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24st September 2020

**For the attention of:**

**Mark Drakeford, First Minister**

Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear First Minister,

Throughout the COVID19 pandemic, you have recognised the invaluable role of public sector workers. In the most testing of times, we have seen the establishment of the Social Care Forum, the Health and Safety Forum, and the announcement to award social care staff an additional £500 – all of which will benefit the public sector workforce in Wales.

We thank you for your commitment to public sector workers.

The dedication of NHS staff has been plain to see. For ten weeks communities across the UK united on the doorstep to applaud key workers for their invaluable work - a small but powerful display of appreciation.

Now is the time for health workers to receive proper recognition for the role they have played. Trade unions are urging the UK government to provide funding for a fair and early pay rise for all NHS staff.

A fair wage increase would help staff feel valued after the huge pressures and challenges faced in recent months. There would also be a boost to the economy as health workers spend the extra money in their pockets on local high streets.

Improvements to staff pay would enable the NHS to hold onto experienced workers – including many who’ve returned to its service during the pandemic. An early rise would help with the recruitment of new staff needed to fill vacancies across wards, teams, departments and clinics.

Yet the rhetoric from Westminster is already turning towards cuts to welfare and public sector pay.

We fully realise that the Welsh government is, to a large degree, beholden to the UK government on issues such as providing funding for a pay increase for NHS Wales workers.

I am therefore writing to ask you for two key actions which we believe will support our campaign for a fair and decent pay rise for NHS workers. We have also written to the Minister for Health and Social Care to seek his support on this issue.

Firstly, I ask you to publicly add your voice to ours in calling on the Prime Minister and Chancellor to centrally fund a fair pay award for NHS workers. I have enclosed the joint trade union letters sent to both.

Secondly, I ask you to publicly commit to ring-fencing any consequential funding received from Westminster related to NHS pay in England, specifically for NHS pay in Wales.

Unfortunately, the struggle against this virus looks set to continue. The least we can do is ensure those on the frontline are properly rewarded for the vital work they do.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

**Karen Loughlin**

**Regional Secretary**

**UNISON Cymru/Wales**