



NHS STAFF TO VOTE OVER PAY

This year, most NHS staff won't even get a cost-of-living pay rise. UNISON believes this is an insult to those workers and the vital work they do. As a result, UNISON members in England and Wales will be voting over whether to take industrial action.

Every NHS member is being urged to vote and make this a really strong turnout – which will strengthen our hand in the negotiations ahead. "It is never easy to call for industrial action," says general secretary Dave Prentis, "but our members have told us that they are angry about what is happening to their pay, and that their current situation is seriously damaging their standard of living, their careers and the care patients receive. "They have been campaigning since the government announced that 60% of staff in England would get no pay rise this year. But the secretary of state hasn't listened. "Now we are saying that enough is enough."

Head of health Christina McAnea adds: "NHS staff have not received an above-inflation pay rise since 2009. So it's an added disgrace that 60% of ambulance staff, nurses, midwives and other health staff will not get a pay rise of any kind this year. "What does this say about the value this government places on dedicated NHS staff?"

The independent pay review body for the NHS recommended a 1% increase to all pay points for all staff across all four countries. In England, health secretary Jeremy Hunt ignored the recommendation, announcing that only those at the top of their bands will receive a 1%, unconsolidated lump sum - a one-off payment that does not alter the hourly rate or count towards unsocial hours or pensionable pay. The Scottish government has met the review body recommendations, announcing a 1% increase to all pay points consolidated - with more at the bottom to take the lowest paid in NHS Scotland above the level of the living wage. Though the Welsh government offered a deal that was different to the deal in England, it did not match the pay review body's recommendation. It is also linked to changes in terms and conditions. In Northern Ireland, there has yet to be an announcement.

Members in England and Wales are voting on both strike action and action short of a strike. The English ballot takes place between 28 August and 18 September. A 'yes' vote will mean a short action in England on Monday 13 October, followed for the rest of the week by action short of strike, such as taking proper breaks.

UNISON's demands are for:

- Immediate payment of the 1% consolidated sum to everyone, and a living wage of £7.65 an hour;
- An above-inflation pay rise for 2015-16;
- A commitment to future pay rises that will restore the value of NHS pay.

The ballot in Wales is likely to run through October. Any action will be co-ordinated with action in England.

Mr Prentis said that voting "yes" for both strike action and action short of a strike would enable all members to take part, whatever their role in the NHS. And he added: "It is incredibly important that every member votes - whatever his or her view. A high turnout would greatly empower UNISON's position in the negotiations ahead. "We have to demonstrate that we are a member-led union, every one of whose NHS members is affected by this. "It would send a strong message to the secretary of state to think again - and give NHS staff the pay deal they deserve."



Although health is a devolved matter for the Welsh government, it is Westminster which decides how much money is available. UNISON Cymru/Wales head of health Dawn Bowden commented: "We understand the very difficult financial situation that Welsh government finds itself in as a result of UK funding cuts. "However, we do not believe it is right that our members have to pay the price for this. "While UNISON has welcomed the minister's announcement on the introduction of the living wage into NHS Wales, we do not accept that a £160, non-consolidated, one-off payment is the best that could be done for the rest of our members. "The Welsh government had indicated that it had a small pot of money available to pay something to staff in NHS Wales. And UNISON had given a clear indication how we felt that could be used to best effect. "To have that view totally ignored is something we find difficult to swallow, given the way in which we have co-operated with the government through the financial difficulties of the last 18 months. "To our members, this feels like a kick in teeth." She said the ballot is the "top priority" for health branches: "All other issues - with the exception of urgent casework – must become secondary to this, to ensure that we secure both a 'yes' vote and a good turnout.

“This will be a difficult few weeks and months, and I thank everyone in advance for the effort I know they will put in to deliver both the ballot result and the action required for the benefit of our members in the NHS.”



NHS members say they're worth more than 'an insult'

UNISON's Worth It campaign continues to fight for fair pay for **all** health members across the UK.

“The pay situation shows that we're not valued. We look after people at their most vulnerable, and I feel that society should be looking after those members of staff in return. The government's attitude has pushed me to want to fight for the NHS more. I know there's a fight ahead of us, but it's a fight we need to win and can win. David Cameron said the NHS was safe in his hands, but from where I'm sitting it doesn't feel like that at all. As a Paramedic, I am trained to deal with any emergency situation - it's a mixed bag and the cases can be complex. Quite a few of my colleagues suffer from stress and anxiety. In our trust, it's the second highest reason why people go off sick. We feel totally undervalued by our Trust, the Management, and the NHS. Enough is enough!”

