

PICKET SUPERVISOR GUIDANCE

Thank you for signing up to be a picket supervisor. Without you and colleagues like you up and down the country volunteering to help us, we wouldn't be able to hold our picket lines and demonstrate our unity and strength in our current dispute.

This guide is designed to help you understand the basics around picket lines, supporting demonstrations and what being a picket supervisor means. This should help you in the fulfilment of this role and give further guidance on how you can access support and advice from your union if you feel you need it.

WHAT IS A PICKET LINE?

A picket line is a group of workers who are on strike who gather outside their workplace to protest or 'picket'.

The picket line applies pressure on the employer to meet the demands of the workers, such as better pay, improved working conditions, or other benefits.

The core purpose of the picket line is:

- To encourage other workers, respectfully and politely, not to cross the picket line, and instead to join the strike – in this case, this would be targeted at other junior doctors.
- To engage with, and provide information to, the public on the dispute and why the strike is taking place. Again, this is to be undertaken respectfully and politely.

WHAT ARE THE RULES ABOUT PICKET LINES?

Each individual striking worker who is picketing is a 'picket'. It is essential that the number of pickets does not give rise to a risk of fear and resentment among other employees. Guidance provides that, to avoid this, the number should not **generally exceed six** and health boards have provided permission for picketing on health board premises on this basis. Pickets will identify themselves with armbands provided by the BMA.

Members are also able to visit picket lines.

It would also be unlawful to obstruct the highway, cause a nuisance or behave anti-socially.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A PICKET SUPERVISOR?

The Picket Supervisor's role is to ensure the smooth running of the picket line. Whilst it's impossible to prepare you for every possible eventuality, as a brief outline you will:

- Be present on the picket line or be readily contactable and able to attend at short notice. The term 'short notice' is not defined, and a picket supervisor can supervise more than one picket line. In practice, provided that the picket supervisor is contactable by mobile phone and is supervising a set of picket lines in one location, such as a single large acute hospital, this requirement should be met.
- Ensure the pickets are aware that they must be identifiable by wearing the BMA-issued armband.



- Ensure the pickets are aware of their purpose and to undertake their roles respectfully and politely.
- Ensure the pickets do not block access to the employer's site for members of the public or patients.
- Ensuring picket visitors and supporters know where they can stand and demonstrate their support for the striking workers.
- Act as the primary point of contact for the picket line, for BMA Cymru Wales staff supporting you and, in the very unlikely event the situation arises, for the police and employer.
- Ensure you are easily identifiable as the picket supervisor. We've provided you with stickers that you can wear that you can wear on the day.

It is important to note, as picket supervisor, you are not responsible for the actions of others. Whilst you are the primary point of contact for the picket line(s) you are supervising, you will have a direct line to the BMA Cymru Wales staff member overseeing your health board to provide you with the advice and support you need.

WHO CAN BE A BMA PICKET SUPERVISOR?

Whilst pickets (individuals picketing) can only be striking workers who work at the workplace in question, the picket supervisor can be anyone who is a member of the BMA, or a member of BMA staff, so long as they are familiar with the provisions of the Code of Practice on Picketing available [here](#).

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO PICKET SUPERVISORS?

Before strike days, you will be provided with:

- A letter confirming the picketing at the workplace is approved by the BMA (this is presentable to either the police or a member of the employer's management upon request).
- A copy of this guidance and the Code of Practice on Picketing available [here](#).
- The details of the BMA Cymru Wales contact for your health board including their direct mobile number.

On strike days, you may well have a member of BMA staff attending your picket as a visitor; however, if not, you can call your BMA Cymru Wales contact for any advice or guidance you may want or need.

If you are ever in doubt, or worried about something, just give your BMA Cymru Wales contact a call – we have your back!

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PICKET LINE AND SUPPORTERS VISITING A PICKET?

Others may visit the picket line to demonstrate support and solidarity with the striking workers. However, they will not be considered an official picket or provided with an armband. They are considered picket visitors and supporters and should not approach junior doctors looking to cross the picket and attend work; only the official and identifiable pickets workers are able to undertake this role.

Picket visitors can be other striking workers in the dispute or supportive workers from the same or other industries, community members, celebrities, family and friends of striking workers or even politicians. They may bring food and supplies to the picketers and show solidarity.

Picket visitors and supporters who wish to hold placards, chant, and play music or instruments should visit the local demonstrations we are holding just off site, to ensure more members of the public see us.

WHERE TO PICKET?

Whilst we do not have the legal right to locate a picket line on the employer's property, we have agreed with employers an appropriate location on site that picketing can take place and this will be communicated to you as part of your briefing pack.

Other considerations:

- A picket line must not block the entrance/exit or the public highway including roads and pavements.
- If a picket line is positioned on the pavement, care should be taken to ensure that people can still pass safely on the pavement without having to walk in the road for example.
- Care should be taken to ensure that patient access to entrance and exits is not impeded including any disabled access.
- Picket lines should not impede essential services such as deliveries.
- Those on the picket line should be reminded to always take care of their own safety and be aware of their surroundings – particularly if the picket line is near a busy road or vehicular entrance for example.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THERE ARE MORE THAN 6 PEOPLE WHO WISH TO PICKET AT MY HOSPITAL SITE?

We have identified locations where demonstrations can take place outside of the employer's property at each hospital site. To ensure that the line does not exceed 6 pickets you should direct individuals to the identified demonstration locations.

As this is not an official picket it is important that those demonstrating **do not wear** official picket armbands.

Picket supporters and visitors can also be directed to these locations.

Those who are not included in the dispute or who may work at a different workplace where no picket is taking place (e.g. GP registrars) should also be directed to the demonstration.

Other considerations:

- Picket visitors and supporters must not block the entrance/exit or the public highway including roads and pavements.
- If picket visitors and supporters are positioned on the pavement, care should be taken to ensure that people can still pass safely on the pavement without having to walk in the road for example.

- Care should be taken to ensure that patient access to entrance and exits is not impeded including any disabled access.
- Picket visitors and supporters should not impede essential services such as deliveries.
- Picket visitors and supporters should be reminded to always take care of their own safety and be aware of their surroundings – particularly if the picket line is near a busy road or vehicular entrance for example.
- It is possible that non-doctors who are politically sympathetic to our cause may visit picket lines or demonstrations. Just like our own pickets and visitors, it is important that these individuals do not cause inappropriate disruption as above and they should be encouraged to participate in the off-site demonstration rather than the picket line. If they attempt to hand out their own placards or other political materials, consider politely asking them to refrain from doing so. This is a doctors' dispute and it's important that the union's official messages are front and centre.
- A megaphone will be provided for use at the **off-site demonstration**. This can be used to maintain control at the demonstration but can also be used to encourage demonstrators to join in with singing and chants on the demonstration.
 - Refrain from using the megaphone until 8am to avoid noise complaints from local residents who may leave near the hospital site.
 - **Under no circumstances use the SIREN function** as this could be misconstrued by members of the public as an emergency services vehicle.
- Individuals may also wish to make speeches to demonstrators. As the picket supervisor at the hospital, permission should be sought from you (or an individual appointed by you at the demonstration) by individuals wishing to take control of the megaphone. It should be made clear to those making speeches that:
 - Speeches should remain respectful and peaceful.
 - Speeches should be short, relevant to the dispute and purposeful. This is a doctors' dispute and it's important that the union's official messages are relayed in the speeches as opposed to other political messaging.
 - The megaphone should be returned to you (or an individual appointed by you at the demonstration) once they have concluded their speech.
- It is important to note, as a picket supervisor, you are not responsible for the actions of others, but you may be approached by a member of employer management or a police officer to ask to assist in addressing any issues, such as an inadvertent blockage or location issue. Whilst you are the primary point of contact for the picket line(s) you are supervising, you will have a direct line to your BMA Cymru Wales contact to provide you with the advice and support you need in such an eventuality.