

# Your NHS pay in Scotland - next steps



# The journey to Scotland's 2022/23 pay ballot:

Last year, members working in the NHS in **Scotland rejected** the Scottish government's pay offer in a consultative ballot and RCN Scotland **lodged a trade dispute** with the Scottish government to express members' discontent. Members were also **asked their views on industrial action** in an indicative ballot in November 2021. **Although engagement was high, it wasn't sufficient** to proceed to a formal industrial action ballot. This year, given the cost of living and staffing crises, we need engagement to be higher.

This year the Scottish government again committed to direct negotiations on NHS pay for 2022/23. The health trade unions submitted a joint pay claim for an above inflation pay rise. The RCN has been clear that **a pay increase that is 5% above inflation is necessary** to start restoring a decade of lost earnings, fill thousands of nursing vacancies and recognise the skill and professionalism of your work. After pressure from the RCN and other trade unions, negotiations commenced in May.

Negotiations ended without agreement. On 15 June the **Scottish government made a final offer of 5% for the majority of staff** working in NHS Scotland on Agenda for Change terms and conditions. Staff on Agenda for Change band 1 will receive 5.36% and staff on point 1 of band 2 will receive 5.05%. With inflation currently around 11% **this is another pay cut in real terms.**

**The pay offer falls far short of the RCN's expectations.** The RCN Scotland Board, RCN Trade Union Committee and RCN Council have recommended that members vote to reject the offer. The RCN is clear that to recruit and retain enough staff **to deliver safe and effective care to patients, the Scottish government must pay nursing what it deserves.** This is a political choice.

In our **pay ballot – from 12 July to 4 August 2022** – you are being asked to vote to accept or reject the offer and to indicate whether you personally would be prepared to take action short of strike or strike action if the majority of members working in NHS Scotland vote to reject the offer. **Industrial action is always a last resort and patient safety is always paramount in planning how action would be taken.**

# What am I being asked?

In the pay ballot, running from 12 July to 4 August, you will be asked two things:

- 1) Whether you accept or reject the pay offer that has been made
- 2) If the majority of members reject the offer, whether you personally would be willing to take any form of industrial action

By seeking members' views on both issues, RCN Scotland can act quickly on the wishes of members. This ballot will not authorise industrial action but is an important test of your willingness and appetite to take it.

## What might happen next?

If RCN members and others working in NHS Scotland vote to reject the pay offer this will send a strong message to Scottish government that they must do better and reconsider their offer. The RCN would continue to campaign for a higher and fairer pay award.

### Six in 10

nursing staff are considering or planning to leave their job



# Statutory ballot

If the majority of members say they are willing to participate in some form of industrial action, a statutory ballot may be considered. A statutory ballot is a legal requirement before industrial action can take place and there are strict thresholds that need to be met in order for the action to be lawful. At least half of all members eligible to vote must do so and in addition, there are other rules on how large a majority has to be for industrial action to be authorised. The current pay ballot is a crucial test of whether these thresholds could, in theory, be met.

Industrial action is always a last resort, but the current staffing challenges are causing unacceptable risk to patients and staff. The Scottish government has had many opportunities to do the right thing by nursing.

## What is industrial action?

Industrial action can take two forms: action short of a strike and strike action.



## Pay cut over £2,200

The Scottish government's offer in real terms for an experienced staff nurse

\*Based on inflation rate of 11.7% (May 2022)

# What is action short of a strike?

Generally, it means working strictly to the terms of your contract of employment and is often referred to as 'working to rule'. This can include taking all your contractual breaks and/or starting/finishing your shifts strictly on time and/or refusing to undertake paid or unpaid overtime.

By working to rule, you are withdrawing the goodwill the Scottish government and employers often rely on. Therefore, action short of a strike can result in disruption if carried out by a significant number of the workforce. This may place pressure on the Scottish government to reconsider their position on the pay award.



**8%**  
**decrease**

NHS pay in Scotland has fallen on average in the last decade

# What is strike action?

Strike action involves a complete withdrawal of labour from the workplace. This could be for half a day, a day or even longer, depending on the dispute. Strike action will almost certainly result in disruption to NHS services.

## Protecting patients

If RCN Scotland members were to take industrial action, patient safety would be paramount.

Read more about industrial action so you can make an informed choice at: [rcn.org.uk/IAHandbook](https://rcn.org.uk/IAHandbook)

**86% of shifts**

lack enough nursing staff to keep patients safe.



# Use your vote to decide the way forward

This pay ballot is an opportunity for RCN members like you to send a strong message to the Scottish government about what you're willing to do to secure fair pay and safe staffing. Don't miss the chance to be part of important change for your profession and your patients.

Look out for an email from Civica Election Services **RCN@cesvotes.com** and use the unique link provided to vote.

Remember to check your junk and spam folders if you don't see the email in your inbox.

**The ballot is open from 9am on Tuesday 12 July to 5pm on Thursday 4 August 2022.**

## Update your details

You can only take part in the ballot if the RCN can confirm that you work in Scotland and your workplace and employer mean you're employed in the NHS on an Agenda for Change contract.

Confirm your details are correct and encourage colleagues to do the same.

**rcn.org.uk/MyRCN**



[rcn.org.uk/FairPay-Scotland](https://rcn.org.uk/FairPay-Scotland)

Find out more about the  
**#FairPayForNursing** campaign



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