

EMTA Position Statement on Industrial Action

February 2023



The Emergency Medicine Trainees Association (EMTA) recognises the 98% mandate in favour of industrial action in the recent BMA ballot. We know this is a direct consequence of doctors across all specialties feeling they are working in unsafe environments where patients are regularly receiving substandard care. In emergency departments nationwide, patients are being harmed by the inability to offload ambulances, exposure to overcrowding and waits of many hours to be seen.

Emergency medicine in particular has a serious retention crisis and the intense pressure felt by frontline clinicians is evident. We believe all healthcare workers should feel valued, respected and supported. Ensuring that doctors are appropriately remunerated for their work is a key part of this and cannot be ignored. However, we also recognise the other contributing factors to retention and endeavour to campaign for better training environments where we can. There will be obvious concerns around patient safety during strikes but as studies have shown these are unfounded.¹ It is important that we make clear that patient safety has actually long been at risk for years due to under-funding, under-resourcing, lack of beds and inadequate social care. Staff deserve better and so do patients.

We recently surveyed our EMTA members on this issue and more than two-thirds of EM trainees surveyed stated that working conditions were **'the most important factor'** when considering their decision to continue training or affected this decision **'to a high extent'**.

They said:

'We are grossly undervalued for what we do. We work in a failing system that is overwhelmed.'

'I am no longer in a position whereby I feel I can complete my job safely given current conditions and this will impact my decision to continue with training.'

'I am only a year away from finishing 10 years of post-graduate training but I am already looking into other options like leaving the UK, as the way EM currently is, is not sustainable and our wages are not worth the stress and burnout.'

We respect the individual decisions of our staff to take industrial action only if they feel it is appropriate to do so. EMTA is not a union and is affiliated with the Royal

College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM), a registered charity. As such we would direct any questions around industrial action to the BMA but we do invite EM trainees to contact us if they have any concerns about how their decision to strike could affect their training. This document from RCPCH, while aimed at paediatricians, also contains valuable information:

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/industrial-action-nhs-practical-advice-paediatric-trainees-sas-doctors>

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¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9306929/>