Dear Colleagues

NOTICE OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION FOLLOWING BALLOT

UK Council met yesterday, 8th October, to discuss the result of the Industrial Action ballot that closed on 3rd October. You will already be aware that the outcome of the ballot was that a majority of members voted yes to both questions.

UK Council decided at their meeting to authorise both strike action and action short of strike. The purpose of this email is to explain to you in detail the decision that has been taken and the action all members of the Society of Radiographers employed within the NHS in the United Kingdom are expected to take. Please note this notice applies to those members who were in membership at 27th August and were therefore entitled to participate in the ballot.

There will be a four hour strike on Monday 20th October beginning at 09:00 and ending at 13:00 on that day. This means that members will be expected not to work during this period unless they are providing essential and emergency cover (See Appendix 1).

We understand that members participating in this strike action will have four hours pay deducted by their employer. Members should then complete only the remaining scheduled hours for that day.

Following on from this there will be four days when members will be expected to participate in industrial action short of strike action. This period will run from 00:01 on Tuesday 21st October until 23:59 on Friday 24th October. During this period members will be expected to work precisely their contracted hours of work and to take their breaks. There should be no overtime worked. Any overtime required by your employer should only be considered if prior agreement to payment at the appropriate rate has been guaranteed in writing by your employer. In addition, where possible and where relevant, members should work within SCoR guidance regarding appointment times. Ultrasound examinations should therefore take a minimum of 20 minutes and no appointments should be arranged taking less time than this minimum.

Members will be aware that our action is part of a co-ordinated campaign by all NHS Trade Unions whose members will be taking a combination of strike action and action short of strike over the coming weeks. Some unions will be taking strike action on Monday 13th October between 07:00 and 11:00 on that day, followed by action short of strike action for the rest of that week.

UK Council has timed our action to ensure a continuation of the campaign into a second week in October and so that it follows the TUC demonstration on Saturday 18th October. We believe this approach will maximise media coverage of our campaign and will ensure that momentum continues following the initial four hour stoppage. Other unions may take action later in October with a further date in November at which time all unions taking action will do so together. This date has yet to be
agreed but it is expected this will be known sometime during the week beginning 20th October. Members will be advised as soon as possible. There are likely to be further days of action after this.

Our colleagues from unions taking action on 13th October have not issued a request for SoR members not to cross picket lines. As emphasised above it is recognised by all that our co-ordinated campaign does stagger strike action meaning there will be occasions where some union’s members are on strike when others are not. Separate advice regarding picket lines is available but members are not required to refuse to cross picket lines set up on 13th October although members are required not to carry out work that would otherwise be carried out by colleagues who are on strike or working to rule. Members are also expected to show support to colleagues on 13th October during their breaks where possible.

The action and this notice apply to all members as described above working in the NHS in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Our aim is to secure a return to pay increases broadly in line with inflation. Members throughout the UK currently have no indication that such an increase is likely regardless of whether their pay is determined by the UK Government or one of the devolved administrations.

The action and this notice also apply to all members whether working in diagnostic imaging or radiotherapy. We are however clear that the action is aimed at having maximum impact on Government and minimum impact on patients. Members working in radiotherapy are therefore advised as follows;

Members in radiotherapy should exercise professional judgement, in compliance with existing protocols designed to manage interruptions, to ensure that no patient outcomes are adversely affected due to prolongation of radiotherapy treatment and in accordance the RCR guidance, ‘The timely delivery of radical radiotherapy: Standards and guidelines for the management of unscheduled treatment interruptions, Third Edition, RCR, 2008, which can be found at https://www.rcr.ac.uk/docs/ oncology/pdf/BFCO(08)6 Interruptions.pdf’. Provision must be made to ensure urgent/emergency palliative radiotherapy is available. Members must ensure that their judgements meet the requirements of both the SoR and the HCPC codes of conduct with respect to provision of care.

It is anticipated that members may have questions about this notice. A question and answer document relating to the ballot has already been produced and circulated to all members. Members are asked to refer to this document, which is available on our website www.sor.org as this may answer some questions. A detailed briefing document outlining why the ballot was necessary has already been circulated and again may provide members with information that will answer more questions. Further questions, relating specifically to information in this notice should be raised with your local SoR representative if you have one. Reps are asked to collate any questions and send them to SoR Head Office using the tuir@sor.org email address. This will enable us to put together a further Q&A document which will assist all members.

The turnout of our ballot was high in comparison to the turn outs achieved by other unions and in comparison with the average turn out for such ballots in the UK. Members should take pride in this particularly bearing in mind the complex legal requirements placed on such ballots which still outlaw
online and internet voting. Members are now asked to ensure the ballot result is now implemented by all members, regardless of how they voted in the ballot, in accordance with this notice.

9th October

Appendix 1

ESSENTIAL AND EMERGENCY COVER GUIDANCE

Advice for SoR members: Essential and Emergency Cover Advice for SoR members on maintaining patient safety during strike action on Monday 20th October and any subsequent strike dates called.

It is the responsibility of individual employers to consider both essential and emergency cover in preparation for any potential industrial action and discuss this with trade unions at local level. As such we would expect the main discussions to take place between local managers and union staff sides, now that the industrial action ballot result is known, supplemented by specific discussions in particular departments or specialist areas.

We cannot issue definitive guidance at national level on what is and what is not appropriate for each employer and for each service as this will vary from service to service; however, we recognise how important this issue is for members and the profession. As a starting point we would advise you to consider those services provided and the number of staff who would normally work on Christmas Day. This may for example include radiotherapy patients undergoing treatment or due to commence treatment on the 20th. Within radiography we would expect SoR reps and managers to discuss and agree what services and what staffing levels are required.

The key is to maintain patient safety and decide which services must continue to prevent patients being put at risk.

Local consideration will also need to be given to adequate supervision for staff who are working on a day when there is a strike, taking into account competence and safe levels of practice and also any health and safety risks for lone workers.

Members will also need to be mindful of the requirement to share information with colleagues and the duty to keep clear and accurate records which becomes particularly important when alternative cover is provided.

The SoR is engaged in discussion, alongside other trade unions, with the national NHS Employers organisation on this matter and will advise members of the outcome of any talks.
A majority YES VOTE has been declared in our ballot result on 3rd October. It is now important that the necessary discussions to consider essential and emergency cover take place immediately.

In your discussions with your employer locally, it would be helpful to flag up that the SoR never wanted to be in the position of balloting for industrial action and it is still our hope that the government even at this late stage will be prepared to enter into genuine talks aimed at reaching a negotiated settlement to the current dispute.