

## MEMBER BRIEFING ON PAY – JULY 2020

### UK government announcement on public sector pay

On Tuesday 21 July, the UK Treasury announced pay settlements to cover 900,000 members of the public sector in England for pay this year 2020/21. These include doctors, dentists, teachers and police - each receiving a 2-3% increase to be paid from within existing budgets. All of these groups are covered by their own pay review bodies. The Scottish Government also made a separate announcement about a pay increase for doctors and dentists.

NHS Nursing staff are covered by Agenda for Change under which a three year pay deal was agreed in 2018. This pay deal includes all staff covered under Agenda for Change - registered nurses and nursing support workers, midwives, radiographers, porters and domestic staff, physiotherapists and many others. The Treasury announcement reiterated that NHS Agenda for Change employees across the UK have an existing three-year deal, which includes 2020/21.

In Northern Ireland, due to the suspension of devolved Government, the NI Department of Health did not implement the 2018 pay deal immediately. In 2020, following industrial action, including strike, a deal was reached which secured pay parity with NHS staff in England for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

You, our members, were very frustrated by the announcement for other sectors, especially since we had called for the government to commit to early and genuine conversations on pay for Agenda for Change staff. The RCN used the announcement as an opportunity to **repeat the call** to urgently bring forward the 2021/22 NHS pay round for Agenda for Change staff.

We want all members to be as engaged as they can be. When we speak loudly and with one voice, we can make the greatest impact. Please keep in touch with your RCN branch, look out for emails and social media posts and follow the updates on the website.

### How NHS pay is agreed

RCN is part of NHS Staff Side of the UK NHS Staff Council, which is made up of 14 health unions and covers all areas of the workforce on Agenda for Change terms and conditions. In the NHS Staff Council, the RCN represents members views in discussions with employers and the UK government.

NHS pay is normally set through the Pay Review Body (PRB) process with governments, employers and unions submitting evidence. The PRB makes recommendations to government ministers in all four countries of the UK, who decide whether to accept the recommendations and what pay awards should be implemented. The governments have not yet confirmed that the PRB process will be used for the 2021/22 pay round. If the PRB process is used, it is expected to start in the autumn.

## **RCN action on NHS Agenda for Change**

Our elected Trade Union Committee is overseeing RCN engagement in all processes to decide NHS pay across the UK. In April 2020 our Trade Union Committee finalised our RCN UK Members Pay Policy which set out the principles we agreed we would use as we discuss the pay terms and conditions of our members. Right now, we are using the evidence and views from our members, including key findings from our **recent member survey**, to inform our evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body or any discussions within the UK NHS Staff Council.

At the beginning of July, along with the other health unions on UK NHS Staff Side Council, we **called for NHS staff to receive an early and meaningful pay rise** which recognises and rewards the true value of their work. We have been clear that investment in NHS pay is an absolute priority to recruit and retain sufficient staff needed to start closing the nursing workforce gap. We are waiting for a response from the UK government to that call.

In parallel, our Trade Union Committee, supported by RCN Council has begun what will be on-going conversations with elected/appointed member committees, boards and branches to discuss next steps and negotiating aims for NHS pay. If the UK government and devolved administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales initiate the NHS Pay Review Body process in the autumn, we will be armed with our members' views.

The Trade Union Committee is very clear that nursing, due to the high levels of skill and responsibility commensurate to the provision of safe and effective care, is entitled to a substantive pay increase in 2021. We are calling for a meaningful and early pay rise for nursing staff and are doing the necessary preparations to respond to whichever mechanism governments decide will be used.

**Any final pay offer or award will be taken back to our members and fully consulted on.**

## **RCN action on pay in the independent health and social care sector**

RCN Council has agreed to the development of a new strategy for the independent health and social care sector, with improving members' pay and conditions as a key part of the work. While we hold recognition agreements with a number of employers, there are many places where these agreements are not in place. Recognition agreements provide some influence over pay, terms and conditions but the RCN is beginning to look differently at how we influence and lobby.

As a modern professional union, our vision is that all nursing staff, irrespective of where they work, be awarded the optimum pay, terms and conditions of employment.