

# What to say on doctors' pay



The hospital  
doctors' union

**DOCTORS  
DESERVE  
BETTER.**



# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

## What to say on doctors' pay

**D**octors are at breaking point. Every day, we are met with long waiting lists and huge elective backlogs. There aren't enough of us and it's becoming impossible to fill rota gaps.

We are exhausted and colleagues are leaving. Decades of underinvestment is putting our NHS at risk, and the situation is only getting worse. This is not good for us, and not good for our patients.

Doctors deserve better. Will you call for a proper pay rise this year to fix the staffing crisis?

This guide will provide talking points to enable effective conversations with colleagues. By coming together as a united front, we can create change.

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### **We're calling for:**

- **Pay restoration for Junior Doctors**
- **A reversal of pay erosion and pension tax reform for Consultants and other senior doctor grades**
- **Reform of the DDRB pay review board**

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**When you hear:** “Doctors don’t deserve a pay award – they are paid well enough already.”

**It’s fair and necessary.**

Hospital doctors have seen pay decline by around a third since 2008. We do a highly skilled and difficult job that should be rewarded appropriately.

We are not worth less now than we were 10 years ago. If anything, the Covid backlog means it is now more important than ever to recognise this.

Pay is also a tool to retain doctors to the profession. We are losing Junior Doctors abroad or to careers outside of the NHS. We are losing our most experienced doctors through early retirement.

## **Proof**

- **The Institute for Fiscal Studies<sup>1</sup> demonstrate the Consultant group have experienced greater pay erosion than any other NHS staff group.**
- **The government have locked Junior Doctors out of pay awards since 2019, sticking rigidly to the multiyear pay deal (which HCSA opposed). It’s not fair that the lowest paid doctors should be left behind the rest of the NHS workforce.**
- **The DDRB acknowledge pay deflation since 2008.<sup>2</sup>**
- **NHS Staff Survey 2021 demonstrated only a third of staff were satisfied with their level of pay, and over half work additional unpaid hours every week.<sup>3</sup>**

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**When you hear:** “Taking action on pay puts the NHS at risk. It’s selfish.”

**It’s for the safety  
of our patients.**

Patients are already suffering because of policy on pay and pensions taxation. We are losing our most experienced doctors and wards are facing extreme staffing shortages.

Doctors have been front and centre of the Covid response, and now we are key in tackling waiting lists and care backlogs. We must invest in doctors’ pay so we can retain colleagues and recruit to unfilled vacancies.

## **Proof**

- **NHS data shows Medical vacancies have risen by 20.8% year on year.** <sup>4</sup>
- **Nuffield Trust research suggests NHS in England is short of 12,000 hospital doctors.** <sup>5</sup>
- **70.2% of HCSA members describe clinical staffing levels as “much worse” in their workplace compared with the start of the Covid pandemic (July 2022).** <sup>6</sup>
- **The most common reason for leaving the NHS in HCSA’s survey was “not feeling valued”. Pay is a tool to show staff they are valued and retain doctors.** <sup>7</sup>
- **The Health Foundation estimate the NHS needs over 4,000 more doctors to tackle the Covid backlog.** <sup>8</sup>

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**When you hear:** “We can’t afford to pay doctors more. Wage awards will push inflation up.”

**It’s an  
economic  
choice.**

We cannot afford not to invest in NHS staff. Prices are going up this year because of the after-effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Paying doctors more is not going to affect these main inflationary pressures, but it will give people more money to spend to keep our economy going in the face of a recession.

Doctors’ pay has been eroded since 2008, which makes a poor pay award this year much worse.

## **Proof**

- **RPI Inflation was at 11.8% as of June 2022 and is expected to rise even higher, which has a huge impact on our everyday costs.<sup>9</sup>**
- **The Governor of the Bank of England said in May 2022 that 80% of inflationary rises are due to energy and goods – not pay awards.<sup>10</sup>**

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**When you hear:** “Senior doctors won’t benefit from a higher pay award because they will lose money in pensions tax.”

**Pay must go hand in hand with tax reform.**

Punitive pensions taxes are leaving many doctors with no choice but to leave the pension scheme or to retire early.

The workforce needs to retain highly skilled senior doctors – and value their work.

HCSA is calling for Annual Allowance to be abolished in Defined Benefit pension schemes and Lifetime Tax Allowance to be restored to a sensible level. Future rises in LTA must be linked to inflation.

## **Proof**

- **The Royal College of Physicians found that over 50% of doctors surveyed had retired earlier than planned, with pensions concerns given as a reason by most.**<sup>11</sup>
- **The Royal College of Surgeons of England found that 69% of respondents had reduced their working hours for the NHS as a result of pensions tax changes (2019).**<sup>12</sup>
- **The Health and Social Care Committee described the situation as “a national scandal”.**<sup>13</sup>

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**When you hear:** “We have no power. Taking action on pay is pointless”.

**We can  
make a  
difference.**

We were applauded during the Covid pandemic. Now we are called upon to clear elective backlogs.

Every day, we save lives and keep the health service moving. Imagine the power if all doctors stand together on pay. It would mean people have to listen to us.

## **Proof**

- In April 2022, the number of people waiting for NHS hospital treatment was at a record high of 6.5 million. We are just as important now as we were at the start of the pandemic.<sup>14</sup>
- In Berlin in 2021, doctors banded together with other health care staff and took action on unsafe staffing. They won minimum stipulated staffing levels in wage contracts.<sup>15</sup>
- Paramedics in the East of England recently won a pay award after getting together collectively and submitting a grievance.<sup>16</sup>

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