



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th January 2024

Dear Contribute,

RE: NURSING PAY AND CONDITIONS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the pay and conditions of nurses. I have read your comments with interest.

I would like to start by saying that I am extremely grateful for the dedication of nursing staff in very difficult circumstances over the last three years. In particular, I appreciate that the challenge of working in the NHS during the pandemic, and through the current period when the demand for patient care has been very high, has taken a significant toll on nurses.

The last few years have also amplified existing challenges in the nursing workforce, such as the ability to retain experienced nursing staff to continue working in the NHS. Extending flexible working is one way to alleviate these challenges in several professions, so that NHS staff have greater choice over their working patterns and achieve a better work-life balance.

Throughout, the Government's approach was to protect the safety of both patients and staff. As a result of talks between the Government, NHS employers and the unions, an offer was made for NHS staff (including nurses) to receive an additional pay rise of 2 percent for 2022-23, on top of the 4 percent increase awarded by the Government through the Independent Pay Review Body process.

A 'Backlog Bonus' of at least £1,250 will also be paid in recognition of the dedication and efforts of NHS staff during the pandemic and their role in cutting waiting lists. The level of bonus will be determined by pay band and experience, so for example, the average nurse in pay band 5, will receive £1,350.

For 2023-24, the Government offered NHS staff a 5 percent consolidated increase in pay, worth at least £1,065. Alongside this, the Government will introduce measures to ensure safer staffing in hospitals, make the pension abatement rules introduced during the pandemic permanent, and identify ways to tackle violence against NHS staff.

The Government also committed to the RCN to address specific challenges around recruitment, retention, and professional development in nursing, and to consider a separate pay spine exclusively for nursing staff in 2024-25. To this end, the Government has issued a call for evidence to seek views on a new pay scale and separate pay arrangements for nurses. You can have your say by completing this survey:

<https://consultations.dhsc.gov.uk/en/6571f32b81667534d30a1e49>.



I firmly believe that this agreement represents a fair and reasonable offer for NHS staff, as well as being a fair deal for taxpayers. The NHS Staff Council – which includes unions and NHS employers – voted to accept this pay deal. The Government ensured that the deal was implemented so that more than a million workers across the NHS (including nurses) could receive this extra pay from June 2023.

Finally, I note your concerns about the Government's proposals around minimum service levels for hospitals during industrial action. However, the last 12 months have seen significant disruption to patient care from industrial action, with more than 1 million appointments being rescheduled since December 2022.

The Government's proposals would require hospitals to provide the same level of care for patients requiring urgent or emergency treatment during a period of industrial action as on a non-strike day. For further context, this would mean that patients requiring urgent cancer treatment, requiring dialysis, or patients requiring a transplant where a potential donor match is identified, can receive the treatment they need without being delayed by industrial action.

As you will know, the Department of Health and Social Care recently concluded a consultation on these measures, inviting views from patients, trade unions and other stakeholders. The department is currently evaluating the responses to the consultation, and will publish next steps in due course.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**