

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

*“Very rarely do I take my eye off my electric meter. My pay didn’t stretch before COVID. I’m working every overtime God sends just to see me through. When the extra hours stop, when COVID goes, I don’t know how I’ll cope. Until you’re so desperate [that] you are ignoring the bills, you will never get what a difference £2,000 can make.”*

**Phillipa, domestic**

Everyone working in health and social care 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.

This is a fair and realistic claim, one that could easily be implemented by the Welsh 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 Vaughan Gething AM, Minister for Health and Social Services on 18 January 2021. While we understand that timing of announcements from the Welsh Government is heavily dependent on announcements from HM

Treasury, and we want an expedited process, we note our disappointment at the very late notice that the Welsh Government gave in issuing a remit.

UNISON first presented this pay claim to the Prime Minister in August 2020. Confirmation of additional funding for NHS pay in England would provide the certainty needed to proceed with meaningful discussions about pay in devolved administrations. 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 consulted members across the whole UK when developing and adopting the claim. Detailed figures in this document on the experiences of staff have been given for Cymru/Wales only. The views and experiences of members working in other administrations were gathered in the same exercise and are provided in separate responses to remits or equivalent processes.

## Background to this pay claim

*“£2,000 would be a boost financially and to my morale. Whilst it was great having the applause, it hasn’t been great time for NHS staff, wherever they are based, and a £2,000 pay rise would show that we are all appreciated.”*

### Lucy, pharmacy technician

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

*“£2,000 would make a huge difference to me and many others. I’ve found additional expense with the household bills and financially, I’m worse off than I have been for many years. My salary has been dropping for years as pay rises haven’t kept pace with the cost of living and you always have half an eye on whether you should move on.”*

### Michael, administration

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. The results provided here are for members working in the NHS in Cymru/Wales only.

It is clear that working in the NHS in Cymru/Wales has changed as direct result of the pandemic. Over a third of UNISON members (40 percent) have worked on a

COVID-19 specific ward or area at some point, and a fifth (20 percent) of members have been redeployed due to the pandemic.

Even for staff who have not physically changed work location, work has changed dramatically. Two thirds (66 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	8%
Yes – because my workplace/work area was shut down	6%
Yes – my work area remained open but guidance was to work from home where possible	17%
No	69%

## NHS staff finances

*“My family work for the NHS and always have. We’ve always been proud workers. However, we are struggling with costs having the kids at home. They’re hungry, always raiding the fridge and we’re using a lot more electricity. My heating costs are through the roof. I’m trying to keep costs down by wrapping up the kids in hoodies and jumpers.*

*“£2,000 won’t go far but it would make me feel a million dollars because health workers want our pride back and we are worth it.”*

### Michelle, domestic

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 (73 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	73%
I am about the same	23%
Don’t know	2%

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 (12 percent) report using a debt advice service. Of greatest concern, there is use of foodbanks, pawn shops, and predatory financial services, with 5 percent of NHS staff reporting using payday loans and a little under 1 in 10 (9 percent) using pawn shop services..

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	77%	16%	2%	5%
Commuting - private vehicle	67%	19%	8%	6%
Laundry of items used at work	67%	14%	2%	18%
Personal stationary supplies used for work	42%	21%	1%	37%
Commuting - public transport	32%	8%	3%	58%
Furniture (for example, to support working from home)	28%	16%	1%	55%
Personal IT equipment used for work	29%	16%	2%	54%
Car parking for work purposes	12%	16%	3%	70%
Childcare	22%	9%	1%	70%

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	95%	5%	1%
Transport	70%	21%	10%
Mortgage/rent	43%	54%	3%
Food	94%	6%	<1%

Have you done any of the following this year?	
Type of support, advice or product	Percent
Used a payday loan company	5%
Asked for financial support from family or friends	33%
Used a food bank	1%
Downsized/moved to a less expensive home	5%
Remortgaged your home	8%
Used a debt advice service	12%
Pawned possessions	9%
Made a new claim for benefits/universal credit	6%
None of the above	53%

*“A £2,000 pay award would give me and my family a couple more days breathing space before payday, before we start struggling again.”*

**Lianne, housekeeper**

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.

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	37%
My salary makes up a larger part of our household income	43%
My salary makes up a smaller part of our household income	20%

Looking in detail at staff who reported that their NHS salary made up a larger proportion of their household income we found that for over half (57 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	44%
Changes to the earnings of others in my household	57%

## Retaining staff in a crisis

*"I know I would have a larger salary in the private sector. I love working for the NHS, and have done for many years, but I currently feel that we are not valued any more. A pay increase would make it more likely I would remain in the NHS."*

### Lucy, pharmacy technician

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 43 percent said they had not considered leaving, over a third of staff (39 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	43%
Yes, but not very seriously	18%
Yes, fairly seriously	26%
Yes, very seriously	13%

Of those staff considering leaving, we asked about their intentions. 81 percent said they would leave the NHS if good jobs were available elsewhere, with half (53 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."

*"£2,000 would definitely help. I really struggle to make ends meet. I have increased my working hours to survive, but it's at the limit of what I'm physically able to do."*

### Jenny, administrative assistant

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	59%	17%	25%
I want to leave the NHS but stay in the wider health and care industry	32%	26%	42%
Whatever happens I will leave the NHS	23%	41%	36%
I am going to move to Bank/Agency working	16%	22%	63%
I want to bring forward my retirement plans	46%	27%	27%
I will stay in the NHS until the current pandemic crisis has ended	53%	30%	17%
I would leave the NHS if good jobs are available elsewhere	81%	13%	6%
I am eligible for retirement and want to take it	18%	27%	55%
The current crisis makes me want to leave as soon as possible	47%	31%	23%
I feel I need to leave the NHS to progress my career	38%	33%	29%

## Impact of positive action on NHS pay

*“A £2,000 pay increase would mean a lot to me and my colleagues. I don't think government cares about ordinary people, past pay increases certainly haven't shown they care about NHS workers.”*

**Rachel, healthcare assistant**

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 have been asking for a pay rise of at least £2,000 for all NHS staff but we have yet to hear any more detail on the Welsh 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 Welsh Government's approach to NHS pay	22%	28%	51%
I feel like the Welsh Government values NHS staff	15%	23%	63%
I worry about how I will balance my household budget if pay does not improve	85%	12%	4%
Given their strong words on valuing the NHS, I expect the Welsh Government to improve our pay	81%	7%	12%
The Welsh government approach to NHS pay makes me question my future working in the NHS	63%	27%	10%
I feel angry at how the Welsh government treats NHS staff	85%	11%	4%
I feel like NHS pay is an important issue for staff in my workplace	97%	2%	<1%

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
I would consider publicly protesting about the Welsh government's inaction on NHS pay	68%	22%	10%
I would consider taking industrial action if it was needed to force the Welsh government position	60%	28%	13%
The Welsh Government's approach to pay make no difference to how I feel about work	28%	28%	44%

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.

*“It’s important staff who really work hard on low bands receive acknowledgement financially for their efforts keeping the NHS working during COVID. We need to be paying people properly and let’s have an end to low pay awards which don’t improve our quality of life.”*

**Mick, administration**

**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	98%	2%	<1%
I would feel recognised and valued for the work that I do	93%	5%	2%
It would boost my morale	93%	6%	1%
I would feel assured that the Northern Ireland Executive was helping Health and Social Care	92%	5%	3%
It would make me feel more confident I can afford to stay in my current job	83%	15%	2%
I would spend more in my local shops and hospitality businesses	83%	13%	4%
I would help me balance my monthly budget	94%	5%	1%
It would ease my financial worries	89%	10%	2%
I would feel confident continuing to work in health and social care	87%	10%	3%
I could repair or replace an essential domestic item like a washing machine or boiler	79%	16%	5%
It would make little or no difference	7%	16%	78%

*“We all deserve a £2,000 pay increase for what we’ve done during the pandemic. It’s about recognition of what we’ve done. We need more than clapping.”*

**Claire, medical secretary**

## 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

