

UNISON

NHS pay ballot



NHS members to vote on action

UNISON, the UK's largest health union is to ballot its 300,000 NHS members in England for strike action. The ballot is in response to the Government's decision to deny 60% of NHS staff and 70% of nurses a pay rise for the next two years. It will begin on 28th August and run until 18 September.

The ballot will cover health workers including nurses, therapists, porters, paramedics, medical secretaries, cooks, cleaners and healthcare assistants. A yes vote will lead to stoppages in early October, followed by further strikes and action short of a strike over the Autumn and Winter.

The ballot follows the Government's decision to ignore the NHS Pay Review Body's recommendations and instead give a 1% non-consolidated increase only to staff at the top of their incremental scale. Because the award is non-consolidated it will not count towards pension entitlements or shift pay and will be wiped away at the end of March 2016.

Christina McAnea, UNISON Head of Health, said: "Balloting for strike action is not an easy decision – especially in the NHS. But this Government is showing complete contempt for NHS workers. It has swept aside the Pay Review Body's recommendations and ignored the union's call for a fair deal. Our members are angry at the way they are being treated and we are left with little choice but to ballot for action.

"We hope to work closely with the other health unions to plan and coordinate action. It is not too late however for Jeremy Hunt to agree to further talks, without pre-conditions, to settle the dispute."

The union has strongly criticised the Government for hijacking increments -arguing that they are not and cannot be made a substitute for a pay rise. Increments are designed to reflect the growing skills and experience of nurses and other healthcare workers and are instead closely linked to competency. They are not a substitute for the annual pay rise that is needed to meet the ever-increasing cost of living.