

Have your say on NHS pay for Agenda for Change staff 2025/26 (England), and NHS cuts / job losses

Dear Unite member,

Across England Unite members in the NHS like you are facing real terms pay reduction, job losses and service cuts. Unite is a member led union, and wherever you and your colleagues decide to take a stand on the attacks faced by the NHS, your union will back you.

Pay award – 3.6%

On 22nd May the UK Government announced that there will be a **one year below inflation pay award of 3.6% for all staff on Agenda for Change salaries** in England (Welsh Government will also be making the same award).

This award will do almost nothing to address the financial pressures faced by you and your colleagues across the NHS pay bands. Nor will it help to recruit and retain the staff that the NHS urgently needs to deliver a safe and effective service.

As a reminder, NHS pay is determined by a Pay Review Body (PRB) that collects evidence and makes a recommendation to the Government. **Unite has not been in any negotiations with UK Government** about this award. Unite has been calling for the abolition of the PRB process for the last three years, as it is no longer fit for purpose. We must move to direct pay negotiations as happens in Scotland.

Unite's recommendation – the pay award is UNACCEPTABLE

The elected Unite national committee, made up of ordinary NHS workers like you, met to discuss the award. They decided that we should run a **consultative ballot** to allow members like you have a say on the award.

They formed the unanimous view that the award is **UNACCEPTABLE**.

The committee also recommend that you **vote YES to take industrial action** to win a well-resourced NHS, with safe staffing levels and decent pay and conditions.

The reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

1 – **The NHS is in crisis**, as acknowledged by the Government, and this award does nothing to address the significant and central staffing issues (which includes over 100,000 vacancies).

2 – **The pay award is not “restorative”** i.e. it does not address the historic devaluing of pay which is driving the recruitment and retention crisis within the NHS. The gap

between the top of scale increase and RPI ranges between 35% (at band 2) and 52% (band 9) since April 2010.

3 – The pay award is below inflation - RPI inflation for April 2025 was 4.5% so the pay award is 0.9% lower. We know inflation hits the lowest paid more so the impact of another below inflation pay rise cannot be underestimated.

4 - The doctors have been offered more – 4% plus £750 for those in training. Unions representing doctors are saying this is not enough.

5 – The Scottish offer is far superior, and Scottish salaries are higher to start with. Scottish NHS staff will receive 4.25% for 2025/26 and 3.75% for 2026/27 with a guarantee that this will be 1% greater than the rate of inflation (CPI).

6 – The award does not address the issue of low pay in the NHS with predictions that next year band 1 & 2 will again fall below the legal minimum (England and Northern Ireland only). It was a disgrace that an interim measure was required this year to ensure that pay in England and Northern Ireland met with the minimum wage requirements (National Living Wage). Band 2s are central to the NHS and their pay should reflect this. (Please note that **band 2s and the bottom of band 3 will not receive 3.6% in August**. These bands will receive 1.3% in order to top the 2.3% paid in April up to 3.6% in total.

What about the cuts?

Please be reassured that Unite members' job security is an absolute priority.

We know that many of you are ALSO facing brutal cuts and job losses in your workplaces. Cuts to pay and cuts to NHS resources are one and the same issue – **there is simply not enough investment in the NHS and that needs to change!**

In this ballot we are also asking a specific question about cuts in your employer and whether you are prepared to take action on the cuts and job losses that you are experiencing.

Any subsequent formal dispute resulting from this consultative ballot does not need to be restricted to the issue of pay alone. If both pay and cuts are something that you and your colleagues are concerned about, then your union will 100% back you in disputes on both these issues.

From experience these kinds of disputes have the best chance of success.

What happens next? - Ballot process

At this consultative ballot stage, you are being asked to share your views on the award and whether you are willing to take action to try to improve it. A consultative ballot is an internal ballot of Unite members in NHS to gauge the strength of feeling and

engagement across our diverse membership on the two current big issues. A personalised voting link will be sent to you in a separate email on 16th June.

Specifically on pay, as the award is not currently part of any negotiations, in practice this means that you will get the pay increase in August regardless of how you vote in this ballot.

The purpose of the ballot is to win a better pay deal and challenge the cuts.

If and where there is sufficient strength of feeling expressed through this consultative ballot, we will be able to proceed to formal industrial action ballots in targeted areas with the best chance of success. By law industrial action requires a further postal ballot carried out via an independent balloting company.

Your voice matters

In order to have the best chance of success we need to hear from as many of you as possible. Your voice is crucial, and a high turnout will strengthen our position.

In 2023 many NHS workers took strike action and forced the government to negotiate a better deal. This experience shows that when NHS workers take action change is possible.

With a high response rate in this consultative ballot, there is also the chance that negotiations could take place without the need to take strike action.

How will the ballot work?

The initial “consultative” ballot will be held online, and each member will have a unique voting link.

The pay question is only for those on Agenda for Change terms and conditions or those whose terms and conditions mirror Agenda for Change (i.e. you get the same uplift as the NHS every year). The cuts question will be open to all members working for the NHS.

The ballot will open on Monday 16th June and will close 5pm on Wednesday 16th July.

The voting link will be emailed to you separately.

If you have any issues in terms of voting, please contact:
healthsector@unitetheunion.org.

We will announce the results and the next steps once the ballot results are known.

As a reminder this is not a formal industrial action ballot at this stage and a further postal ballot will be required by law if industrial action is to be taken.

Change is possible. This month we saw a major shift by government on the issue of winter fuel payments. Unite led this campaign and won it like we do on many, many campaigns. We can win for members in the NHS and will where members organise and direct the union. Winning starts with getting involved and we look forward to receiving your vote.

Kind regards

Richard Munn

National Officer Health, Unite