

Dear Secretary of State and Professor Banfield,

This week we have seen arguably the most significant strikes the NHS has ever had to manage with huge disruption to key frontline services so that urgent and emergency care could be prioritised.

Yet again, industrial action hampers the NHS' ability to tackle the significant backlog in care, and places patients at potential risk. We have estimated that over a quarter of a million appointments and operations will have had to be cancelled during this latest round of industrial action. It is clear that the current standoff is detrimental to all parties, with repercussions felt most keenly by patients.

While we await what we hope is inevitable eventual negotiation, our members are questioning how much damage will be caused along the way. Health leaders want both sides to do everything within their power to find some common ground as soon as possible, and it seems that the current approach is not working here.

Therefore, we are now urging you both to invite Acas, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service – or another mediation service – to support with negotiations and help to bring this industrial action to a close. With both sides having seemingly incompatible pre-conditions for negotiation, we believe this option should be explored as a matter of urgency to help bring both sides to the table and find a way forward.

As always, we stand ready to support in any way we can to bring an end to this industrial action and allow the NHS to get on with the good work that patients need. If you would like to discuss our suggestion further, or if there is anything else that we can help with, you can get in touch via [external.affairs@nhsconfed.org](mailto:external.affairs@nhsconfed.org).

Yours sincerely,



**Matthew Taylor**  
**Chief executive**  
**NHS Confederation**

**Date**

12.04.2023

**For the attention of**

Rt Hon. Steve Barclay MP  
[mb-sofs@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:mb-sofs@dhsc.gov.uk)

Professor Philip Banfield, Council  
Chair, BMA  
[pbanfield@bma.org.uk](mailto:pbanfield@bma.org.uk)