cross."*

The government website guidance states, *"Non-union Staff and Striking. If non-union members go on strike they are protected from dismissal and have the same rights as union members, as long as the industrial action is lawful."* So le-

gally we are covered if we choose not to cross picket lines, if our grade is affected by the strike. Aslef the train drivers union tells its members similar.

Our unions should be encouraging us to stand together like this. We need to ensure our unions back any members that take action on this basis. Health workers might choose to join a second union for the period of the strike to ensure we have full support from a union with strike mandate. 🧡



Strike together on 15-16 March!

Firefighters in the UK have voted for the first nationwide strike on pay since 2003. 1 February was the biggest single day of strikes for more than a decade. Schools, rail, universities, and the civil service are all coordinating action. On 6 February nurses and ambulance workers strike simultaneously for the first time.

Further united strikes and big trade-union street demonstrations look possible on 15-16 March, 15 March being Budget day. The National Education Union (NEU) has set those days for the next strike for teachers across England and Wales, and school support staff in Wales, with regional strikes in the interim. The PCS civil servants' union is likely to call action then, and the UCU university workers' union has set 16 March.

Activists will press for firefighters, transport workers on rail and the London Underground and buses, postal workers and NHS workers to join them, as part of a comprehensive escalation. 🧡

Strikes

6 Feb: Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

6-7 Feb: Nurses (RCN) strike

9 Feb: NHS physiotherapists (CSP) strike

9-10, 14-16, 21-23, Feb, 27 Feb-2 Mar, 16-17 and 20-22 Mar: Higher Education workers at 150 universities (UCU) strike. Unison HE members at 12 universities will strike on various days in Feb.

11 Feb: Drivers on the Bakerloo Tube line (Aslef)

14 Feb: Teachers and support staff in Wales (NEU) strike

15-16 Feb: Teachers on the Isle of Man (NASUWT) strike

20 Feb: Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

28 Feb: Teachers in the Northern, North West, and Yorkshire and Humber regions (NEU) strike

Feb and Mar, including national all-out strikes on **28 Feb** and **1 Mar:** Teachers in Scotland (EIS) have 22 strike days

1 Mar: Teachers in the East Midlands, West Midlands, and Eastern regions (NEU) strike

2 Mar: Teachers in London, South East, and South West regions (NEU) strike

6 Mar: Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

13 Mar-20 April: 20 further days of rolling strikes by teachers in Scotland (EIS)

15-16 Mar: Teachers in England and Wales and support staff in Wales (NEU) strike.

20 Mar: Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

Mar, date TBC: 72-hour junior doctors strike (BMA), pending ballot

Until 3 Apr: Discontinuous strikes by workers at Diageo's plant in Leven, Scotland (Unite).