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**Pay 2018: Q&A at 5 February 2019**

**Q. Did UNISON or other unions agree to the imposition of the award?**

A. No. This was imposed without any agreement. That is why we are planning to ballot on whether you would support action to make the Agency think again.

**Q. Why is it taking a while for UNISON to take action?**

A. We need to make sure our membership data is in good shape before balloting, to make sure that our ballot gives a lawful result. We also want to act in concert with our sister unions at EA. Prospect, GMB and Unite all need, under their procedures, to hold a further indicative ballot on industrial action before they can ballot formally.

**Q. What is so complicated about the ballot process that you need to do all this checking?**

A. There are very strict conditions set out in law to make it hard for us to hold and win ballots. We need to make sure that no-one who should not receive a ballot paper does so, and that we make every effort to ensure address and other details are accurate. This means going through a process of validating the information we hold before we can proceed with a ballot.

**Q. How can I make sure that my membership information is correct?**

A. Go to my Unison (you can get there by a google search, or click this link: <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison>). You’ll need your membership number which the branch can give you. You need to make sure that your home address, workplace details and job title are correct. Or call the UNISON helpline on08000 857857, explaining that you are updating these details for a planned ballot. Again, it’s helpful to have your membership number to hand.

**Q. What action will you be balloting on?**

A. We intend to ballot on firstly, action short of strike. We will set out options including working to the general Agency contract (such as not travelling or working outside core work hours and not volunteering for actions you do not have to perform, like taking part in incident response rosters). We’ll also ballot at the same time on strike action, which would enable those contractually required to do incident response and similar duties to take part in action.

**Q. When will you be balloting?**

A. We need to give 7 days notice to the employer of the exact ballot question. We hope to begin balloting at the end of February or the start of March. There will be a three week ballot period.

**Q. What can we do in the interim?**

A. For most staff participation in rosters for incident response out of hours is voluntary. Whether to take part or not is entirely a matter for you. If industrial action is approved in ballot, we would likely ask you to withdraw from future commitments within the period of the industrial action.

**Q. I can’t afford to take action?**

A. We understand that many members rely on standby and call out payments in order to supplement their salary. We have agreed as a principle that we will try to shield members from the worst impacts of any reduction in income during any action. We are still discussing how best to apply that formula but it will ensure a fairness to our members.

**Q. Am I contractually obliged to undertake any standby or out-of-hours work?**

Contracts vary across the Agency. There is no general requirement that staff work in excess of their contracted hours or participate in rosters. However, in some cases and for some roles, roster participation or regular out-of-hours working will have been established through requirement by the Agency. If action was supported in a ballot, members could take action where it was endorsed by their union, no matter their individual contractual position, and no action could be taken against them individually by their employer.

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