# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **UK Government’s Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill** |
| **DATE** | **22 May 2023** |
| **BY** | **Mick Antoniw MS, Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution** |

The UK Strikes Bill is a threat to public services, democratic freedoms and devolution. The Welsh Government is utterly opposed to a Bill that represents a nakedly political and opportunist attack on the rights and dignity of public services workers.

When the Bill was published, we wrote to the UK Government and followed that up with a Written Statement that elaborated on our opposition to the Bill.  During the passage of the Bill through the House of Commons, we wrote again to the UK Government. We published our letters and the Written Statement [here](https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-welsh-government-position-strikes-minimum-service-levels-bill) and [here](https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s134674/LJC6-09-23%20-%20Paper%2011%20-%20Letter%20from%20the%20Counsel%20General%20and%20Minister%20for%20the%20Constitution%20to%20UK%20Go.pdf).

We will go on fighting to keep devolved Welsh services out of the Bill as it returns to the House of Commons and the Welsh Government will not enable the Bill’s implementation in any way. Welsh Ministers have informed UK Ministers that we will not participate in UK consultations on the creation of Minimum Service Levels for specific sectors, including those which are devolved. As with both the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds, the Welsh Government will not dedicate its resources to support the implementation of UK policy that undermines devolution and contradicts our objectives.

The UK Government attempt to impose the Bill onto devolved Welsh services was defeated in the House of Lords who passed an amendment to limit the Bill’s scope to England - and we will fight to stand up for devolution and democratic accountability in Wales.

We laid before the Senedd a Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) which was debated in the Senedd on 25 April. The Senedd refused its consent to a Bill that deliberately bypasses our Welsh Parliament and Welsh Government. By overriding devolution, UK Ministers have denied devolved governments the power to prevent work notices being issued in Wales by UK Ministers with no mandate.

Despite assurances that the UK Government would seek voluntary agreements beyond those areas it is already consulting upon, those assurances cannot be relied upon. A recent Written Statement from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services confirmed the UK Government is already considering the need to consult on additional minimum service levels covering a wider range of health services.

We will work with trades unions and employers through our social partnership model to explore every possible option to avert any prospect of work notices being issued in Welsh public services.

In Wales, devolved public services and trade unions work in social partnership and those relationships are founded upon trust, good faith and mutual respect – principles which the UK Government are recklessly undermining through this Bill.

We have existing and valued social partnership structures in each of the devolved public services within the Bill, which bring together the Welsh Government, employers and trade unions. We will use these structures to discuss and seek to coordinate responses in the event the Bill becomes law and applies to Wales and our devolved public services.