

UNISON campaign for a £2,000 pay increase for the NHS

"I work as a domestic for a Community Health Trust. I earn about £18,000 per annum, £9.28 per hour. For this my work involves front line contact with COVID-19 patients. Each day I take my life in my hands by my exposure. I am not complaining, I think it is a vocation not just a job. However, I wonder if the general public are aware of the risks I'm exposed to compared to my financial reward. I believe they would be shocked."

Stephen. Domestic.

Everyone working in the NHS deserves a pay rise. That is why we are asking the government to give all staff a pay rise of at least £2,000.

A £2,000 increase to every pay point would mean:

- A pay rise of over £1 per hour for all staff
- A fair and equitable rise, reflecting the contribution of all staff through 2020 and beyond
- A minimum of £10.23 per hour – taking the NHS pay floor back above the real Living Wage
- A Band 5 starting salary of nearly £27,000

NHS staff report that this pay increase would make them more likely to remain working in the NHS, improve their morale, and that they would spend more in their local economy.

Meeting this claim would add less than £3 billion to the annual operating budget for the NHS in England, a modest portion of the overall pay bill. It would also generate benefits back to the Treasury in the form of increased tax receipts and less spending on in-work benefits.

This is a fair and realistic claim, one that could easily be implemented by government, and one that is strongly supported by UNISON members working in the NHS.



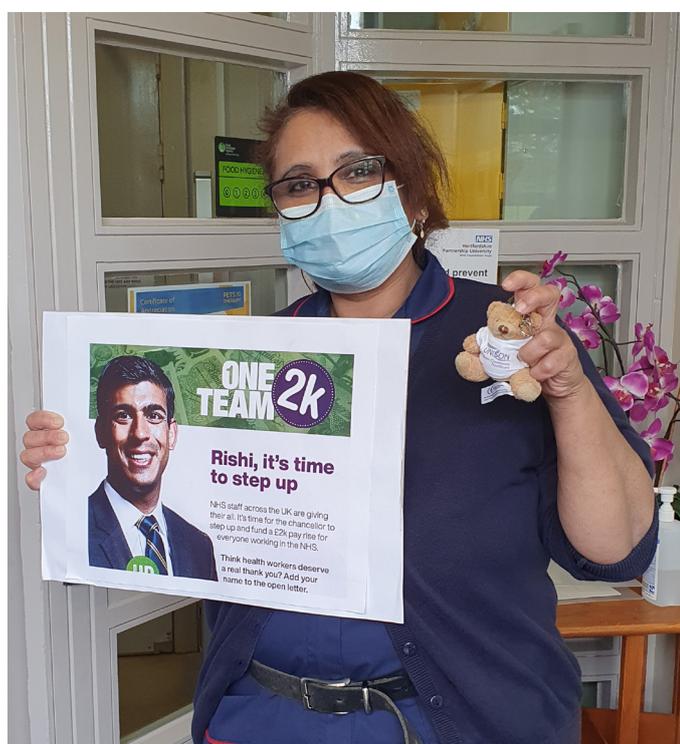
UNISON

UNISON is the largest trade union in the UK and the largest trade union in the NHS with around 500,000 members working in health and care roles. Our members carry out virtually every role in the NHS apart from medicine and dentistry. We have particularly large membership in nursing, the ambulance service, medical secretaries and similar roles, and operational support roles. In broad terms our membership reflects the distribution of roles across the NHS.

We are a campaigning, democratic and organising union; our approach to this pay round has been led at every stage by our senior committee for workers in the health sector and informed by regular large-scale consultations with our members working in the NHS.

This document is presented to the NHS Pay Review Body in response to the remit issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in December 2020. UNISON first presented this pay claim to the Prime Minister in August 2020. We continue to call on the Prime Minister to speed up this process and announce funding for an early and significant wage increase without any needless further delay.

UNISON has adopted the position set out in this document on a UK wide basis. We will pursue this claim through any route set out by government in each of the relevant administrations. Detailed figures in this document on the experiences or views of staff have been given for England only. The views and experiences of members working in other administrations were gathered in the same exercise and will be provided in separate responses to remits or equivalent processes when those begin.



Background to this pay claim

“£2,000 would mean a lot to me. Clapping for us was good but Boris seems to have forgotten us. COVID-19 has changed our lives. We should be appreciated a bit more by the government.”

Mandy. Admin worker.

We believe that pay and reward is an important issue for NHS staff. Our work over the last few years demonstrates this view is held by most NHS staff and that the pay reforms of 2018 may have been a factor in making pay an issue NHS staff actively think about. The reflections of our members on the last pay round provided the context for the drafting of our current pay claim.

We began working with UNISON members in the NHS on our approach to a 2021 pay settlement as far back as autumn 2018 through our national and regional structures, UNISON conferences, and other forms of engagement. In February 2020, nearing the end of the three-year agreement, we conducted a membership consultation to evaluate our approach to the 2018 reforms and to ask members how they wished us to approach the next pay round.

There was strong support from members for the pay reforms we had secured in the 2018 agreement. We asked UNISON members in the NHS, *“Thinking about the current 2018-2021 pay deal, not just the parts that directly affect you, how do you feel about the following elements?”*

Aspect of pay reform	Net support
Immediate increase for the lowest paid staff to set a new minimum above real Living Wage	88%
Breaking the pay cap	85%
6.5% pay increase and a 1.1% lump sum for staff at top of bands 2 – 8c over three years	85%
Removing overlaps between pay bands	83%
Closure of band 1 and upskilling roles to band 2	79%
Quicker progression to the top pay point of bands 2-7	78%
Higher starting salaries for new recruits	66%

The 2018 reforms normalised workplace conversations about pay and reward in the NHS. We asked members in what way they had engaged with the pay reforms, both in terms of conversations and decision making. Large numbers of members had engaged in the process.

Activity reported by UNISON members in the NHS	Percent
I read UNISON information about the pay proposals.	77%
I used the NHS pay calculator	68%
I spoke to colleagues at work about the proposals	65%
I read information on the NHS pay website	59%
I voted in the UNISON consultation	54%
I read information from my employer about the pay proposals	46%
I got information from other sources, including social media	30%
I attended a briefing or information session provided by my employer	8%
I did none of the above	5%

Members were also positive about the process of reform itself. A majority of members (76 percent) said that the process was “a more transparent way to make changes to NHS pay,” with slightly smaller majorities of members agreeing that “the process produced a fair outcome” (60 percent) and that they felt “more involved in the process than in previous pay years” (55 percent).

Members were also clear that they wanted the approach to the next round to be more straightforward. We asked members, “Thinking about the UNISON pay claim for the April 2021 pay year, how important is it to you that we include the following elements in our pay claim?”

	Net support
An above inflation uplift to all pay points	94%
Extra measures to raise the minimum rate in the NHS to £10ph in 2021	88%
Keeping it simple - ask for one headline figure	75%

Drafting and consulting on the UNISON pay claim

An overwhelming majority of UNISON members support the specific claim of £2,000 for all NHS staff, as well as the principles that underpin that claim.

Our lead committee for NHS staff met during spring/early summer 2020 to consider the findings of the consultation exercise from February 2020 and concluded:

- There was significant appetite among NHS staff for an active conversation about improving NHS pay, and a desire for staff to be involved in that process
- There should be a simple, headline approach to the next NHS pay round
- It continued to be a high priority to ensure NHS pay stayed ahead of increases to the Real Living Wage, maintaining the principle achieved in the 2018 reforms

We considered many different approaches. Our lead committee agreed to consult on a draft pay claim of an increase for £2,000 on every pay point on the basis it was the best way of meeting calls to:

- Make a simple claim which felt fair to all
- Achieve a minimum pay rate of over £10 per hour, clear of the Real Living Wage
- Secure a significant pay increase for all staff without widening the gap between the lowest and highest earning staff

In early summer 2020 we consulted members on the specifics of this draft pay claim. Nearly 35,000 UNISON members responded across a full range of occupations and pay bands, giving us confidence that the findings reflect the wider UNISON membership working in the NHS.

A large majority (87 percent) of UNISON members favoured an NHS pay rise paid as early as possible, not waiting for the usual 1 April settlement date.

A majority of members (70 percent) favoured of a flat rate approach to pay increases, with consistent support across all occupations and pay bands. A large majority (84 per cent) of UNISON members backed a £2,000 pay claim, saying an increase of that size would make a meaningful difference to them.

Current experience of NHS staff

“A £2,000 pay rise would make a lot of difference. I have had to purchase my own personal equipment to conduct my role and offer therapy from home. It would go some way to recoup my additional expenses - heating, electricity, ink, paper etc. Everything [I have needed] for a pop up office in my dining room.”

Sharon. Mental health nurse.

2020 has been an extremely difficult year for NHS staff. In whichever way we engage with NHS staff, whether through our committee meetings, surveys, or speaking directly with members, we hear very similar stories.

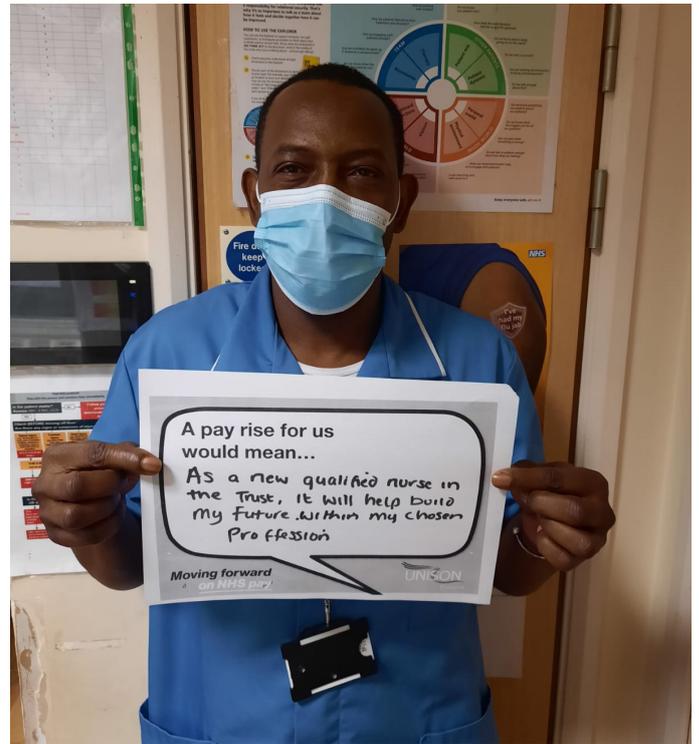
To investigate these experiences more deeply in December 2020 we conducted an in-depth survey asking UNISON members in the NHS about their experiences of working in the pandemic, their household finances, and their views on working in the NHS.

It is clear that working in the NHS has changed as direct result of the pandemic. Over a third of UNISON members (39 percent) have worked on a COVID-19 specific ward or area at some point, and around a quarter (24 percent) of members have been redeployed due to the pandemic.

Even for staff who have not physically changed work location, work has changed dramatically. 70 percent of UNISON members report having to learn and use new work skills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also asked members if they have worked from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Have you worked remotely/from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic?	Percent
Yes – as a result of my own risk factors	9%
Yes – because my workplace/work area was shut down	7%
Yes – my work area remained open but guidance was to work from home where possible	24%
No	60%



NHS staff finances

“2020 was a very difficult year for us. If the Government don’t consider a decent pay increase for NHS workers...I would consider leaving purely to receive better pay to cover the increases in our financial expenditure.”

My type of role could command a lot more outside of the NHS, and £2,000 would go a long way into helping us get back on track with our finances, paying off credit cards and other bills etc.”

Sandra. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards worker

We asked NHS staff about the cost of working, as well as more general questions about their household finances and financial health. The pandemic has changed work in very different ways for different groups of NHS staff but almost all report increases in the cost of working, as well as increases to usual household costs.

A large majority of NHS staff (71 percent) report that they are worse off this year.

Overall, compared to 12 months ago, how do you feel your pay has changed relative to your cost of living?	Percent
I am better off	2%
I am worse off	71%
I am about the same	24%
Don't know	4%



“I have considered leaving the NHS – the pay as it is quite low when you take into account the amount of work done and amount of extra work done through good will. It leaves you feeling slightly undervalued. I have stayed [so far as] I feel that I contribute to my patients’ care, which in turn makes me feel valued. A £2000 a year pay rise would mean I would have to worry a little less about my bills getting paid!”

Lisa. Medical Secretary.

Additionally, a significant number of staff report accessing financial support, guidance or products. Over a third of staff (34 percent) have asked for financial support from family or friends, and over 1 in 10 staff (11 percent) report using a debt advice service. Of greatest concern, there is use of foodbanks, pawn shops, and predatory financial services, with 7 percent of NHS staff reporting using payday loans.

Thinking about the money you spend in order to be able to work, how do you feel the cost of the following has changed over the last 12 months?				
	Increased	Neither increased nor decreased	Decreased	Not applicable
Food and drink while working, or while travelling to or from work	73%	19%	2%	6%
Commuting - private vehicle	64%	15%	9%	12%
Laundry of items used at work	61%	17%	2%	19%
Personal stationary supplies used for work	48%	20%	1%	31%
Commuting - public transport	40%	9%	4%	48%
Furniture (for example, to support working from home)	37%	15%	0%	47%
Personal IT equipment used for work	34%	20%	1%	45%
Car parking for work purposes	31%	20%	9%	41%
Childcare	22%	10%	1%	67%



“[£2,000] would mean that I no longer have to live paycheck to paycheck. It would mean that I would be able to cover a surprise cost, such as my car breaking down, which is essential for my role in the ambulance service”

Nick. Emergency Care Assistant.

Thinking about your other household expenses, how do you feel the cost of the following have changed in relation to your income?

	Increased	Neither increased nor decreased	Decreased
Energy and water bills	93%	6%	0%
Transport	70%	22%	9%
Mortgage/rent	44%	53%	3%
Food	91%	8%	0%

“A £2,000 pay rise would certainly make a difference to my life. It would mean there is a little bit more money left towards the end of the month, which makes it easier to cope. I am currently sat here with no boiler and no means of paying for a new one (this one is old and not repairable). I’m not credit worthy so can’t get finance.”

Debra. Central services worker.



Have you done any of the following this year?	
Type of support, advice or product	Percent
Used a payday loan company	7%
Asked for financial support from family or friends	34%
Used a food bank	3%
Downsized/moved to a less expensive home	5%
Remortgaged your home	6%
Used a debt advice service	11%
Pawned possessions	7%
Made a new claim for benefits/universal credit	6%
None of the above	54%

In parallel to our work on pay we have continued to investigate and respond to our members’ experiences of issues such as staffing levels and wellbeing. A quarter of respondents to our survey on health and wellbeing earlier in 2020 stated that the pandemic had placed either themselves or their family under financial difficulty. Of these, 81 percent stated this had negatively affected their mental health.

Our findings show several factors have contributed to financial strain this year, with 29 percent of respondents identifying a job loss in the household. Additionally, almost half (48 percent) of all survey respondents stated they had not coped well mentally during the pandemic with reasons why including fear of getting sick, increased exposure to unwell patients and feeling isolated contributing factors.

“The extra stress COVID has brought on for no extra additional gains have made me rethink [staying in the NHS]. I could go to another job, do the same role, similar pay for far less stress.

A £2,000 pay rise would mean I’d stop looking for another job. I’m at the top of my band, so [a £2,000 pay rise] would be ideal.”

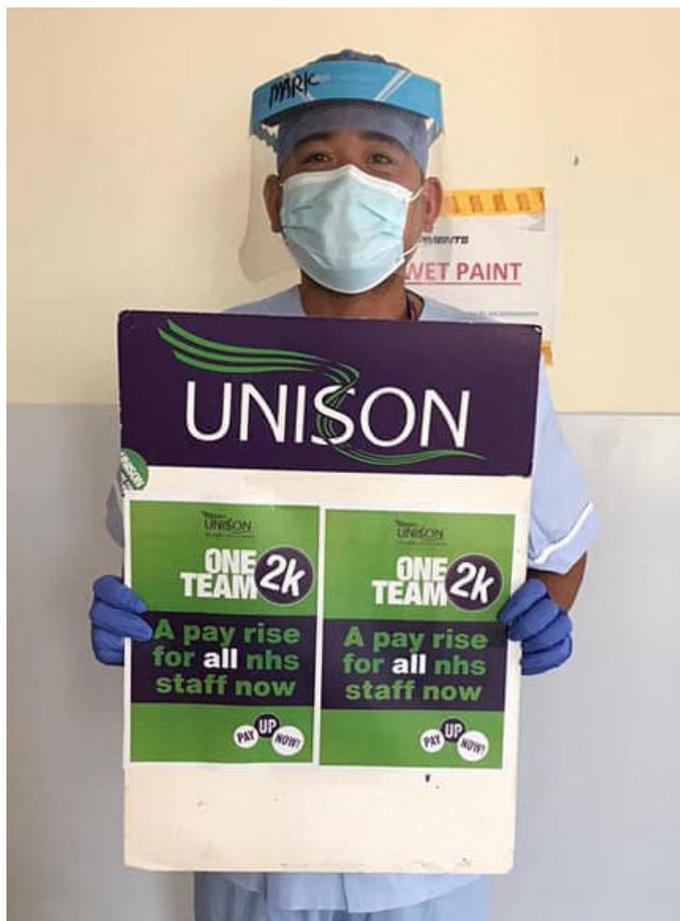
Sam. Field engineer.

For many of our members, their NHS salary needed to go further in their households. We asked, “Compared to 12 months ago, how does your NHS salary relate to your total household income?”. We also asked a follow up question on the cause of that change.

Compared to 12 months ago, how does your NHS salary relate to your total household income?	
	Percent
No change	40%
My salary makes up a larger part of our household income	43%
My salary makes up a smaller part of our household income	17%

Looking in detail at staff who reported that their NHS salary made up a larger proportion of their household income we found that for nearly two-thirds (62 percent) this was a result of changes to the earnings of others in their household.

What has caused this change? (Segment, “salary makes up a larger part...)	
	Percent
Changes to my earnings	38%
Changes to the earnings of others in my household	62%



Retaining staff in a crisis

“I have recently considered leaving my job because I don’t feel valued by the government or my employer. The government has underpaid nurses for years then expect us to [staff] the front line in a war against a deadly virus. A pay rise would be one incentive for me to stay working in the NHS, and a £2,000 pay rise would mean I could put some savings away for a rainy day and not be as anxious about finances on my retirement.”

Linda. Adult Nurse.

The vacancy crisis in the NHS is well understood. However, without action, we risk losing the staff we already have – exacerbating problems and creating an even larger recruitment challenge. We asked UNISON members to what extent they considered leaving the NHS. While 46 percent said they had not considered leaving, over a third of staff (34 percent) reported either fairly or very seriously considering leaving.

Are you considering leaving your current position in the NHS within the next year?	
	Percent
No, I am not considering leaving	46%
Yes, but not very seriously	19%
Yes, fairly seriously	23%
Yes, very seriously	11%

“I have spent 37 years working full-time in the NHS. (If there is a pay rise), I probably will stay a bit longer than I planned to. I am 60 in April 2022 so I could take my pension and go. If the Government treats NHS staff with positive pay policy going forward, I might stay longer. The NHS would keep my skills and knowledge.”

Steve. General management.

Of those staff considering leaving, we asked about their intentions. 82 percent said they would leave the NHS if good jobs were available elsewhere, with half (50 percent) reporting they will stay in the NHS until the current pandemic crisis has ended. Of greatest concern, about a quarter of staff considering leaving (23 percent) report that “whatever happens [they] will leave the NHS.”

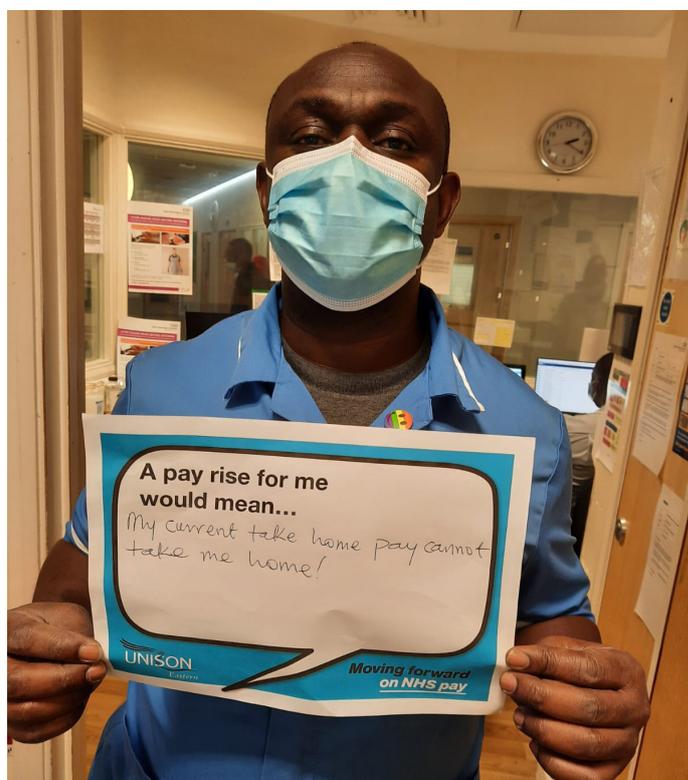
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?			
	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
I'm thinking about leaving my current role but want to stay in the NHS	52%	24%	24%
I want to leave the NHS but stay in the wider health and care industry	35%	34%	31%
Whatever happens I will leave the NHS	23%	46%	32%
I am going to move to Bank/Agency working	20%	30%	51%
I want to bring forward my retirement plans	44%	26%	30%
I will stay in the NHS until the current pandemic crisis has ended	50%	37%	14%
I would leave the NHS if good jobs are available elsewhere	82%	12%	7%
I am eligible for retirement and want to take it	16%	33%	51%
The current crisis makes me want to leave as soon as possible	42%	34%	24%
I feel I need to leave the NHS to progress my career	41%	36%	23%

“A £2000 pay increase would mean a lot to me. It would show that as NHS staff are appreciated, especially after the year we have all faced. I have felt like leaving the trust I work for as I can earn the same money delivering parcels for Hermes. And I would get less abuse from patients. A £2000 pay increase would make me seriously reconsider this.”

Dean. Healthcare assistant.

“I love the NHS but the divide between private sector and the NHS is ever growing. I am consistently worse off staying in the NHS, and the amount of stress and workload I have compared to people working in a factory, for example, who are taking home more money than me. A £2,000 pay rise would [also mean I was] able to stop claiming tax credits.”

Julie. Admin and clerical worker.



Impact of positive action on NHS pay

“A £2,000 pay rise would seem to me a fair repayment of the hard work that NHS staff have given during the pandemic, the risks we’ve taken dealing with patients and continuing to go to work every day leaving our homes and potentially bringing back the virus to our homes. I would just like to be recognised and rewarded for my endeavours and sacrifices.”

Andrew. Pharmacy technician.

NHS staff feel strongly about pay. There are high levels of dissatisfaction and anger about how NHS staff have been treated. There are also very high levels of expectation that the Government must take positive action on pay, with a strong risk of further discontent if that does not happen. The challenge of this combination cannot be over-stated. Inaction, or positions taken in bad faith, inequitable treatment or even simply poor communication risk making this situation much worse.

We wrote to the Prime Minister in August asking for an early pay rise of at least £2,000 a year for all NHS staff. Other than being told there will not be a NHS pay freeze we have yet to hear any more detail on the Government’s plans for NHS pay. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
I do not pay attention to the Government’s approach to NHS pay	18%	17%	65%
I feel like the Government values NHS staff	7%	12%	81%
I worry about how I will balance my household budget if pay does not improve	80%	14%	6%
Given their strong words on valuing the NHS, I expect the Government to improve our pay	76%	6%	18%
The government approach to NHS pay makes me question my future working in the NHS	67%	23%	10%
I feel angry at how the government treats NHS staff	87%	10%	4%
I feel like NHS pay is an important issue for staff in my workplace	95%	4%	1%
I would consider publicly protesting about the government’s inaction on NHS pay	63%	26%	11%
I would consider taking industrial action if it was needed to force the government position	61%	27%	12%
The Government’s approach to pay make no difference to how I feel about work	26%	24%	50%

However, as always, NHS staff are open minded and practical. When asked to consider the possibility of positive Government action on pay and reward, most staff responded positively. Staff report that a pay increase of £2,000 would address issues of value, morale, retention, and household finances.

“As we have been working throughout the pandemic putting ourselves and our family at a greater risk, [a] pay increase would give everyone a morale boost and make us feel as though we have not been forgotten and that we are appreciated.”

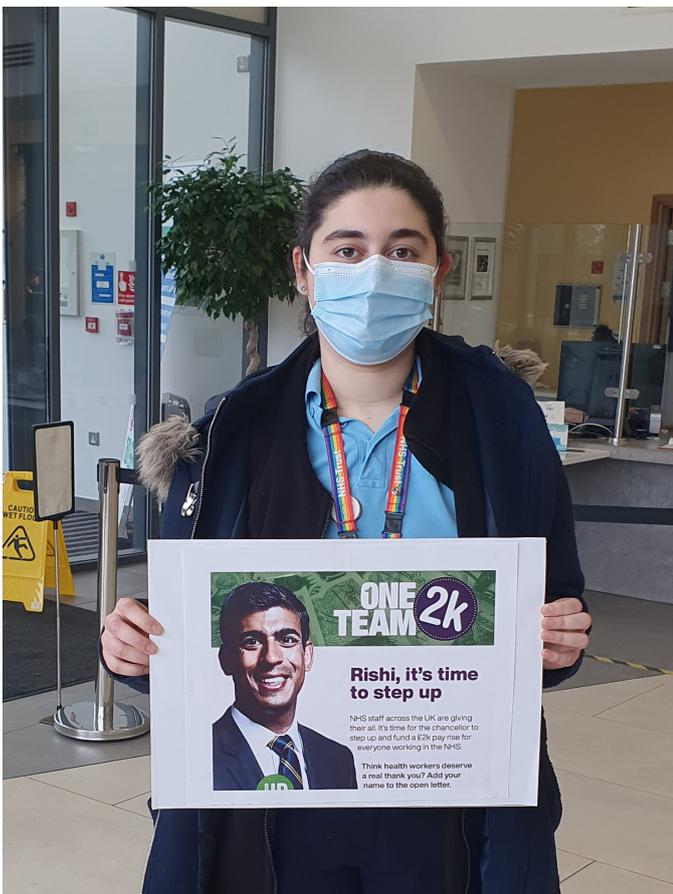
Julie. Biomedical scientist.

If the government did agree to fund UNISON's pay claim for a £2,000 increase for all NHS staff what would that mean for you?

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
It would make a meaningful difference to me	95%	3%	2%
I would feel recognised and valued for the work that I do	89%	7%	4%
It would boost my morale	91%	6%	3%
I would feel assured that the government was helping the NHS	88%	8%	4%
It would make me feel more confident I can afford to stay in my current job	83%	14%	3%
I would spend more in my local shops and hospitality businesses	77%	19%	4%
I would help me balance my monthly budget	91%	8%	2%
It would ease my financial worries	85%	12%	3%
I would feel confident continuing to work in the NHS	82%	15%	3%
I could repair or replace an essential domestic item like a washing machine or boiler	73%	21%	5%
It would make little or no difference	10%	16%	74%

“It’s not only about clapping for NHS staff or being praised by the Houses of Parliament or Government. It’s time to step up in a more kind way.”

Ademola. Welfare Rights Officer



Specifics of the claim

Our claim is for a £2,000 consolidated increase to the value of every pay step point in the pay framework outlined in Annex 2 of NHS terms and conditions of service.

The increase in value should be reflected in adjustments to all national allowances and supplements.

In addition, we would expect this pay rise to be reflected in the pay, terms and conditions of other workers in health care, including workers in wholly owned subsidiaries, private contractors, and other staff not directly covered by national NHS pay, terms and conditions of service.

Structure of NHS pay following a £2,000 consolidated increase to all pay points

	Entry		Full rate
Band 2	£20,005	2 years	£21,337
Band 3	£21,737	2 years	£23,142

	Entry		Full rate
Band 4	£23,892	3 years	£26,157

	Entry		Intermediate		Full rate
Band 5	£26,907	2 years	£28,970	2 years	£32,615

	Entry		Intermediate		Full rate
Band 6	£33,365	2 years	£35,176	3 years	£39,890
Band 7	£40,890	2 years	£42,894	3 years	£46,503

	Entry		Full rate
Band 8a	£47,753	5 years	£53,668
Band 8b	£55,168	5 years	£64,001
Band 8c	£65,751	5 years	£75,664
Band 8d	£77,914	5 years	£89,754
Band 9	£93,004	5 years	£106,927

