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PRESS RELEASE

UNITE SUSPENDS INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN NHS PAY DISPUTE

Unite, the largest trade union in the country, is suspending its industrial action over the imposed three-year NHS pay deal.

A joint meeting of Unite's Health Sector National Industrial Committee – attended by representatives from both the Amicus and TGWU sections – decided to defer industrial action on the pay campaign.

Unite now intends to concentrate on other aspects of the overall pay strategy, such as boosting the authority of the Staff Council, collating evidence for future pay claims, broadening the remit of the Pay Review Body (PRB), and specific employment issues, such as the recruitment and retention of pharmacists in the NHS.

Unite reiterated its rejection of the 'derisory' three-year pay deal imposed on NHS staff as a result of last year's government public sector pay strategy.

Unite said that it was determined to work with other health sector trade unions and professional associations in 2009 in pursuit of better pay and conditions for NHS staff, although it expressed 'disappointment' that some unions had signed-up to the three-pay deal last year.

Unite's National Officer for Health, David Fleming said: 'Since Unite rejected the derisory deal imposed by ministers last spring, the world has gone through a period of unprecedented economic circumstances and continues to do so.'

'As a result, perceptions and attitudes have changed, which is not surprising. Given the hardships, job losses, and home repossessions affecting thousands of our fellow citizens, the joint committee decided to defer industrial action. It was the mature and sensible course to take.'

‘The committee would like to salute the brave and principled stand that our members have taken over the last nine months and the fashion in which they supported the work-to-rule day of action on 3 December.’

‘And Unite members can rest assured that we will be campaigning strongly in 2009 to tackle those issues, such as pay, which haven’t gone away, despite the economic climate.’

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NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS:

- Before Christmas, the PRB declined to recommend to Health Secretary, Alan Johnson that the ‘re-opener’ clause be triggered on the current three-year pay deal
- Unite members voted by 76% to 23% to take part in industrial action short of a strike last autumn. There was a 53% vote in favour of strike action, with 45% against.
- Unite’s policy is to defend and strengthen the independence of the Pay Review Body (PRB) to arbitrate pay on an annual basis. The PRB recommended a 2.75% pay award for this year, 2008/9. The government, subsequently, imposed the three-year deal worth in total 7.99%.

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Unite is campaigning against the imposed three-year NHS pay deal which will mean pay rises being barely 50% of the current rate of inflation. More information is available on the 'campaigns' page of the website www.amicustheunion.org

Unite Health Sector web page www.unitetheunion.com/health

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

www.unitetheunion.com/cphva

Unite is the largest union in the UK. 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.