

Unite's Consultative Ballot Outcome

6 August 2025

Thank you to all members who voted in the recent NHS consulted ballot. Below are the results, Unite's statement and the next steps.

Do you think that the Government's decision (3.6% pay award for AfC staff) is Acceptable or Unacceptable?

Yes – 11%

No – 89%

If the UK Government do not come back with an improved pay award, are you prepared to take industrial action up to and including strike action?

Yes – 82%

No – 18%

Is your employer currently making cuts or job losses?

Yes – 66%

No – 34%

Are you prepared to take industrial action up to and including strike action to defend jobs and services?

Yes – 95%

No – 5%

Unite's ballot of members in health has demonstrated the strength of feeling among the NHS workforce. 89 per cent of members believe that the pay award (3.6%) is unacceptable and 82% are prepared to take action up to including strike action.

The strength of feeling around government cuts was even greater with 95 per cent of members expressing their willingness to take action in order to oppose cuts to the NHS.

We are calling on the UK government to meet with us and in order to avoid a strike that is likely to affect a number of Trusts (including Ambulance Trusts) and a number of national organisations such as NHS England and NHS Blood and Transplant.

The pay award offered to Agenda for Change NHS staff was below inflation (RPI and CPIH). It is less than the award for doctors and teachers, and it is less than that offered through negotiations in Scotland.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: ***"When it came into power this government was clear that the NHS was broken. But staff are still leaving in droves, and morale is still at an all-time low. The NHS can't be repaired while the government continues to erode pay and drastically cut NHS budgets."***

"This pay award does nothing to reverse 15 years of real terms pay reduction. The lowest paid in the NHS will feel especially cheated because part of the award was paid out early in order to get them above the minimum wage. The fact that that needed to be done shows how far we are from where we need to be."

The consultative ballot and survey by Unite also found that two thirds of staff are already experiencing the real-life effects of cuts in their workplace.

Unite national officer for health Richard Munn added: ***"On the issue of cuts our members are baffled - it is literal "Orwellian doublespeak". How can the NHS be "fixed" with thousands of staff at risk of losing their jobs?"***

"Unite members are not resistant to better use of technology, ill health prevention and health promotion, or the move from hospital to community as outlined in the 10 year plan, provided skills and staff are not reduced. However, to propose huge job losses on the scale suggested is completely nonsensical and smacks of headline grabbing politics as opposed to delivering better services. It is no surprise that almost all members who voted are prepared to take action against cuts."

Unite is committed to resolving this issue and will work with the government to do so but given the lack of willingness from ministers to date, Unite will progress towards the next formal ballot we are required to carry out in order that we can take action. Our members have witnessed the NHS deteriorate for years and feel duty bound to take a stand to defend it.

As you are probably aware the UK has very restrictive laws regarding industrial action. The consultative ballot was the first step and is for Unite to gauge members' opinions. To take strike action we have to conduct a formal postal ballot (yes, it has to be postal!). The turnout in the postal ballot has to be 50% or greater to allow industrial action to be taken. Where the consultative ballot that we have just conducted shows a sufficient turnout we will progress to the postal ballot stage. Unite reps and officers will be contacting members to explain the process in these specific workplaces. Once confirmed we will publish a list of work places being balloted here: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/unite-in-your-sector/health-sector/unite-campaign-materials/pay-and-cuts-2025> If your workplace is not on the list but you want to help in the campaign please contact healthsector@unitetheunion.org

The campaign continues...