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## **All NHS staff need a pay rise that's above inflation, say health unions**

NHS unions are today (Friday) breaking with tradition and submitting a pay claim directly to the government on behalf of more than one million health workers across the UK.

In a letter to the Chancellor, 14 health unions including UNISON, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Unite and the GMB, are asking Philip Hammond to earmark funds in the November Budget for a pay rise in line with inflation (Retail Price Index). The claim also calls for an additional £800 to restore some of the pay lost over the past seven years.

Cleaners, nurses, radiographers, pharmacists, midwives, medical secretaries, paramedics, therapists, dental technicians, as well as caterers, porters and everyone else who works in the NHS have suffered real terms pay cuts of around 15 per cent because of the government's harsh pay policies, say unions.

NHS unions believe the government has undermined the role of the independent pay review body and severely restricted its ability to make recommendations. Health unions are therefore seizing the initiative today and going directly to the government.

**UNISON head of health Sara Gorton** said: "Health workers have gone without a proper pay rise for far too long. Their wages continue to fall behind inflation as food and fuel bills, housing and transport costs rise. NHS staff and their families need a pay award that stops the rot and starts to restore some of the earnings that have been missed out on.

"A decent pay rise will make it easier for struggling hospital trusts to attract new recruits and hold onto experienced staff. Continuing with the pay cap will further damage services, and that affects us all. The government must give the NHS the cash it needs so its entire workforce gets a decent rise, without the need for more services to be cut.

"There must be no selective lifting of the cap, as with police and prison officers a few days ago. All public servants, no matter where in the country they live or what job they do, deserve a proper pay rise."

**Royal College of Nursing chief executive and general secretary Janet Davies** said: "If the government gives nurses the same deal as the police, it would still be a real-terms pay cut. Nursing staff must be given a pay rise that matches inflation, with an additional consolidated lump sum that begins to make up for the years of lost pay.

"When the next pay review body process begins, the government must allow it to be truly independent and able to recommend a meaningful increase that helps hardworking staff with the cost of living.

"It must be fully-funded and not force the NHS to cut services or jobs to pay for it. When ministers hold pay down, it drives too many nurses out of the NHS. The RCN will submit further evidence on motivation, morale, recruitment and retention issues for nursing staff."

**Unite national officer for health Sarah Carpenter** said: “The pay austerity in the public sector of the last seven years has been short-sighted and misguided. Making dedicated health professionals pick up the tab for the greed and machinations of a banking elite that nearly brought the UK’s financial system to its knees is just plain wrong.”

**Royal College of Midwives director for employment relations and communications Jon Skewes** said: “This claim represents fair compensation for the rise of cost in living and goes some way to make up for midwives' pay losing over £6,000 in value since 2010. Without an increase to pay, there will be no incentive for midwives to stay in midwifery, or for students to consider joining a profession that’s so undervalued by the government and badly overstretched in terms of staffing.

“Currently there is a shortage of around 3,500 midwives in England alone resulting in midwives working harder than ever before. Last year 80 per cent of midwives who were considering leaving the NHS said they would stay if their pay increased. It’s essential the government puts the funding in place to pay staff this fair increase so that the NHS can recruit and retain hardworking midwives and other NHS staff.”

**Managers in Partnership chief executive Jon Restell** said: “Managers in the NHS know how the cap has hit their own pay, and that of their staff. They see the damage it’s doing to NHS services by making it harder and harder to recruit and keep good staff. Patients need the best staff and our staff need a fair pay rise.”

**Society of Radiographers industrial relations manager Paul Moloney** said: “There is an urgent need for a fair increase for radiographers that matches the increase in prices, with an additional catch up element. Radiographers have suffered a cut in actual pay over the last seven years and demand to be treated fairly.”

#### **Notes to editors**

Inflation figures released earlier this week show that the retail prices index stands at 3.9%.

UNISON head of health Sara Gorton chairs the NHS group of trade unions. Royal College of Nursing associate director of employment relations Josie Irwin is the secretary.

The NHS unions are: British Association of Dietitians, British Association of Occupational Therapists, British and Irish Orthoptic Society, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, Federation of Clinical Scientists, GMB, Managers in Partnership, POA (union for prison, correctional and secure psychiatric workers), Royal College of Midwives, Royal College of Nursing, Society of Chiropodists Podiatrists, Society of Radiographers, UNISON and Unite. The NHS pay review body was introduced in 1986.