



Department
of Health &
Social Care

CARE

Adult Social Care Delivery Directorate
39 Victoria Street
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To:
Directors of Adult Social Services

14 December 2023

FORTHCOMING INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY JUNIOR DOCTORS

Dear Colleagues,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks for your dedication and hard work in ensuring that critical services are delivered to people who need them.

As the Minister for Care [set out in July](#), it is essential that we take a ‘whole system’ approach to supporting people and their carers this winter. This means integrated care partnerships, integrated care boards, local authorities, health and care providers and the voluntary sector all working together to support individuals who draw on care and support. Effective, joined-up working across health and social care will make sure people get the best possible outcomes and that we make effective use of the combined resources of the system.

I would therefore like to bring your attention to the recent communication from [NHS England to NHS organisations](#) about preparations for the industrial action by junior doctors scheduled from Wednesday 20 December to Saturday 23 December and from 3 January to Tuesday 9 January. These new rounds of industrial action come at an already very challenging time for the health and care system, alongside winter pressures such as flu, Covid and norovirus.

As outlined in the letter, systems have been asked to work with their Local Authority partners to reduce hospital occupancy levels as far as possible ahead of Christmas and the New Year to ensure sufficient headroom to safely manage the normal increases in bed occupancy in the two weeks following Christmas. This will require concerted action by the NHS, local authorities and other partners – including effective communications with local care providers - both to prevent avoidable hospital admission, and accelerate patient discharge processes.



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I would like to draw your attention in particular to the reprofiling of discharge, which will mean the days between Christmas and New Year will be particularly busy this year and key to recovering bed occupancy.

We recognise the significant work local authorities are already undertaking with the NHS and other partners to help prevent avoidable hospital admissions, to resolve crises at home and to improve discharge from hospital and community settings. Thank you in advance for the critical additional work that will be needed over the Christmas and New Year period to accelerate discharges, maintain hospital flow and protect patient safety.

I understand that this request comes at a time when your resources are already stretched. Your cooperation and proactive approach in this matter are not only appreciated but essential in ensuring that patients receive the best possible care during these challenging periods of industrial action. We would also be grateful if you could provide feedback on your experience at local level through regional chairs so that we continue to factor this into any future system-wide response.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment.

Kind regards,

Claire Armstrong
Director of Adult Social Care Delivery