

British nurses go on strike in rejection of pay proposal

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Nurses make up a quarter of the entire public health workforce and represent the largest proportion of the workforce | Photo: Twitter @MundoEConflicto

London, May 1 (RHC)-- The strike by members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) will begin at 20:00 local time this Sunday and run until the end of Monday, after a ballot rejected the UK government's latest offer.

Union leaders agreed with authorities that nurses can be called in during Sunday's strike to provide minimum staffing levels in intensive care and trauma services. NHS England said "positive discussions" with the RCN had resulted in agreements to ensure that staff would provide coverage.

The British government has said that the escalation of the strike "puts patient safety at risk." The work stoppage by British nurses is one of the largest joint actions so far, NHS England warned, warning patients to expect "disruption and delays to services during the strike period".

The services will cover intensive care units, including for neonatal and pediatric care, as well as resuscitation and major trauma units. "These mitigations do not represent a return to standard staffing levels," said Dame Ruth May, director of nursing for England

An RCN spokesperson indicated that "a national agreement was reached to increase staffing levels in some key life-saving areas," adding that this strike would be "more intense" than previous strikes. Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said the granting of exemptions was "progress."

The strike was called earlier this month after RCN members rejected a government offer to nurses in England of a 5% pay rise by 2023-24 and a one-off payment of at least £1,655 to supplement last year's pay, depending on staff grade.

RCN leadership had recommended that members accept the offer, but it was rejected by 54% to 46%. During the nursing strikes earlier this year in January and February, broader national exemptions were implemented, meaning that nursing coverage in other critical areas was maintained.

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