

February 2023

RCN consultative ballot on the new pay offer for NHS Agenda for Change staff in NHS Scotland

Introduction

The Scottish government has made a new pay offer for NHS Agenda for Change staff who are employed in NHS Scotland.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Scotland is conducting a consultative ballot of all eligible members regarding the new pay offer. This will open at 10am on Tuesday 28 February and close at 9am on Monday 20 March 2023.

This consultation document sets out the context, background, and detail of the Scottish government's pay offer to enable those RCN members who are eligible to vote in this consultative ballot to make their own informed decision. You can read more detailed [FAQs \(Frequently Asked Questions\)](#) on our website.

RCN Scotland Board recommendation

RCN Scotland Board is recommending to members that the new pay offer be accepted.

The board discussed the offer in detail and the context of negotiations and previous offers. They also heard from the RCN negotiating team, who believe that the Scottish government entered these negotiations in good faith and that the critical need to address the crisis in nursing is being heard and acted upon. It is the assessment of the RCN negotiators that no further funding will be made available.

The board is of the view that the potential reform of Agenda for Change included in the offer provides the long overdue opportunity to address key issues within Agenda for Change that are impacting on the nursing profession.

Your vote

The RCN Scotland Board has decided to consult you on this offer as the RCN position is that members will have the final say. This consultation will determine the next steps.

You are being asked to accept or reject the offer. The RCN Scotland Board recommends acceptance.

If the majority of members vote to accept the offer, RCN Scotland would confirm to the Scottish government the RCN's position. The RCN would seek implementation of the offer as soon as possible. If the majority of RCN members vote to reject this offer, RCN Scotland would inform the Scottish government of the outcome of our ballot and consider the next steps including quickly resuming plans for industrial action. If rejected there is no guarantee that the current offer will be available in the future.

It is for you, the RCN members in Scotland, to have the final say on this offer - please consider carefully what it means for you before casting your vote.

Background

In late 2021, the Scottish government stated that it wished to pursue a settlement for the financial year 2022-23 with the health trade unions through direct pay negotiations, as opposed to participating in the UK Pay Review Body process (PRB).

An initial pay offer in early June was rejected by members. RCN Scotland subsequently commenced a statutory ballot for industrial strike action. The strike ballot was conducted between 6 October and 2 November 2022.

During the ballot period, the Scottish government invited the RCN and other health trade unions for further talks. The Scottish government made a further offer which was rejected outright by RCN Scotland Board on behalf of members.

The result of the strike ballot was announced on 9 November and provided RCN Scotland with a clear mandate to take strike action in all NHS boards and employers.

The Scottish government responded to our mandate and pressure for an improved offer to prevent strike action. Following intensive talks, the Scottish government made their 'best and final' offer in December 2022. Eligible RCN Scotland members overwhelmingly rejected the offer in a consultative ballot from 5-19 December 2022. RCM and GMB members also voted to reject the offer. The other health trade unions voted to accept.

The Scottish government is now implementing this offer despite RCN Scotland remaining in dispute. [Read the detail of the 2022-23 pay award here.](#)

In January 2023 RCN Scotland, RCM and GMB met the Scottish government for talks to resolve the dispute. The Scottish government made the following commitments if the RCN, RCM and GMB agreed to pause strike action to allow further negotiations to take place:

- Negotiations for the 2023-24 NHS Agenda for Change pay offer would commence on an accelerated timetable starting imminently with an aim of concluding by the end of February.
- A commitment to an additional payment equivalent to three calendar months' value of the difference between the 2022-23 and the agreed 2023-24 pay rates.
- A firm commitment to review the NHS Agenda for Change framework to ensure nursing is recognised and rewarded with a clear route for career progression.
- A commitment to match any NHS pay increase in England for 2023-24 if it is higher than that agreed in Scotland.
- A commitment to invest any additional Barnett consequential funding that comes to Scotland from an NHS pay settlement in England for 2022-23 directly into NHS pay in Scotland for 2022-23.

The overwhelming mandate for strike action from RCN members in Scotland was instrumental in securing these further negotiations and commitments from the Scottish government. RCN Scotland paused the announcement of strike dates in response.

The Scottish government also committed to supporting NHS employers to agree an extension of the RCN's mandate for strike action beyond early May if required.

After a number of meetings, these further negotiations concluded on Thursday 16 February 2023 with a new offer from the Scottish government. This new offer has three elements:

- A one-off lump sum payment, equivalent to three calendar months' value of the difference between the 2022-23 and the 2023-24 pay rates calculated on your basic rate of pay and paid on a pro rata basis. This payment is in recognition of the RCN's ongoing dispute and is in addition to the percentage pay increase being offered.
- A pay increase of different percentages depending on the Agenda for Change band you are on for 2023-24. Most would receive a consolidated increase of 6.5% up to Band 8a.
- A review of NHS Agenda for Change with the aim of modernising the framework to support recruitment, retention and the long-term sustainability of the nursing workforce.

The new Scottish government NHS staff pay offer

The Scottish government's stated aim is to deliver an agreed one-year pay deal for NHS Scotland Agenda for Change staff in addition to the offer that is being implemented for 2022-23.

They have committed an overall financial envelope of £568 million for Agenda for Change pay in 2023-24, in addition to the financial envelope of £515 million for 2022-23.

The new offer equates to an average of at least 6.5% consolidated uplift for all staff up to and inclusive of Band 8a. All staff will also receive a one-off pro rata payment of between £387 and £939 depending on their pay point in addition to the consolidated percentage pay uplift.

The total uplift for 2023-24, including both the pay rise and one-off payment, is over 8% for all staff up to and inclusive of band 8a, pro-rata.

2023-24 Pay Offer – Pay Scale

Band		2022/23	2023/24 Offer	% Increase to 2022/23 Salary	Consolidated increase over 2 years		One-off Payment
1	1	£21,692	£23,240	7.14%	£3,753	19.26%	£387
2	1	£21,814	£23,362	7.10%	£3,753	19.14%	£387
	2	£23,820	£25,368	6.50%	£3,753	17.37%	£387
3	1	£23,914	£25,468	6.50%	£3,759	17.32%	£389
	2	£25,808	£27,486	6.50%	£3,883	16.45%	£420
4	1	£25,914	£27,598	6.50%	£3,889	16.40%	£421
	2	£28,187	£30,019	6.50%	£4,037	15.54%	£458
5	1	£28,384	£30,229	6.50%	£4,125	15.80%	£461
	2	£30,329	£32,300	6.50%	£4,251	15.16%	£493
	3	£35,365	£37,664	6.50%	£4,749	14.43%	£575
6	1	£35,522	£37,831	6.50%	£4,759	14.39%	£577

	2	£37,087	£39,498	6.50%	£4,861	14.03%	£603
	3	£43,286	£46,100	6.50%	£5,364	13.17%	£703
7	1	£43,422	£46,244	6.50%	£5,372	13.14%	£706
	2	£45,080	£48,010	6.50%	£5,480	12.89%	£733
	3	£50,506	£53,789	6.50%	£5,943	12.42%	£821
8a	1	£53,513	£56,992	6.50%	£6,027	11.83%	£870
	2	£57,767	£61,522	6.50%	£6,506	11.83%	£939
8b	1	£63,530	£67,285	5.91%	£5,960	9.72%	£939
	2	£68,223	£71,978	5.50%	£5,960	9.03%	£939
8c	1	£75,711	£79,466	4.96%	£5,960	8.11%	£939
	2	£81,426	£85,181	4.61%	£5,960	7.52%	£939
8d	1	£90,590	£94,345	4.15%	£5,960	6.74%	£939
	2	£94,629	£98,384	3.97%	£5,960	6.45%	£939
9	1	£107,840	£111,595	3.48%	£5,960	5.64%	£939
	2	£112,673	£116,428	3.33%	£5,960	5.40%	£939

Source – Scottish government

The table above details the proposed increase for each point on the pay scale both in monetary and percentage terms. The figures are illustrated with reference to whole time equivalents, that is, employees on a 37.5 hour full-time contract. The monetary and percentage terms would be pro-rated accordingly for those not employed full time. [Read the full details on the Scottish government website.](#)

Allowances and RRP's which increase in line with pay uplifts will be uprated as appropriate.

The pay uplift will also apply to the Two-Tier Agreement.

In the event that the UK government makes any improved pay award for the NHS in England which has additional funding through the Barnett formula, and which exceeds the total average percentage of the relevant pay award, then it is agreed that this will trigger an automatic re-opening of pay negotiations for 2022-23 or 2023-24 (whichever is relevant) with any additional resources directed into NHS Scotland pay.

Review of Agenda for Change

The RCN and other trade unions and professional bodies, as well as NHS Employers and the Scottish government have agreed key principles and themes for a review of Agenda for Change in Scotland which will build on the commitments made already as part of the 2022-23 offer.

The offer reaffirms previous commitments to modernise priority areas and supplements previously agreed reforms to the working week; protected learning time and a review of band 5 nursing job profiles, but now goes further, committing to a broader review. [Read the Agenda for Change Review Heads of Agreement on the Scottish government’s website.](#)

The themes for the review are set out in three areas:

Terms and conditions	RCN’s priorities for the review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractual protected learning time. • Reduction of the working week. • Supplementary staffing arrangements and pay rates. • On-call arrangements and allowances • Maternity, paternity and shared parental leave arrangements. 	<p>The RCN’s aim is to improve the terms and condition of members to deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contracted CPD time • reduction in the working week • improvements to the rates of pay for supplemental work such as bank, • appropriate rates of pay for on call and to ensure that on-call arrangements are operated correctly • maternity, paternity, and parental leave arrangements that are the best possible for our members and at least have parity with other public sector organisations.
Pay spine	RCN’s priorities for the review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental values and duration. • Transition points between Bands. • Pay on promotion. 	<p>The RCN’s aim is to ensure that the NHS pay spine recognises the knowledge, skills and education of our members, as well as the level of responsibility they hold. We will be looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the points on the pay spine to address the clear pinch points around transition between bands • action to address the lack of fairness in terms of the size of incremental steps and the duration members remain on a particular increment • a commitment for no detriment in earnings when promoted, regardless of working pattern.
Job evaluation	RCN’s priorities for the review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Band 5 Nursing Profiles. • Improved career progression for nursing. • Fair operation of the Job Evaluation Scheme. 	<p>The RCN’s aim is to build on the commitment already made around review of the Band 5 nursing profiles. We will seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve career progression and create clearer career pathways. We believe that other NHS professional groups already have a framework in place which supports this and will seek parity • ensure the fair and consistent operation of the Agenda for Change job evaluation scheme across Scotland • remove the current variation across employers for similar roles.

Nursing Taskforce

As a result of pressure from the RCN, the Scottish government will establish a Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce that addresses the crisis facing Scotland's nursing workforce.

While not included in the pay offer, the Taskforce has been secured by the RCN as a direct result of our campaigning on safe staffing and mandate for strike action. We are committed to working with our stakeholders to ensure this delivers benefits for nursing.

The formation of this Taskforce demonstrates that the voice of nursing is being heard. We will ensure that this continues and that the individual experiences and views of our members shape and inform this essential work. The Taskforce will progress regardless of the result of the pay consultation.

ENDS