

Further three-day junior doctors strike announced for June

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A further strike by junior doctors has been announced for June after pay talks with the government broke down. The government have offered a 5% pay increase which they say is “fair and reasonable”. However, the British Medical Association (BMA), which represents doctors and medical students have said the offer was not “credible”.

The further strike, which will take place from 7 a.m. Wednesday 14 June to 7 a.m. on Saturday 17 June is the third round of action in the dispute over pay (earlier strike action took place in March and April). These dates will also coincide with the annual NHS Confederation conference. The BMA have said that strike action will continue in the coming months if a resolution cannot be found, with at least three days of action a month until August when their current strike mandate expires. The BMA has also confirmed that if the dispute remains unresolved at this point, it plans to hold a further ballot that would give them a mandate for a further six months.

At present the government offer of 5% is still some considerable way off the 35% increase asked for by the BMA, which it says is needed to make up for the last 15 years of below-inflation rises. Of note, junior doctors in Scotland have been offered a new 14.5% pay rise over a two-year period. Although the BMA has said it is willing to continue talks, the government have said that talks could only continue if the strike was called off. Therefore, the dispute shows no signs of being resolved anytime soon.

This further round of action by junior doctors will continue to cause concern for NHS employers given the current pressure on services. Trusts may also find contingency planning even more difficult if consultant doctors, who are currently being balloted on action, also vote in favour of strike action. Therefore, there may be less options for cover if both consultants and junior doctors strike at the same time. The RCN has also said it plans to re-ballot its members after they rejected the Agenda for Change pay deal.

Unless progress is made, Trusts could see action continuing into the winter, when demand on services will be even higher.

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