

Emergency services and industrial action

TUC's guidelines

The TUC Health Services Committee has issued the following code of practice to union members who are taking industrial action in the NHS.

"(i) Any action which restricts services to patients due to an industrial dispute should be consistent with respect for human life, safety, and dignity.

(ii) In the event of an industrial dispute it will be a matter for each union or unions to consider the action that is necessary in the light of the circumstances of the dispute.

(iii) For the duration of an industrial dispute, the union(s) involved should make arrangements in advance and with due notice, in consultation and, preferably, by agreement, with the employer, or appropriate senior members of staff, for the maintenance by their members of supplies and services essential to maintain emergency services and services to high dependency patients.

(iv) Emergency services are those which directly involve the life, limb, or ultimate safety of a patient, for example, 999, renal dialysis, terminal discharges, maternity, radiotherapy, or serious accident patients.

(v) High dependency patients are those whose life, limb, or ultimate safety might be at serious risk without the maintenance of services, for example, children, severely mentally handicapped people, or elderly patients.

(vi) No services should be reduced to a level where satisfactory cover cannot be maintained in respect of emergency and high dependency patients. In particular, delivery and distribution of drugs, food, oxygen, and fuel should not be impeded.

(vii) Unions may wish to give additional and more detailed advice on instructions to their members appropriate to the particular circumstances of the dispute."