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PRESS RELEASE

35% GAS PRICE HIKE 'HOLES' NHS PAY POLICY 'BELOW WATER LINE'

Unite calls for the immediate reopening of pay talks

The staggering 35 % British Gas price hike has dealt 'a deadly blow' to the government's policy to hold NHS pay below the rate of inflation for the next three years.

Unite the Union, the largest union in the country, called for the immediate reopening of pay talks, which it has consistently asked for since the spring.

And Unite is still waiting for responses from Health Secretary, Alan Johnson and his counterparts in the devolved countries to its letters stating that the union was in dispute over pay.

Unite argues that the current pay deal over the three years is, in effect, a substantial pay cut, given the latest Retail Price Index inflation rate of 4.6%.

Unite National Officer for Health, David Fleming said: 'British Gas's breathtaking announcement is the latest outrageous price rise in utility, housing, food and petrol costs.'

'The soaring cost of living these rises have generated will eventually mean ministers will have to revisit their NHS pay policy, which has been shown to be threadbare and unrealistic. It is holed below the water line – and a result we are calling for the immediate resumption of talks with the government and NHS Employers.'

Unite will be including the gas price rise in its evidence to the independent Pay Review Body (PRB) in relation to future pay awards.

Unite is the biggest of the health trade unions to reject the government's deal and will be pursuing its *Cut My Pay – No Way* campaign into the autumn.

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Unite/CPHVA press releases can be seen on the CPHVA website:

www.unitetheunion.com/cphva

Unite (Amicus section) is the third largest union in the NHS. It has seven professional sections: the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association, the Mental Health Nurses Association, the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists, the Society of Sexual Health Advisers, the Medical Practitioners' Union, College of Healthcare Chaplains, and the Hospital Physicists Association.

Unite was formed by an amalgamation of Amicus and the Transport and General Workers' Union in May 2007.