



Craig Whittaker MP

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NHS Pay

Thank you for contacting me about NHS pay and nurses' pay in particular.

I believe strongly that the passion, commitment, and specialist knowledge our doctors, nurses and other NHS staff provide is part of what makes our NHS so special. I recognise that staff morale is vital to maintaining staff commitment to services.

I fully support the Government's mission to make the NHS the safest, highest quality healthcare system in the world. There are over 11,300 more nurses on our wards since 2010 and over 52,000 nurses now in training. The government recently committed to increase nurse training places by a further 25 per cent, the largest ever increase.

How we value and retain our staff is also critical. I am encouraged by the Government's announcement that the 1 per cent pay cap will no longer be applied. Instead it will look to the expert pay review bodies to deliver a more flexible settlement which balances the need for affordability with the need for improved retention of staff and fair rewards for hard work and excellent performance. These independent pay review bodies apply their expertise and objectivity in making recommendations to Government. Any changes will need to be justified by the available evidence on recruitment, productivity gains, and particularly retention. As I understand it, the Department of Health will continue to look at efficiency and value for money within its existing budget, which continues to see year-on-year increases.

Concerning pay awards in recent years, you may be aware that the NHS is one of the few public sector workforces that receive annual incremental pay progression. Around half of staff on Agenda for Change (AfC) contracts receive incremental pay of around 3 per cent on average. For example, and this might not reflect everyone's circumstances, a typical qualified nurse (Band 5) can expect seven years of pay progression averaging around 3.8 per cent a year, in addition to annual pay awards. This means pay rises in addition to the 1 per cent headline award have been received.

To help support NHS staff in their duty of care, the Government has committed to increase NHS spending in England by at least £8 billion in real terms by 2022. By cutting bureaucracy and championing higher standards, Ministers have ensured that this money goes on frontline care, including staffing, and not administration.

I am proud the NHS has once again been rated the best healthcare system in the world, something that is only possible thanks to the dedication and hard work of all NHS staff, supported by a strong economy.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP