

NHS leader urges Acas intervention to avert 'catastrophic' junior doctor strikes

An [NHS](#) leader has urged the [Government](#) and junior doctors' unions to call in the [Acas](#) conciliation service to end their stalemate and avoid "catastrophic" strikes.

On the eve of what is set to be the most disruptive walkout in NHS history, chief executive of the NHS Confederation [Matthew Taylor](#) has said the likely impact is "heartbreaking" and called on both sides to end their "battle of rhetoric".

Thousands of junior doctors led by the [British Medical Association](#) (BMA) will take industrial action in the four days between Easter Bank Holiday and the following weekend.

These strikes are going to have a catastrophic impact on the capacity of the NHS to recover services.

Mr Taylor said there is "no question" this strike will be more disruptive than the 72-hour walkouts by NHS staff last month, which led to 175,000 cancelled appointments.

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Speaking about pay negotiations which would avoid the action, Mr Taylor told BBC Breakfast: "It's depressing that there seems to be no movement at all from the two sides of this dispute over the last few days.

"We should consider asking the Government and the trade unions to call in Acas, the conciliation service, to provide some basis for negotiations, because if anything the positions seem to have hardened over the last couple of days."

Mr Taylor also told Sky News that "what we're seeing is a battle of rhetoric rather than talks", adding that he expected "up to 350,000" appointments to be cancelled.

He said: "These strikes are going to have a catastrophic impact on the capacity of the NHS to recover services.

"The health service has to meet high levels of demand at the same time as making inroads into that huge backlog that built up before Covid, but then built up much more during Covid.

"That's a tough thing to do at the best of times, it's impossible to do when strikes are continuing."

Asked whether everyone who needs urgent care this week will get it, he said: "We hope so.

"There's no point hiding the fact that there will be risks to patients, risks to patient safety, risks to patient dignity, as we're not able to provide the kind of care that we want to."

Mr Taylor also advised the public to use NHS services in "the most responsible way you can", and to avoid "risky behaviour" which could result in a visit to A&E during the strikes.

The BMA has asked for a 35% pay rise to bring junior doctor pay back to 2008 levels, and help resolve the recruitment and retention crisis.

Health Secretary Steve Barclay has blasted this demand as “unrealistic” and said their strikes had been planned to “cause maximum disruption”.

Junior doctors will walk out from 6.59am on Tuesday until 6.59am on Saturday.