

Academy Statement

Junior Doctors and the wider context of the dispute

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges made clear its view yesterday that the series of five days' of industrial action proposed by the BMA was not proportionate and would cause real problems for the NHS. This position has the overwhelming support of Academy members

The specific statement on industrial action obviously sits in a broader context of the junior doctors' dispute itself, the underlying concerns of doctors in training, the pressures under which all health staff are working and the overall state of the NHS.

Whilst the Academy is at odds with the BMA over the proposed tactic of the strike it has consistently been supportive of the concerns of junior doctors. Throughout the dispute the Academy has stated that in addition to specific concerns around the contract, there is a strong feeling from doctors in training that they are not valued in the NHS and the training environment often does not support junior doctors. These are issues which need to be addressed whatever the outcome of the contract dispute.

The Academy believes that the only effective resolution will come from discussions and agreement between the parties so that it can be settled once and for all.

There is work being undertaken by a number of organisations on the underlying concerns of junior doctors and the training environment. Colleges are already looking at a range of initiatives they can themselves do around the well-being of junior doctors, ways to improve working arrangements for juniors or initiatives to support juniors. This will form part of the discussion at the Academy Council's policy day on 20 September where the initiatives will be mapped so any potential requirements or gaps identified.

Many of the concerns of junior doctors relate to the pressures of their working environment made worse by rota gaps, staffing shortages and increased service demands. These cannot be solved by individual medical royal colleges or indeed probably by individual employers. They will only be fully resolved when we can deliver a sustainable health and care system. That is the other key issue the Academy will be considering at its forthcoming policy day.

The Academy is clear that the NHS and Social care system is under pressure as never before. Changing demographics, rising demand and unprecedented financial pressures are leading to huge strains on the system and its staff. The NHS is "under resourced, under staffed over stretched" and needs additional resources, but also to show better use of existing resources.

It is clear that a wider and honest conversation across the UK is also needed to look at how we continue to provide a health and care system for the future. One that meets the needs of the population and is sustainable in terms of the range of services it offers, the quality of care it provides and its affordability. This calls for an informed conversation between policy makers, professionals, service providers and above all patients and the public to develop a shared understanding of the contract with society for providing our health and care system.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges will be setting out its views of what is required and how proposals can be implemented. This will synthesise College and Faculty views and identify key common issues, which can be fed into any wider societal debates about what the healthcare system we want looks like, how it will be provided and crucially, how it will be funded.