

NHS Unite members reject pay offer and vote to ballot on strike action

Unite, the UK's largest trade union and third largest in the NHS, have overwhelmingly voted to reject the government's 7.99 per cent three-year pay deal and they have also voted for a ballot on industrial action.

94.8% of Unite's health sector workers - including health visitors, hospital pharmacists, health care chaplains and members in many other health care professions and support services voted to turn down the three year offer worth less than 8%.

Unite Assistant General Secretary Gail Cartmail said: "This overwhelming vote sends a clear message. Our members are angry and frustrated that they are being asked by the government to accept this woefully inadequate three year pay deal.

"Unite members believe this pay deal is in effect a substantial pay cut when you take into account the inflationary trends in the economy, such as soaring petrol prices, increased mortgage payments and runaway utility costs. We believe years two and three especially are set at rock bottom levels taking into account forecasted rising inflation."

Unite believes that the Retail Price Index (RPI) is the appropriate measure of inflation, unlike the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which does not take into account the rises in house prices and it is against the RPI that this three year deal should be measured.

Unite is concerned that this current pay offer will damage NHS morale, recruitment and retention. Unite also reject the idea that public sector worker wages are the cause of inflation

Unite Health Sector National Officer Karen Reay said: "Our members in the health sector and right across public services are dedicated and hard working. Gordon Brown's government say it is listening and this unprecedented call for a ballot for strike action must be heard. Our members must not be forced to take the blame for inflation. Services will suffer and demoralisation will result in an inability to recruit and retain essential NHS staff."

Unite's 12,000 ancillary and ambulance staff also rejected the pay deal in a separate ballot last month.