

16<sup>th</sup> September 2020



Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

By Email: [CEU.enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk](mailto:CEU.enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk)

Dear Chancellor,

**Re: NHS Pay**

I am writing to you on behalf of GMB members working in the NHS.

GMB, the Union for NHS staff, represents more than 620,000 workers in the public and private sector. We are the largest Union in Ambulance Services.

GMB members have been at the forefront of the Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19). Putting their own lives at risk so they can continue to care for others, often whilst being denied access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing. During the height of Covid-19, Thursday nights were used by the general public, members of parliament and your government, to show appreciation for key workers and give thanks to our NHS. Now it's time to turn those warm words and claps in to true value and recognition.

NHS workers are currently in the third and final year of the previous pay award. GMB was the only union to reject that pay award - as our members saw it for what it really was. A real terms pay cut and a reduction in terms. The pay award was criticised at the time for being too complicated and a sell-off of terms - loss of unsocial hours enhancements when on sick leave for ambulance workers, removal of automatic pay progression and in no way providing pay justice for staff who had faced real terms pay cuts since 2010. Our concerns about the inadequacy of the pay award have proven to be correct time and again during the last three years. Failure to reach agreement on apprenticeship pay, the buying and selling of annual leave and this year we saw the lowest paid staff in the NHS fall below a real living wage.

NHS staff are set to have lost thousands of pounds in real terms by April 2021 when their next pay increase is due. Wages haven't recovered in real terms from the unprecedented pay constraints imposed after 2010, leading to on-going recruitment and retention pressures. It was estimated prior to Covid-19 that there were 100,000+ vacancies, despite one of the main reasons for the Reform of NHS Agenda for Change Framework Agreement being to address this very issue.

GMB and other health unions wrote to you in July asking for your commitment to enter meaningful pay discussions for a significant and early pay increase. In previous years, a remit to the Pay Review Body was set by the Chief Secretary. If it is your intention to follow this

process once again, we ask for it to be done without imposing restrictions and conditions and to allow pay justice to be achieved.

After extensive consultation with GMB members across all pay bands within the NHS, I can confirm that a significant increase for our members, will deliver them the pay justice they deserve. That's why GMB is calling for a pay increase of 15% or £2 per hour, whichever is greater. GMB is also calling for unsocial hours enhancements to be made payable when on sick leave for all NHS and Ambulance staff. Never again should NHS workers suffer a financial detriment as a result of illness. The Department of Health & Social Care recognised this injustice during Covid-19 and implemented special provisions to protect pay. This should once again become the norm for all staff.

All workers in health are vital in ensuring the delivery of services. Therefore, the pay award needs to be fully funded to ensure that all employees of organisations contracted or commissioned to provide services to the NHS can also benefit from any increase.

Workloads continue to increase. Many NHS staff continue to work additional unpaid hours or are forced into overtime on lower rates of pay. A mental health crisis amongst the workforce is looming. Covid-19 remains a very real and genuine fear for NHS staff as we head into winter and a potential second peak, without satisfactory provisions in place for track and trace, testing, or quality and quantity of PPE supplies. Staff morale, recruitment and retention all rest now on your announcement regarding their pay. I urge you to do the right thing and give pay justice to our key workers in the NHS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Harrison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachel Harrison  
GMB National Officer

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