

Further consultants strike announced following government pay offer

21 July 2023  Jacqui Atkinson

The Government have accepted the recommendations made by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body (DDRB) to award a 6% pay increase for doctors and dentists in England for 2023-24 ([NHS staff receive pay rise](#)).

In addition to the 6% pay increase, doctors and dentists in training will also receive a further consolidated uplift of £1,250, meaning that junior doctors pay will increase by between 8.1% and 10.3% depending on which stage of their training they are at.

Specialist and associate specialist (SAS) doctors engaged on the 2021 contract, will receive an increase of 3%, which is on top of the increase for 2023/24 that had been already agreed as part of a multi-year deal.

The pay offer for 2023/24 has been made despite the doctors pay dispute for 2022/23 remaining unresolved which has seen both junior doctors and consultants take strike action. The increase is some way short of the pay restoration that the BMA are seeking, and which has led to the BMA describing the offer as "derisory". They have also announced a further two days of industrial action by consultants on 24 and 25 August.

Given that the Government have said that the offer is "final" and there will be no more talks on pay, it is difficult to see that there will be a resolution anytime soon. This will continue to prove problematic for healthcare employers who have no influence over pay awards but will have to continue to put contingency plans in place to cover the action.

Further, the High Court ruled last week that regulations permitting agency workers to backfill for striking employees were unlawful and will be quashed with effect from 10 August 2023 (see [here](#)).

Whilst this decision will not impact any strike action which takes place prior to 10 August 2023 and therefore agency cover which has already been planned can remain in place, post this date employers will no longer have the option to use agency workers. Therefore, Trusts will need to use existing employees from other parts of the organisation which may prove increasingly difficult due to the time of year as staff take holidays and also if good will is starting to run low amongst the workforce.

In addition to doctors pay, the Senior Salaries Review Body, which covers very senior managers in the NHS and executive senior managers in Arm's length bodies recommended an increase of 5%, with a further 0.5% in each employing organisation to be used to address specific pay anomalies. This increase was amid concern that some staff on the highest Agenda for Change bands were overtaking their managers in terms of pay, which could deter staff from applying for promotion.

The pay awards will be backdated to 1 April 2023 and are only applicable to NHS staff directly employed by NHS providers. The awards will be funded by NHS England through system allocations, with some money coming from existing budgets, hence savings will need to be made.

Therefore, it appears that notwithstanding the Government's acceptance of the review bodies recommendations we haven't seen the end of the pay unrest issues in the NHS for the moment.

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