Background

- Industrial action by UNISON commenced on Monday 25th November 2019 in relation to pay and staffing levels.

- This took the form of targeted strike action and industrial action short of strike across the five Health and Social Care Trusts.

- Further action is planned by UNISON next week. The Royal College of Nursing are also planning 24 hours of industrial action short of strike on 3rd December 2019.

- This is likely to cause significant disruption across all services, including cancellations of planned appointments and treatment.

- Health and Social Care (HSC) organisations continue to work closely together to mitigate the effects of any disruption from industrial action with a strong focus on patient safety.

- Health and Social Care Trusts are working hard, as far as possible, to contact any patients and service users who may be impacted by any disruption to services or cancellations.

- We apologise to all those patients, clients and family members who have been and may be affected.

- Information updates on patient and client services will continue to be posted on Trusts’ websites and via social media.

- For further information on the negotiations with Trade Unions see Department of Health’s statements.

Week Commencing 2nd December - Expected Disruption to Services

Further significant disruption to services is expected next week commencing 2 December 2019. See below a summary of the action we are aware of at this stage. This is subject to change and further details will be released.
1. Belfast Trust

- The Belfast Trust anticipates there will be significant disruption to services across the Trust from Monday 2 December 2019.
- Emergency services and outpatient appointments provided in community facilities are not affected.
- Full details of service disruptions can be found at: http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/3240.htm
- The Trust will be writing to all affected patients to provide a rescheduled appointment or admission date as soon as possible. Due to the extraordinary circumstances and the large number of people affected, the Trust has asked that people do not ring to reschedule their appointment as Trust staff will be in touch with them in due course.

2. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)

Saturday 30 November 2019:
- Overtime ban for 24 hours from 0700. Life threatening calls will be prioritised to ensure patients receive the quickest response.

*If you believe you require an ambulance do not hesitate to dial 999 immediately.*

Alternatively consider other options open to you including self-care; seeking pharmacy advice or self-presentation at Minor Injury Units or Emergency Departments. By so doing, you will help keep ambulances free for emergencies, particular during this challenging period.

3. Western Trust

The following services and facilities will be impacted:

Monday 2 December 2019:
- Planned strike action may affect normal business in Pharmacy Departments at Altnagelvin, Gransha, South West Acute and Omagh Hospitals and Primary Care Complex and Drumclay Home, Enniskillen between 8.30am to 12.30pm.
- Action short of strike for UNISON Trades Unions members.

Tuesday 3 December 2019:
- RCN members’ action short of strike for 24 hours.
Wednesday 4 December 2019:

- Potential disruption to support services (laundry, porters, security, domestics, catering, mortuary assistants, housekeeping, car park staff and smoking cessation staff) at Altnagelvin, Gransha, South West Acute and Omagh Hospitals and Primary Care Complex, Drumclay Home, Enniskillen, as well as, day centres and residential homes in the Tyrone and Fermanagh area.

4. Southern Trust

The following services and facilities will be impacted:

Tuesday 3 December 2019:

- Nursing union members will be taking a number of actions short of strike.
- Laundry services at Craigavon Area Hospital will be impacted from 12-4pm.

Wednesday 4 December 2019 (8am – 12noon):

- Various Trust sites – transport.
- St Luke’s Armagh and South Tyrone Hospital – Porters.
- Daisy Hill Hospital – Porters.

5. South Eastern Trust

The following services and facilities will be impacted:

Monday 2 December 2019:

- All Day Centres remain open but carers have been informed that transport to the centres and catering are not available.

Wednesday 4 December 2019:

- All routine outpatient appointments at Ulster Hospital, except Maternity and Children’s, have been cancelled.
- Endoscopy appointments are being kept under review until closer to the day, when the impact of industrial action by Health Care Assistants and by Central Sterile Services Department is clear.
- Contingencies are in place for other services.
Friday 6 December 2019:

- All Outpatient Departments at Ulster Hospital, Lagan Valley, Downe, Ards and Bangor closed in the afternoon due to industrial action by all UNISON members including Health Care Assistants.
- Endoscopy appointments are being kept under review until closer to the day.
- Day Case surgery - ENT and Gynae at Lagan Valley Hospital cancelled.
- Medical Day Case Unit and Dermatology Laser Unit at Ulster Hospital will be closed all day.
- Cath Lab and Ambulatory Hubs at Ulster Hospital will be closed in the afternoon.

All other services are operating normally. If you have not been contacted, please assume your appointment is going ahead as planned.

6. Northern Trust

The following services and facilities will be impacted:

Friday 6 December 2019:

- UNISON action short of strike from 0700 – 1200 affecting the following:
  a. All hospitals and community locations (excluding Children's Homes).
  b. All domestics, domestic supervisors and managers, team leaders, porters, portering supervisors, portering co-ordinators and managers, mailroom porters, Lab porters, X-ray and pharmacy porters, theatre porters, A&E porters, catering staff including dishwashers, catering assistants, coffee shop assistants, chefs, cooks, catering supervisors and managers, housekeeping, car park attendants, rapid response teams, laundry.
  c. Pennybridge Stores: All CES Assistants, cleaning bay assistants, supervisors and domestic assistants
  d. Causeway Hospital only: Radiographers, X-ray staff, Imagers.

Impact of Strike to Date

Between 25th November and 29th November 2019 across the five Health Trusts there has been industrial action across a range of services including:

- Sterile services across major hospitals
- Some hospital and social care transport
- A number of patient support services (domestic services, catering, laundry etc.)
- Some portering services
- Laboratory drivers

Services across the Trusts are coping, but clearly the industrial action has had an impact on a wide range of areas including:
Day Centres
Surgeries
Theatres
Wards
Diagnostics
Collection of bloods from GP practices

Local Impact

In addition to the disruption detailed above, see below further details in relation to treatment cancelled or services closed as a result of industrial action:

For the period between 11am on 25th November to 11am on 29th November 2019

Belfast Trust

- 16 orthopaedic surgeries were cancelled
- A small number of patients were cancelled in Regional Disablement Service, a limb fitting centre for people across Northern Ireland who have had amputation surgery.

Northern Trust

- Adult Centres were closed across seven areas in the Northern Trust between 8am and 12pm on Tuesday 26th November due to targeted strike action by transport and care staff.
- On Tuesday 26th, due to there being no transport, cardiac isotopes were unavailable to allow cardiac investigations to take place for six patients. These patients have been rescheduled for next week and communicated with.

Further Information

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Website
Twitter
Facebook

Northern Health and Social Care Trust
Website
Twitter
For enquiries contact the Communications Office at the Health and Social Care Board on 028 9536 3278