

Letter from Westminster



Steve Brine: MP for Winchester

LAST week, many of my constituents working in the National Health Service received the welcome news that they are set for a pay rise, and it goes without saying it is hugely deserved.

As readers will be acutely aware, our NHS colleagues work incredibly hard, not least at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital, and staff including nurses, midwives, cleaners and porters will receive a pay rise of between 6.5 per cent and 29 per cent. This truly is a landmark decision, and recognition of the fact that this government values the work they do enormously. The public sector pay restraint was necessary to tackle the awful deficit we inherited, but last September we were able to end the 1 per cent pay award policy, and using new money allocated at the Budget, our proposals will see big wage rises over the next three years for over 1.1 million NHS workers. In particular, I am delighted that the lowest earning staff such as porters, cleaners and hospital caterers will see their wages rise by 15 per cent.

We are also investing in higher starting salaries for staff in every pay band, and a newly qualified nurse will receive starting pay 12.6 per cent higher in 2020-2021 than this year. Starting pay for a midwife will increase by 18.1 per cent.

We'll also support staff retention so that our NHS is staffed by the skilled compassionate workforce that it needs, and Ministers will guarantee fair basic pay awards for the next three years to the 50 per cent of staff who are at the top of pay bands, while guaranteeing fair basic pay awards and faster progression pay for the next three years to around 50 per cent of staff that is not yet on the top of their pay band. I know retention is particularly important locally as it is across the service.

It is also important to note this isn't just about better pay - it is also about making the NHS a better employer. Shared parental leave rights will be extended to all staff, and the NHS will commit to reducing sickness absence by improving staff health and wellbeing, with all staff will receive better skills and development training.

And on top of that, we'll be working with NHS employers and trade unions to boost productivity so that we can achieve better outcomes for patients. Proposals include a framework for buying and selling annual leave which will consider the pay value of annual leave that staff may wish to sell back to their employers. This could help increase capacity and reduce spend on agencies.

Finally, I know I speak on behalf of all my constituents when I say thank you to local NHS staff for everything you do to look after us.

More of my work, in Winchester and in Westminster, via www.stevebrine.com and Ministerial updates on Twitter @BrineMinister

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