



16 July 2024.

Dear Secretary of State

Our previous letter of 9 July 2024 committed to providing you with an update on the progress that has been made on the 2023/24 pay agreement with the NHS Staff Council and the then government. ([NHS Staff Council statement pay deal implementation June 2023 final \(002\).pdf](#)). Commitment was made in this agreement to progress work on a range of contractual and workforce issues to address some longstanding concerns of employers and trade unions.

Work has been taken forward in partnership by the NHS Staff Council, DHSC officials and NHS England and has been subject to oversight and governance by a Programme Board jointly chaired between the NHS Staff Council and senior officials from the DHSC.

A summary of the work programmes is provided below; recommendations from the work programmes are set to be received by the Programme Board at its next meeting on 26 July.

As this work is now approaching its conclusion, we felt that it was an appropriate moment to provide you with our assessment on the progress made, and to set out the views of the NHS Staff Council on priority actions that can – subject to agreement – be taken forward, as part of any future considerations for pay and industrial relations issues for the staff covered under the main NHS Terms and Conditions of Service (Agenda for Change).

Summary of 2023/24 pay agreement work programmes.

1. NHS Staff Council led work programmes.

Apprenticeship pay.

- The NHS Staff Council has reached an agreement on how to preserve pay for existing staff when they elect to take up an apprenticeship role. (<https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/apprenticeship-pay-guidance-and-faqs>)
- As part of the plans for expansion of the NHS workforce set out in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, the NHS Staff Council believes that a compelling case remains for a more comprehensive solution on the pay for apprentice roles to be agreed – including interaction with the future estimated trajectory of statutory minimum wage and real living wage rates and the need to consider impacts on pay for staff wanting to undertake a medical degree apprenticeship; this has also been called for by the NHS Pay Review Body in their most recent reports. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/nhs-pay-review-body>)

Job Evaluation.

- The group has discussed a wide range of job evaluation related issues, reaching an agreed position on the following key areas that need to be progressed further:
 - Urgent work is required to confirm a set of comprehensive measures (with a rapid implementation plan), to ensure that the contractual elements of the NHS



Job Evaluation Scheme are being consistently delivered; as well as managing industrial and employment relations risks linked to the banding of staff, this is viewed as essential to restoring confidence in the operation of the pay system and upholding a key principle of the original AfC agreement i.e. equal pay for work of equal value.

- As part of any agreed work programme measures to be introduced for a centrally co-ordinated set of activities to ensure job evaluation capacity and practice is being delivered to a consistent standard by all employers.
- Commission the procurement of a national digital solution to support job evaluation processes and the monitoring of consistent practice across all parts of the system.

Agency spend.

- As part of a continued drive to reduce costs and dependencies to the use of agency staff, the NHS Staff Council has identified a range of measures that could be considered for implementation, with the aim of seeking to communicate more effectively the attractive benefits associated with either a substantive role or working as part of an NHS staff bank.
- In addition to these measures the NHS Staff Council would like to reconvene discussions on assessing the scope and opportunities for the introduction of a new framework agreement around bank staff working.

Redundancy cap.

- The group was unable to reach an agreement on the introduction of a new cap set at a proposed £100,000 for redundancy payments.

Violence and aggression (in conjunction with the Social Partnership Forum).

- This work has been led by the SPF but has engaged with the relevant sub groups of the staff council. In previous reports details of the mapping work, the outcomes from a survey undertaken and the key lines of enquiry were shared.
- A set of draft recommendations have been presented and tested with the SPF and Staff council sub groups. They include making work and workplaces safer, leadership, data and reporting, risk assessment training and support, the importance of EDI and the role of partnership working.
- A final report with recommendations is due to be presented to the next Programme Board meeting,

2. DHSC led work programmes.

DHSC officials are responsible for providing final reports to the Programme Board from the following work programmes.

Nurse career progression.



- Several key themes have emerged from the discussions in this work programme, namely: development and line management support, including promotion opportunities for nursing staff; access to career information across all stages of a career in nursing; funding requirements to support training and education and structural pay and terms and conditions issues.
- There is also a recognition of some interdependencies to the wider issues surfaced in the Job Evaluation work programme, as well as some additional read across to the separate work already being taken forward in the main NHS Staff Council on the review of the national job profiles for nursing and midwives staff groups.

Pay Setting process.

- Our previous letter to you set out some of our initial thoughts as chairs of the NHS Staff Council on the current and forthcoming pay rounds and the future pay setting process. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you what role the NHS Staff Council may have in terms of helping progress to be made in this area.

Pension Abatement.

- DHSC has responded to the Member contributions phase 2 and miscellaneous amendments consultation and as a result of the consultation, pension abatement for staff who claim their pension early using historic special class rights was removed permanently, as of 1 April 2024, completing this workstream.

3. NHS England led work programmes.

Safe Staffing.

Support to newly qualified registrants.

NHS England will be responsible for providing final reports to the Programme Board from the above work programmes. Work on these looks likely to need to continue. The NHS Staff Council will be seeking assurance that a partnership approach is maintained going forward.

We hope that you have found this update helpful and as the joint chairs of the NHS Staff Council we would welcome an early opportunity to discuss with you how the NHS Staff Council can help shape some of the priority actions and work that needs to be taken forward.

We look forward to meeting with you soon.



Yours sincerely

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Chair, Employer side

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