

The NHS pay agreement in England

The NHS pay deal, fought for and won by UNISON activists like you, secured £4.2 billion of additional funding for NHS staff. Now it's time to put those pounds in members' pockets. And it's you that can make sure it happens.

National agreements only work when activists and staff work to ensure that all the hard-won benefits are implemented locally by employers and actually reach our members pay packets.

Checklist for branches

The living wage

All staff in Band 1 and the lowest paid staff in Band 2 will receive an immediate increase to £17,460.

- ▶ **Check:** that this has been done – it has been agreed nationally that this should be paid in July.
- ▶ **Make sure:** that back pay for these staff includes any enhancements, such as unsocial hours, as back pay is part of the national agreement.
- ▶ **Ask:** HR how many staff have been lifted out of poverty pay and on to a living wage rate – it's persuasive to use concrete figures in recruitment and organising to show what UNISON does for the lowest paid staff in the NHS.

3% to the top of the bands

All staff at the top of bands 2–8c should receive an immediate pay increase of 3%.

- ▶ **Check:** that this has been done – it has been agreed nationally that this should be paid in July, backdated to April.

Back pay

The national agreement stipulates that the new pay rates will be paid in July but backdated to 1 April.

We have had some reports of employers saying they may need to delay back pay until August in order to calculate it accurately. But this needs to be agreed locally – there is no national agreement to delay back pay, but we are aware that the ESR funding methodology means funding for arrears will come through to employers in August.

- ▶ **Check:** whether the employer will pay back pay in July. If there is an issue and they cannot pay in July, the employer needs to discuss this with the joint unions as soon as possible.
- ▶ **If there is an issue:** make sure that the employer agrees a resolution with the joint staff side unions, and ensure that the employer clearly communicates this to staff.
- ▶ **Make sure:** that the employer does not blame trade unions for any delays. The national agreement set out an expectation of pay in July, which was taken in good faith. Any further delays are the employers' responsibility.



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Progression

Progression will work differently in the new pay structure.

- ▶ **Check:** that HR and payroll are following the “staff journeys” guidance in the agreement, rather than making staff sit on the same pay point for more than a year.
- ▶ **Make sure:** that staff know to count their years of experience when looking at the pay scales. Get them to find out their incremental date/anniversary of appointment, so staff who aren't at the top of their band know when to expect their pay increase.
- ▶ **Check:** that the employer understands that any pay points within a band, that an employee has skipped (for example, because they have been promoted from the overlapping band below) count as “years of experience”.

Things still to come

The agreement contained a number of other elements which require further negotiation, with the detail yet to be agreed by the staff council. These include:

- Re-profiling Band 1 roles into Band 2
- Buying and selling annual leave
- Enhanced shared parental leave.

Additionally, the new progression system doesn't apply to existing staff during transition so there should be no changes to how people move through increments. For new starters, who will benefit from higher starting salaries, there will be NHS Staff Council guidance ready to use from April 2019.

- ▶ **Wait:** for NHS Staff Council guidance on this before starting local negotiations.

If it goes wrong

In all likelihood, any mistakes that get made during the implementation will probably be just that – mistakes. But it is still important that these are addressed as soon as possible.

If you or a member finds a mistake:

- ▶ **Check:** as far as possible that a mistake has been made, rather than it being a misunderstanding.
- ▶ **Go:** to the employer as soon as possible. Try to reach a point where you can both agree and share a written description of the mistake, the number of staff it affects and whether it affects any staff in particular.
- ▶ **Agree:** a way forward with the employer. Ultimately, if the employer does not implement all of the agreement they will be liable for back pay, so it is in their interest to get it right as early as possible.
- ▶ **Ask:** the employer to write to the staff affected as soon as possible, ideally as a joint communication from the staff-side, clearly communicating the issue and how it is going to be resolved.

