

national FBU strike for fire and rescue services in August 2013, the teachers' strikes in November 2011, and Unite's British Airways strike in March 2011. A number of other countries ban public servants from striking at all e.g. New York's mass transit system benefits from the Taylor Law (New York State Public Employees Fair Employment Act), which prohibits public employees from striking, and civil servants are not allowed to strike in Germany.

Q: Why are you only introducing this tougher threshold for the health, education, transport and fire services?

These are the services in which industrial action has a collateral impact on members of the public that is disproportionate and unfair. Strikes can put lives at risk, prevent people from getting to work and earning a living – either because the trains aren't running or because parents can't get to work because they are looking after kids prevented from going to school because of a strike – and prevent businesses from managing their workforces effectively.

Q: Who exactly will this apply to? Will X or Y be included?

The tougher threshold will apply to members of trade unions in the health sector, schools, transport operators, and fire services, regardless of whether they are delivered by public or private sector operators. We will bring forward legislation setting out the exact scope of these definitions.

Q: What thresholds will apply to which thresholds?

Restrictions	Services
Not allowed to strike	Police officer, prison offices & armed forces
Must have 50% turnout and 40% of those entitled to vote voting in favour for strike to be valid	NHS, schools, transport operators and fire services
Must have 50% turnout to be valid	All other services

Q: Will this threshold apply to both the public and private sectors?

Yes, the new strike thresholds will apply to all members of trade unions working in these services.

Q: Would this have stopped the 18 bus companies planning to go on strike in London on 13 January?

Yes, turnout for these strikes was only 25 per cent and only 21 per cent of those eligible to vote voted yes so our new threshold would have prevented this disruption.

Q: Why are you not just committing to introducing Minimum Service Levels now, rather than prolonging the issue by undertaking a review?

We think there is a strong case for introducing Minimum Service Levels in this country but first want to fully understand the evidence from other countries and how this applies to the UK.

Q: How will Minimum Service Levels work in practice?

We will be reviewing how it works in other countries so we can understand better how such arrangements might be made to work in the UK context. We will consult employers and unions on how best to make Minimum Service Levels work for the UK public.

Q: Won't Minimum Service Levels undermine current voluntary agreements to provide core services?

We will look carefully at how to ensure Minimum Service Levels build on existing arrangements where these are in place.

Q: Won't these changes contravene ECHR guidance?

We believe that these proposals strike a fair balance between people's rights to freedom of association and the need to ensure people can access the essential public services on which they rely day in and day out.