Reject the NHS Pay Offer; Nurses & Allied Health Professionals oppose this insult

This branch notes:

- Nurses and other healthcare professionals on Agenda for Change have suffered under Conservative policies of austerity, with an unacceptable pay restraint for the past 8 years, which has seen nursing staff face a 14% pay cut in real terms (RCN 2017).

- The deal, which on average is 6.5% over the three years, will mean a real terms pay cut for the most loyal, longest-serving NHS workers as the OBR forecasts that RPI inflation is set to increase by 9.6% over the next three years. There is also 1.1% unconsolidated rise in the second year, unconsolidated meaning it is not permanently counted in the pay band structure, but just given as a lump sum at the start of that year.

- One example of many as to why this deal is smoke and mirrors: if you are currently a band 6 on pay scale point 24 your salary is £29626. In 3 years you will be earning £32,731. With new NHS Pay now, you will be earning £33,779 in three years. That’s an increase of £1,048 equating to a 3% pay rise, not 14.02%. Many of the figures are misleading and are being sold as a huge victory.

- The figure of a 29% pay rise for some is also highly disingenuous as it counts incremental rises in with the pay offer and removal of band overlaps. Unions have long rejected the argument that increments are a pay rise. They are meant to reflect skills and experience developed through time in service. The increments will also no longer be automatic and annual, they will be years in between and be based on productivity.

- Unsocial hours payments, along with sick pay for bands 1 to 3 and Ambulance workers will be cut, meaning that they will be paying part of their payrise themselves, an unacceptable red line we told would not be crossed.

This branch believes:

- That this pay offer is an insult and a pay cut with several disguised caveats. Performance related pay penalises workers, especially when the departments we work in have faced brutal cuts through austerity. Our departments are often unable to meet the key performance indicators not because of lack of hard work from NHS staff but because of short staffing and lack of resources, and this will directly affect our pay over these next 3 years.

- This pay deal does nothing to address the recruitment and retention crisis that is driving workers from our NHS and has left 100,000 positions unfilled. If your current salary is £22128; by 2020 it will rise to £24490, whilst it’s not as bad as a pay cut as the 1% cap, it is still nonetheless a pay cut. King’s Fund’s figures have shown that this trend of a steady decline in nursing is not going anywhere (Addicott et al 2015) so long as a concoction of low pay and unsafe work conditions created by the Conservatives
continues to demoralise health workers. It is a disaster for the future of nursing, patient safety and the NHS.

- The Majority of the lowest paid workers (domestics/caterers/maintenance/porters et al) in the NHS are being privatized or transferred/outsourced into subsidiaries/private companies. This 2 tier workforce created by mass privatisation as Trusts attempt to cut tax bills and reduce salaries would see that the majority of what used to be bands 1 to 3 staff won’t even be eligible for this offer.

- Whichever way this deal is spun in real terms, nurses will have suffered a 14% pay cut over recent years, & and a deal that would see us just break even in Year 1 with a real terms pay cut in years 2 & 3, especially for those experienced and dedicated staff at the top of their bands, is simply not acceptable.

- In response to some reverberations on the internet by just a fraction of the nursing workforce, the Conservatives took the threat of annual leave theft off the agenda. It just goes to show how strong we really are and what a weak position the government are actually in. They retreat at the first sign of dissent, which is why we must move to reject this deal as a mass organised collective.

This branch resolves:

- That this pay deal be rejected.

- That the RCN should not capitulate to the bullying and intimidation, by the Conservatives, nor echo it when they say ‘if you don’t take this, it will revert back to 1%’.

- That if the members reject the pay deal when the consultation ends June 5th that the RCN sticks to its word and ballots the members for industrial action.

Reference list:

https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-006195 on 19/05/2017