

Time to talk about pay

NHS
PAY
2016/
2017

UNISON
the public service union

March 2016

Time to talk about pay

Responding to the NHS Pay Award 2016/17

To: Branch secretaries and stewards in all Health Branches [England only]

About: NHS Pay Award 2016/17 – member consultation on 2016-17 pay award

For: Discussion and response by Thursday 14 April

The NHS Pay Review Body (PRB) has recommended a 1% consolidated pay increase for all NHS Staff on Agenda for Change contracts. The Government has accepted the recommendation and pay for NHS staff will be increased from 1 April 2016.

UNISON and other trade unions are in talks with employers about what improvements can be made to the AFC pay structure, including making it quicker to get to the top of the pay band. These talks have not yet concluded. Bearing that in mind we want to know how members feel about the annual pay award and what they want to do about it at this stage. Most of the NHS trade unions have indicated they will not challenge the pay award.

We want branches to speak with members and feed back to the Health Service Group so we understand strength of feeling among members across the country.

Resources to be used alongside this guidance include:

- Guidance on using electronic voting - including data protection considerations
- Template communications to members
- Template paper ballot
- Template electronic survey wording
- Response form for branches

Branches must respond by **Thursday 14 April**. This is so there is enough time to compile responses from all branches for the Health Service Group Executive to consider before Health Conference.

What we want branches to do

1. Plan how your branch will consult with members on the pay award
2. Promote the consultation process – ensure as many members are as involved as possible
3. Talk about pay – consult with your members and come to a decision as a branch
4. Report back to the Health Group – by Thursday 14 April

Summary of 2016/17 pay award

The NHS Pay Review Body (PRB) has recommended a 1% consolidated pay increase for all NHS staff on Agenda for Change contracts across the whole UK. The PRB also recommended that High Cost Area Supplement minimum and maximum thresholds should also be raised by 1%, and stated all that staff below the top of their Agenda for Change pay band should continue to be eligible for incremental pay progression. This was the maximum the PRB could award within the public sector pay cap set by the UK Government. The PRB also rejected all Government calls for targeting the pay award at only some members of staff.

Although the PRB recommendation is the same for all staff, implementing the award is the responsibility of the four UK Governments so there are slightly different outcomes.

England

The Government has announced it accepts in full all Pay Review Body (PRB) recommendations. This means a 1% pay increase for all Agenda for Change staff. That means all basic pay, as well as rates for additional entitlements such as unsocial hours, will increase by 1%. High Cost Area supplement minimum and maximum thresholds will also be raised by 1%.

Scotland

The Government has announced it accepts in full all Pay Review Body (PRB) recommendations. This means a 1% pay increase for all Agenda for Change staff.

Additionally, staff earning under £22,000 will also receive an additional sum to increase their pay by at least £400. The result of this is all staff in Scotland will earn at least the Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation.

Wales

The Welsh Government has not announced its response to the PRB recommendations.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive has not announced its response to the PRB recommendations.

Summary – Government implementation of PRB recommendations by country

Country	1% uplift	Other
England	Awarded	1% uplift for HCAS minimum and maximum
Northern Ireland	TBC	TBC
Scotland	Awarded	Living Wage top up - £400 minimum raise for staff earning less than £22,000
Cymru/Wales	TBC	TBC

UNISON priorities for the 2016/17 pay review round

In the pay round process we called on the Pay Review Body to:

- recognise that NHS staff and services simply cannot survive four more years of pay cuts
- recommend a catch-up award for NHS staff to start to address what they have lost
- resist the Treasury call for 'targeting' - where some staff get more than 1% while others get less - and make a fair award for all staff
- recommend that from 2016 the NHS incorporates the real Living Wage as a minimum consistently across all four countries
- create a 'roadmap' for reaching a £10 an hour minimum pay rate to end poverty pay in the NHS and help protect NHS staff from cuts to their tax credits
- restore a UK-wide NHS pay structure by levelling up to the Scottish salary scales
- apply a 'feels fair' award of at least £1 an hour for all staff
- recommend a proper pay framework for apprentices in the NHS to protect them from pay exploitation.

UNISON also continues to campaign against the unfairness of the 1% limit the Government imposed on the PRB.

UNISON priorities for refreshing the NHS pay structure

For a number of years now UNISON members have told us about problems with the design of the AfC pay bands: they are too long; some pay points are too close together; there is too much overlap between bands; and pay at the bottom of the structure is too little to live on.

When the pay dispute in England was settled in 2015 we got agreement to hold talks with the employers and the Department of Health about refreshing the AfC pay structure to make it fit for the future. Talks are proceeding with the NHS Employers – with the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland administrations attending so they can decide about getting on board once we have some clear outcomes.

UNISON believes these talks are crucial to giving members hope of something more than a measly 1% annual uplift. They also provide an opportunity to try and restore a single UK pay structure through levelling up.

What we are talking about

We have been talking to the employers about a pay structure that is fairer, simpler and easier to understand:

1. Living wage for all

Introducing the Living wage as the pay floor across the whole of the NHS is long overdue. And moves already taking place in Scotland to re-profile Band 1 jobs need to be extended out across the UK.

2. Better, quicker

Reducing how long it takes to get to the top of the band – the rate for the job – will be fairer and better for staff morale. We want to use the current band maximums but hang a smaller number of pay points below them.

3. No more overlaps

At the moment there are considerable overlaps between the top of one pay band and the bottom of the next. This means jobs with higher job evaluation scores can be paid the same or less than lower-scoring jobs. This needs to be put right to ensure fair and equal pay for work of equal value.

What we are not talking about

UNISON has made it crystal clear that our members will not accept any moves to reduce payments for working unsocial hours. We have warned that, like the junior doctors, any such moves would provoke a damaging industrial dispute. Members will be consulted separately once the pay structure talks reach an outcome.

Consultation guidance for branches

Time to Talk About Pay involves four simple steps, from starting the process to returning your branch decision to UNISON Health Group.

These are:

- Step 1 - Plan how your branch will consult with members on the pay award
- Step 2 – Promote the consultation process – ensure as many members are as involved as possible
- Step 3 - Talk about pay – consult with your members and come to a decision as a branch
- Step 4 - Report back to the Health Group – by Thursday 14 April

If you need additional guidance or support, contact your regional organiser or the Health Group on health@unison.co.uk – clearly marking your email subject line “NHS pay consultation 2016/17.”

Quick checklist

Step 1

- Agree a consultation process in your branch
- Set a timeline
- Decide who is taking responsibility for each part of the process

Step 2

- Publicise Time To Talk About Pay to members
- Advertise dates, times and methods of branch consultation

Step 3

- Consult with members
- Record the consultation result

Step 4

- Complete response form
- Return form to Health Group by Thursday 14 April

Step 1 – Plan

Helpful resources for this section: guidance on electronic voting

Agree a process and timeline

Your branch should agree a process for consultation. This should take into account the time needed to inform members, go through the consultation process, and return the branch decision to UNISON Health Group. The deadline for responding is Thursday 14 April 2016.

Choosing a process

You must include as many members as possible. In doing this, your branch must have regard to fair representation and ensure that for example part-time staff, shift workers, and mobile workers are not disenfranchised.

Holding a single meeting for members to talk about pay is a great way to bring people together but to involve as wide and diverse a group of members as possible in the discussion on pay you should consider a range of methods to support members to participate. For example you could use a combination of:

- branch meetings
- a paper ballot
- electronic voting
- other methods

When you are planning your process, make sure you take into account access including making sure that staff working night shifts are able to participate.

If you are using electronic voting, UNISON has prepared guidance on using SurveyMonkey. As there are data protection issues please make sure you read the guidance carefully.

Setting out responsibilities

Ensure all tasks are clearly assigned to committee members, and that everyone is clear on what their role is.

Step 2 – Promote the consultation

Helpful resources for this section: template communication to members

Once you have planned and approved how you are going to consult members, you need to make sure as many of them as possible know you are going to talk to them about the pay award for 2016/17.

Remember, not everyone will know the details of how NHS pay works – particularly newer members – so it's important to tell members what you are talking about, and why it is important, as well as how and when you are going to consult with them.

You can use the template communication to members, included in this pack, to explain the pay award and inform members what UNISON is consulting on.

Ensure that you clearly let members know how the branch will come to a decision, and how they can participate.

Step 3 – Talk about pay

Helpful resources for this section: template paper ballot; template electronic survey wording

Talk with members about how they feel about pay in general, and the 2016/17 award in particular.

The Health Service Group Executive has approved the questions to be put to staff in all health branches. Please ensure the question is put to branch members precisely as it is laid out in the guidance.

Members may have lots of questions about the pay award and how it will affect them. Don't worry – you don't have to have all the answers – the Health Group and UNISON regional officers can help if there are complicated questions.

Any extra information that UNISON gets will be sent out in Health Circulars, so keep an eye out for these during the consultation process.

Step 4 – Report back

Helpful resources for this section: Response form for branches

Once you have completed the consultation process in your branch, you should ensure you respond to the Health Group so your members' voices are heard at a national level.

There is a set form to fill in – the response form for branches.

When filling in the response form, as well as reporting the votes of your members and your branch decision, you will also be asked questions on the consultation process you used. An appropriate branch official will need to authorise the consultation return.

Forms completed electronically, scanned forms that have been completed by hand, and paper forms sent through the post are all acceptable.

Send your response to health@UNISON.co.uk – clearly marking your email subject line with:

“NHS pay consultation 2016/17”

Alternatively, you can post the form to:

NHS pay consultation 2016/17

UNISON Centre
130 Euston Road
London
NW1 2AY

Try and complete as much of the form as possible. The deadline is Thursday 14 April, to ensure there is enough time for the results to be calculated and the Health Service Group Executive to consider the result before Health Conference.

Your members may well have raised other issues over the course of the consultation process – make sure you feed these in through the usual processes to Regional Health Committees, and through your regional representatives on the Health Service Group Executive.