

Appendix A

Royal College of Nursing

Position statement on industrial action.

With a membership of almost 400,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. RCN members work in a variety of hospital and community settings in the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with the Government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

RCN Council is able to authorise all forms of industrial action on behalf of its members. Rule 12 of the RCN's Rules outlines the circumstances in which RCN Council may authorise such action.

Rule 12 .1 states:

"It is a fundamental principle of the College that its members shall not act in any way which is detrimental to the well being or interests of their patients or clients. Without prejudice to this fundamental principle, the Council is empowered to authorise action by members of the College in furtherance of an industrial dispute and to make regulations governing the procedure to be followed. This rule may not be altered, amended, added to or repealed other than by resolution of the College in general meeting passed by no less than two-thirds majority of the members present or voting by proxy".

In arriving at a decision to authorise industrial action, RCN Council will ensure that any action proposed is consistent with the above fundamental principle and the principles set out by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) 'Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives'.

Those principles may be summarised as follows:

- The complete abandonment of ill patients is inconsistent with the purpose and philosophy of professional nurses and their professional organisations as reflected in ICN's Code of Ethics for Nurses and the NMCs 'Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives'
- Crisis intervention by nurses for the preservation of life is essential
- Ongoing nursing care will be provided to ensure the survival of those unable to care for themselves
- Nursing care required for therapeutic services without which life would be jeopardised will be given

- Nursing involvement will be necessary for urgent diagnostic procedures required to obtain information on potentially life-threatening conditions
- Any action will comply with the statutory legislation for the implementation of industrial action.
- In the event of strike action a minimum essential service to the general public must be maintained.
- Council will require evidence that the action will not breach any of the aforementioned principles