

60% of Health Workers Consider Leaving the NHS , According to New Survey

Three out of five health workers have considered leaving the health service in the last twelve months, according to the biggest ever survey of NHS staff. The findings are released as fourteen trade unions representing health care staff submit evidence to the independent pay review body calling for a substantial above inflation pay award for NHS workers in 2008-09. The unions point to the spiraling cost of living, deteriorating morale and the blow another pay cut would deal NHS staff.

This year the remit of the Pay Review Body has been expanded and for the first time the evidence is being presented on behalf of 1.1m NHS staff. The survey covers more than 24,000 NHS workers, including nurses, physiotherapists, radiographers, occupational therapists, ambulance staff, cooks, cleaners, porters, and clerical have been surveyed by independent researchers at Incomes Data Services (IDS) on behalf of the joint staff-side unions. They found sixty percent of NHS workers have considered leaving the NHS in the last 12 months, while 61 percent said their morale and motivation had deteriorated since a year ago. Other key findings include:

- * 41% have been subjected to some kind of violence or abuse
- * 61% reported being bullied by patients or their carer
- * 84% said their workload had increased over the last 12 months.

Among the reasons cited for increased workload were the impact of vacancy freezes, redundancies and the pressure to meet government targets.

Anne Duffy, Chief Executive of the Community & District Nursing Association said:

"These findings are very concerning and it essential that the Government takes heed of the survey results. It is crucial that morale is boosted across the health service and amongst our members who are nursing in the community. Future pay deals must be fair and recognise the hard work and commitment of those working in the NHS. In addition to the necessity of a fair pay deal to ensure motivation and retention of skilled and dedicated staff the CDNA is campaigning to ensure an increase on mileage allowances to ensure that community nurses using their cars are not subsidising the NHS from their salaries to pay for ever-increasing fuel prices."

Karen Jennings, Staff Side Chair, NHS Executive of Staff Council and UNISON Head of Health, said:

"This year the Government has scored an own goal when it comes to nurses and health workers¹ pay. By picking on the pay of NHS staff they are in

danger of unpicking all the good work that has gone into recruitment and training. It is a disgrace that 60% are looking for work outside the NHS and the lesson (warning to) for Government is clear - NHS staff are angry. The Government has the cure - bridge the pay gap and don't interfere with the independence of the pay review body. This year we need a substantial, above inflation pay rise just to put health workers back on an even keel. They are faced with mounting gas, water, electricity and housing bills - they cannot afford to take another pay cut. We are putting the Government on notice that health workers want a fair deal."

Last year the pay review body, which makes recommendations to the government on the level of pay for NHS workers, said staff in the UK should receive 2.5% paid in full. The government's subsequent decision to ignore the review body and pay the award in installments angered NHS staff and unions by reducing its overall value to 1.9%. After lobbying by unions, national assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland decided to pay the award in full to NHS staff working in those countries. It was only after some unions balloted members in England on industrial action the government improved its offer to English nurses but insisted the award would still be paid in installments. In its submission to the review body the unions

reaffirm their commitment to a UK-wide pay award for healthcare workers.

Kevin Coyne, Head of Health, Unite

"It is important to invest in and retain high quality, highly skilled staff and this should be reflected in the pay recommendation. Motivated staff are integral to improved service delivery and should be recognised and rewarded as such; not treated as a budgetary burden. Holding down pay will simply undermine the drive to improve services by decreasing morale and making it harder to attract and retain staff. A key issue for Unite members is to achieve a 35 hour working week which is essential to moving NHS staff away from the NHS long hours working culture.

Unite-Amicus fully support the independence of the NHSPRB and believe a repeat intervention by the Government would be extremely detrimental to the Review Body process and staff morale."

In their submission to the review body the unions cite data showing how

NHS salaries have failed to keep pace with spiralling day-to-day costs, such as housing, energy, childcare costs and travel, which impact disproportionately on lower paid staff.