



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

9th May 2024

Dear Government,

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 four years. In particular, I appreciate that the challenge of working in the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic, and through the current period when the demand for patient care is very high, has taken a significant toll on nurses.

Over the last few years, the Government has taken steps to bolster the nursing workforce, with 51,245 additional nurses in September 2023 compared to 2019. Last year, the 'NHS Long Term Workforce Plan' set out ambitions to double the number of adult nurse training places by 2031, which will include over 5,000 more mental and learning disability nurses a year.

The Government has also taken action to improve pay and conditions for nurses. As a result of talks between the Government, NHS employers and the unions, NHS staff (including nurses) received 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 was also 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 was determined by pay band and experience, so for example, the average nurse in pay band 5 received £1,350.

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 covering 2022-23 from June 2023.

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 consider a separate pay spine exclusively for nursing staff in 2024-25. To this end, in January 2024, the Government issued a call for evidence to seek views on a new payscale and separate pay arrangements for nurses. The Government is considering the responses to the call for evidence and will announce the next steps in due course.



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 1.3 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 held a consultation on these measures in November 2023, 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

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