

NHS PAY:

REJECT THE TORIES' DIVIDE AND RULE OFFER

HEALTH UNIONS MUST TAKE ACTION TOGETHER TO FIGHT FOR MORE



Do you agree with us?

**WE NEED YOU TO
JOIN THE SOCIALIST
PARTY TODAY**

The Socialist Party in England and Wales is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), which links us together with socialist organisations all over the world.

We say: take the wealth off the billionaires. Fight for a society that works in the interests of the 99%.

Text JOIN with your name & postcode to 07761 818206

✉ join@socialistparty.org.uk

☎ 020 8988 8777

📮 Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

📘 @socialist_party

🐦 Socialist Party

Subscribe to the Socialist

Weekly paper of the Socialist Party



www.socialistparty.org.uk/main/subscribe

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

**100%
ANTI-AUSTERITY**

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition: tusc.org.uk

Join the Socialists

socialistparty.org.uk

One of the issues that nearly lost the Tories the general election was the ongoing crisis in the NHS: growing waiting lists, staff shortages and growing unrest among health workers against the ongoing pay cap.

This led to a wave of pay protests over the summer, when even the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) was threatening to take strike action if the pay cap wasn't scrapped.

Under enormous pressure to retreat, in his Autumn statement the Chancellor announced that the government would review and fund NHS pay.

The unions, having been denied the right to negotiate pay and conditions for members, instead having to rely on pleading to the pay review body for the last decade or more, correctly ignored the pay review body and submitted a claim directly to the government on behalf of 13 unions, for a modest 3.9% and £800.

However instead of upping the campaign and preparing the members for a fight to strengthen their hand in the talks, the unions' leaders went into months of secret talks and dropped any campaigning.

Members were not kept informed of developments during the talks. In fact, Unison health service group executive members were sworn to secrecy - not to share anything - at the pain of threat of disciplinary action against them.

Yesterday, the unions put out a deluge of facts and figures to members as to why they should accept the offer.

The offer wasn't even put to the Unison health executive to discuss and vote on, and now Unison intends to simply have an email survey to accept or reject instead of a series of full workplace debates, discussions and votes.

This is totally unacceptable. Particularly for such a complex offer there must be a full and democratic consultation and voting by members in workplace meetings.

SO WHAT IS IN THE DEAL AND WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN FOR WORKERS?

While Jeremy Hunt proudly endorsed this latest pay offer for NHS staff, the headline figure of 6.5% is not all it seems.

In reality the pay award will be stretched out over three years, with staff receiving a 3% increase this year followed by 1.7% in the two years after.

Clearly the first year has broken the pay cap and is the biggest offer to any group of public sector workers to date.

However, why a three-year deal? Why not even a guarantee that years two and three would at least match the rate of inflation if it's higher than the offer? Currently inflation is predicted to be 9.6% over the next three years - as such, 6.5% would mean another round of falling pay.

It has been reported, including by some union leaders, that some staff will receive increases of up to 29%. However, as ever, the devil is in the detail.

On top of the pay offer, the government is offering to accelerate workers through their pay grades by paying increments early.

While this will clearly benefit a significant number and they will welcome getting what they are entitled to early, 52% of NHS workers won't see a penny out of this part of the award as they are already at the top of their pay band.

It's one thing for a Tory government to try a divide and rule tactic but it's entirely another for a trade union to recommend accepting a deal that pays for one member's pay increase at the expense of others who are forced to take a pay cut.

Even the new pay progression scheme has more than one sting in its tail. At the moment workers generally get automatic pay progression through their grade each year.

Under the new proposals it could take workers two, three or more years to get a single

NSSN CONFERENCE 2018

11am-4.30pm

Saturday 7 July in Conway Hall,
25 Red Lion Square, London
WC1R 4RL

Open to all trade union and
anti-cuts campaigners

www.shopstewards.net

incremental increase - so what the employers give today, they will claw back tomorrow.

In addition, rather than being automatic, progression will be subject to performance. In the context of massive cuts to training budgets, with staff having to fund their own professional development in many cases, what is being packaged as a good deal for new starters may end up being the opposite.

It is highly likely that staff will be held back down on the pay spine because their employers are not investing in training.

This is little more than a further drift to performance related pay. On top of this the government is making a move on unsocial hours' payments and sick pay by reducing what a worker can claim when off sick. Again this is a case of giving with one hand and taking with another.

Beyond the positive spin, the offer does nowhere near enough to claw back the 14% real terms losses NHS workers have endured since 2010.

Clearly the government is on the back foot, having to break the pay cap and find £4.2 billion to fund this deal.

However we cannot accept a divide and rule deal that accepts continued falling pay. This is a deal that has been secured by secret talks; imagine what could be won if the unions were to mobilise the anger of members and lead a real fight.

Reject the offer and prepare a real fight across the health unions.