

RCN Guidance on Picketing

A picket (or picket line) is where union members in a trade dispute with their employer gather at or near their workplace. The purpose of a picket is to peacefully communicate information and/or persuade others not to work in support of the strike.

There is no legal right to picket in Guernsey but attendance for the purpose of peaceful picketing is not illegal, and management cannot prevent you from doing it – RCN members should reassure any colleagues who may feel pressurised by their employer not to participate.

Generally, the picket will be attended by RCN members who would otherwise be at work but are taking part in strike action. Attendance at or near your own place of work for the purpose of peaceful picketing is a recognised lawful activity in the UK – management cannot prevent you from doing it.

RCN members should only picket at their own place of work. If there is no picket taking place at their worksite, they should **not** join another one, even if it is a worksite of the same employer (unless they also work at that site). If RCN members have more than one workplace (e.g. mobile workers) they can picket any of them or any place from which their work is administered (i.e. a 'head office' or Health and Social Care headquarters location).

To help this to happen and to facilitate peaceful picketing at workplaces, RCN members who want to take part in a picket during strike action should contact their local RCN Industrial Action Dispute Committee (IA Committee) for details of their local picket via the appropriate 'closed' Facebook pages.

The local RCN IA Committee will be responsible for organising peaceful picketing and supporting RCN members to be able to participate peacefully in the pickets at appropriate times and locations. Some areas may agree a rota to manage numbers and ensure reasonable participation from a range of members. RCN members participating in a lawful and peaceful RCN organised picket will be given some form of identification to wear to indicate that you are picketing (e.g. an arm band, tabard, etc.).

The RCN local IA Committee will appoint a 'picket line supervisor' to manage the RCN picket line and (if required) to liaise with any employer representatives or any police who may attend the picket.

RCN members must respond appropriately to the instructions of the RCN picket line supervisor. In general, those picketing should avoid being on private property or blocking the public highway (which includes some pavements) and cooperate fully with any requests from the police to deal with any obstructions.

Picketers should not physically attempt to stop a person or vehicle from entering the site – any person who decides to cross a picket line must be allowed to do so. This includes RCN members who have agreed to work in derogated areas on strike days. Such members will be given a badge which they can wear into work, saying they support the strike.

Students, other nurses or hospital staff who are **not** included in the dispute should not join or form any part of an official picket line. But they can visit the picket, when not on duty, to provide logistical support (like bringing food). Students who are working as Nursing Assistants/Senior Nursing assistants may join a picket line at their place of work if they have been balloted for industrial action.

RCN members, including those from parts of the UK, who are not directly involved in the dispute, cannot form part of a picket. Members of the public are not prevented from visiting a picket line to show their support. However, such visitors should not form part of the picket or take part in picketing activity (such as seeking to peacefully persuade others not to work in support of the strike).

Role of RCN Picket Supervisor

The role of the picket line supervisor is to:

- manage the picket to ensure it is peaceful
- carry out a risk assessment of the proposed location for pickets, including the safety of the location and risks from moving vehicles or slips, trips and falls; exposure to weather extremes; and the health and well-being of picketers, including access to fluids and food.
- distribute identification (e.g. armbands or tabards) and picketing material to RCN members participating in the picket
- ensure that workers from other places of work do **not** join the picket line, and that any offers of support on the picket line from outsiders are politely refused
- ensure that the number of pickets at any entrance to, or exit from, a place of work is not so great as to cause an obstruction or give rise to fear and resentment amongst those seeking to cross that picket line
- liaise with picket supervisors of other unions if they are involved in the picketing, to ensure peaceful picketing is established and maintained
- contact the lead for the RCN Local IA Committee immediately if they experience any difficulty on the picket line – if the Local IA Committee lead official is not available the RCN helpline should be contacted on **0345 772 6100**.
- act as a point of contact/liaison for the police (if) required during the period of picketing.

Expectations of RCN members during pickets

Picket rules must be followed by members and are set out as follows:

- Picketing must be carried out in contemplation or furtherance of the dispute;
- Members must only join a picket at or near their own place of work;
- Members are advised that the purpose of picketing is to peacefully communicate information to employers, other employees and the public on the reasons for the dispute and on the planned actions being taken by the RCN and/or or peacefully to persuade a person to work or not to work;
- Members may speak with members of the public, employers or other employees and may distribute RCN information leaflets designed to share information with the public.
- Members may also carry official RCN banners and placards presenting information on the dispute.
- Where members are picketing at a main entrance, they must not interfere with the performance of other employees who are not involved in the dispute;
- Members must not obstruct traffic or hinder entrances by sitting, kneeling or lying down in a public entrance that is being picketed;

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- Local IA Committees will identify a specific number of RCN officials to be present at all pickets and those officials will take responsibility for guiding and directing members whilst engaged in picketing;
- Members will be allocated a visibility 'bib' or jacket with the RCN logo and this must be worn whilst on a picket line.
- Members must behave in a respectful way at all times