

NURSES UNITED

Submission to the NHS Pay Review

Body 2020-21

Introduction

Nurses United UK is a campaign organisation of 'frontline nurses for frontline nurses'. We exist to organise Registered Nurses, Student Nurses and people who identify as a member of the Nursing field, to take action to create the changes we - and our patients - need.

We were established in March 2020 when our first staff member came into post, 1 week prior to the beginning of England's 1st national lockdown. Throughout our entire time of operation, we have been struck by the overwhelming need to lift up and create a space for frontline nurses to have their voices heard. As such, we are submitting evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body to ensure that our stories are listened to.

We urge the NHS Pay Review Body (PRB) to recommend a restorative 15% uplift across all sections of the Agenda for Change (AFC). This uplift should be funded by central government and not from existing NHS budgets. Below we will aim to justify our rationale for this.

We're struggling to survive

Our NHS Pay survey

The recommendations presented here have been supported by the data from our 2020 NHS Pay survey, the highlights of which can be seen in Appendix A. The data which we have provided is specific to Registered Nurses and includes 3,127 respondents across the pay bands and has representation from all major trade unions within the NHS Staff Council.

Unfortunately what we found was the startling evidence that 39% of our profession are missing meals to be able to pay their bills and over 11% of them had missed a rent or mortgage payment. This information was backed up by both our Organise and Change.org petitions which have been included as Appendices B and C respectively, with comments such as these from nurses:

"I live in the South of the country, and can barely afford rent currently. I love my job and have no opportunity to move up a band within my service, so I have to make do and work 60 hours a week doing bank shifts in A&E, community crisis teams, and inpatient care to top up my income. The stress levels are so high, and we keep telling ourselves to focus on a day at a time- just get through. But we need something to ease it."

“Please help us. Please value us. We are people, we are struggling, and we are doing it to keep the nation as safe and well as we can because that is our job and our passion. We need your help to keep doing it.”

Once again, these comments were reflected in our data from our pay survey with 87% of nurses saying that their mental health had been negatively affected by work over the past 12 months.

As 30% of nurses said that they intended to leave the profession within the next year, with factors such as poor mental health (11%) or poor work-life balance (15%) being the most common reasons, we feel that it is essential for the PRB to listen to the solution that frontline nurses offered:

- A meaningful pay rise (27%)
- Less workplace stress (21%)
- An improved work-life balance (20%)

Overwhelmingly, 99% of respondents said that NHS staff should receive a pay rise. The vast majority of respondents across all unions supported a rise of 15% or more (61%).

Additionally, because of the well-established links between pay¹, stress and nurses' intent to leave their roles, it is imperative that the PRB recognise that these factors are likely to impact how safely staffed our NHS is². This is something that nurses themselves currently see as being a problem with 66% of respondents to our survey [see Appendix A] saying that they were frequently working below safe staffing levels with 77% saying that they believed this was putting patient care at risk.

Focusing on nurses at the top of Band 5

While we understand that the PRB has a duty to consider all segments of the AFC, we believe it is important to highlight 'Top Band 5 nurses' as they represent the most populous group within the NHS and the majority of their role is focused upon direct patient care as 'frontline nurses'. This group is likely to consist of some of the most experienced nurses and are therefore more likely to be able to consider taking early retirement and leaving our profession. They are therefore critical to the safe function of our NHS.

In addition, as Appendix D shows, it is nurses at the top of their bands who were the most hard-hit by inflation (Retail Price Index [RPI]) during the last decade with a Top Band 5 nurse in England losing £6,714 in comparison to if they had been awarded inflation-meeting pay increases.

¹ Health Education England (2014) *Growing Nursing Numbers: Literature Review on nurses leaving the NHS*
<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Nurses%20leaving%20practice%20-%20Literature%20Review.pdf>

² Coomber, B. & Barriball, K.L. (2007) Impact of job satisfaction components on intent to leave and turnover for hospital-based nurses: a review of the research literature. In the *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 44(2): 297-314. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16631760/>

We believe that this stark picture is indicative of why the vacancy rate has ballooned from 8,153 Registered Nurses (RNs) (2.5%) in 2010³ to 43,590 RNs (12%) in 2019⁴. This is even more important for the PRB to consider when 254,518 (35%) members of the Nursing Midwifery Council register are aged over 51 and therefore likely to be able to retire under their current pension arrangements⁵.

Reducing inequalities

Furthermore, another additional area for the PRB to consider is the impact that a restorative 15% pay rise would have on reducing inequalities. The disproportionate representation of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds within senior nursing roles are well documented⁶ and may go some way to explaining the much higher number of BAME nurses missing meals (61%) or borrowing money from friends to get by (45%). In the future, it is important that all stakeholders, including the PRB, do more work to tackle the race pay gap.

What does the public say?

Our evidence from the survey is not the only thing that we would like to highlight to the NHS PRB.

128,357 signatories on our Organise petition and 481,552 on our Change.org one back a restorative 15% pay rise for NHS workers. This information was supported by 385 emails and almost 200 letters to the NHS PRB which was facilitated by ourselves to ensure that you were able to hear the stories beyond the statistics. As such, we have included both Appendices B and C for you to review the comments and depth of feeling from across all corners of the United Kingdom.

In addition, the data from polling conducted by YouGov in May shows that 77% of the British public support at least a 10% pay rise for nurses and 78% support an annual pay rise above the rate of inflation⁷. When this is taken with the evidence that the PRB has previously seen around a pay rise for NHS workers being an investment within our economy⁸, it is clear that a 15% pay rise would also be good policy.

³ The Health and Information Centre (2010) *NHS Vacancies Survey*.
<https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub01xxx/pub01912/nhs-vaca-surv-31-mar-eng-2010-rep.pdf>

⁴ National Audit Office (2020) *The NHS Nursing workforce*.
<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-NHS-nursing-workforce-Summary.pdf>

⁵ Nursing and Midwifery Council (2020) *Permanent register data tables - September 2020*.
<https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-register/september-2020/nmc-register-september-2020-uk-data-tables.xls>

⁶ NHS Workplace Race Equality Standard (2020) *2019 Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts*.
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/wres-2019-data-report.pdf>

⁷ YouGov (2020) *Public Interest Survey Results: 7th - 11th May 2020*.
https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/jols8k21zp/PublicInterest_PostCovidPolicy_200508_w.pdf

⁸ Dromey, J. & Stirling, A. (2017) *Lifting the cap: The fiscal and economic impact of lifting the NHS pay cap*.
<https://www.ippr.org/files/2017-11/lifting-the-cap-october2017.pdf>

In summary

Nurses United UK calls on the NHS PRB to recommend a 15% restorative and centrally funded pay rise to the Westminster Parliament. It is what nurses, and the public, are both calling for and need.

Appendices

Appendix A - Nursing Notes and Nurses United UK survey highlights

Background

The survey ran from September to November 2020. A total of 3,558 full responses were received and analysed with 3,127 of these from Registered Nurses working across the NHS in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

90% of respondents said they are in a union with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) making up the largest proportion of this (55%) followed by UNISON (26%).

The majority of staff (77%) admitted to enjoying their work but many highlighted major issues.

30% of respondents said they planned to leave the profession in the next twelve months with a poor work-life balance (15%) and poor mental health (11%) being the most common motivators.

Of those that were looking to leave, 27% said a meaningful pay rise would convince them to stay while less work-related stress (21%) and an improved work-life balance were close behind (20%).

NHS staff reported feeling valued by their patients (88%) but undervalued by the Government and their employers with the reasoning behind this mirrored by the previous statement.

Pay and Conditions

Nursing staff said that they worked very frequently below safe nursing staffing levels (66%) with a large majority (77%) saying this put patient care at risk.

Staff said they felt their pay did not reflect their role (89%) with excessive workplace stress (69%), a higher level of clinical responsibility (64%), undertaking the work of more than one person (63%) and regularly working unpaid hours (50%) being the justification for this.

Overwhelmingly, 99% of respondents said that NHS staff should receive a pay rise. The vast majority of respondents across all unions supported a rise of 15% or more (61%). Over half (55%) said they would be prepared to take strike action up to and including the withdrawal of non-critical patient care.

84% admitted to regularly leaving work more than an hour late with 81% saying this was usually unpaid overtime.

One in three (35%) nursing staff also reported being physically assaulted and the majority of respondents (81%) reported being verbally assaulted.

Over half (51%) reported bullying in the workplace with many being subject to racism (9%) and discrimination (40%).

87% said their mental health had been negatively affected by work over the past twelve months.

Nursing staff report having an average of 15 days per year off work due to stress and/or mental health issues, this shadows physical health at just 10 days per year.

Finances

Over half (64%) of nursing staff admitted to working overtime to pay bills. In addition, 57% admitted to using a credit card and 29% to borrowing money from friends to pay essential bills.

One in ten (11%) nursing staff told us they had missed a rent or mortgage payment in the past twelve months.

Most-shockingly, 39% of nursing staff admitted to missing meals to feed their families or save money.

4% said they had accessed a foodbank and 6% admitted to using a payday loan.

A massive 67% said they frequently lost sleep worrying about their finances.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities

Amongst BAME communities there were some marked differences.

A substantial portion of respondents, 62%, said they had experienced racism and 63% said they had experienced discrimination. Shockingly 83% of BAME nursing staff said they had been verbally assaulted at work in the past year and 60% said they had experienced bullying from colleagues.

Over half (61%) of BAME nursing staff admitted to missing meals to feed their families or save money.

Around half (45%) said they had borrowed money from friends to pay essential bills.

Appendix B - Organise: 'Give a big pay rise to all NHS staff' petition and letters to the NHS Pay Review Body (PRB)

The petition (**please see attached document**) calls for a big and immediate pay rise for NHS staff and currently stands at 128,357 signatories, including thousands of NHS staff, and can be viewed here: <https://platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/nhs-staff-bonus>

Signatories have been informed their responses would be submitted to the PRB.

NHS staff are sending direct letters to the NHS PRB. The content of a selection of them can be seen here: <https://platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/nhs-pay-rise-reasons>

If the PRB would like to respond directly to all petition signers they can do so by emailing: usman@organise.org.uk

Appendix C - Change.org petition: *Claps don't pay the bills - give all NHS workers a 15% pay rise #NHSPay15*

The petition (**please see attached document**) was organised by a Nurses United member, Matthew Tovey, and calls for a 15% pay rise for NHS staff and currently stands at 481,552 signatories, including thousands of NHS staff, and can be viewed here:

<https://www.change.org/p/claps-don-t-pay-the-bills-give-all-nhs-workers-a-15-pay-rise-nhspay15>

Signatories have been informed their responses would be submitted to the PRB.

If the PRB would like to respond directly to all petition signers they can do so by emailing: campaigns@nursesuniteduk.org

Appendix D - Comparison of a Top Band 5 Salary to Retail Price Index (RPI) Salary

| Year | Actual Top Band 5 salary in April of that year | Percentage pay rise ¹ | Estimated Inflation-meeting Top Band 5 salary ² | Annual Retail Price Index (RPI) ³ |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|
| 2010 | £27,534 | N/a ¹ | N/a ¹ | 4.6% |
| 2011 | £27,625 | 0.33% | £28,800 | 5.2% |
| 2012 | £27,625 | 0% | £30,381 | 3.2% |
| 2013 | £27,901 | 1% | £31,353 | 3% |
| 2014 | £27,901 | 0% | £32,293 | 2.4% |
| 2015 | £28,180 | 1% | £33,068 | 1.0% |
| 2016 | £28,462 | 1% | £33,398 | 1.8% |
| 2017 | £28,746 | 1% | £33,999 | 3.6% |
| 2018 | £29,608 | 3% | £35,222 | 3.3% |
| 2019 | £30,122 | 1.7% | £36,384 | 2.6% |
| 2020 | £30,615 | 1.6% | £37,329 | Not yet released |
| Total difference in pounds (£) | £3,081 | | £9,795 | |
| Percentage increase | 11.20% | | 35.57% | |

1 - Percentage pay rise is calculated in comparison to the previous year. The period covered includes all the years in which the Conservative government's have been in power. As such, the percentage pay rise or estimated top band 5 pay rise for 2010 are not included as this was awarded before their election.

2 - Values are based upon multiplying initial salary of £27,534 by the RPI from the previous year, i.e., £27,534 * 4.6% = £28,800.

3 - Data taken from the Office for National Statistics at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/czbh/mm23>