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## **NHS Staff Pay rise**

NHS staff have been at the heart of the fight against coronavirus, working day and night to protect our NHS and save lives. They do so much to make our health service one to be proud of and they deserve our respect, admiration, and full support.

In July, the Government published reports of the NHS Pay Review Body and the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration, each of which recommend a 3% pay increase for staff, including nurses, paramedics, consultants and dentists in England.

Despite initially suggesting a 1% pay increase for NHS staff, the Government has accepted the recommendations of both pay review bodies for a 3% increase. However, this is not an NHS-wide settlement. It does not cover junior doctors who have had an intense year caring for sick patients on ventilators, who have been redeployed to other sites across the NHS and who have seen their training disrupted. Nor does it cover care workers, who deserve to finally receive the real living wage.

I am also concerned that the Government is refusing to back up the £2.2 billion pay settlement with the cash needed, instead expecting overstretched hospitals to find this extra money. This is particularly worrying when the NHS is under significant strain, with continuing COVID-19 pressures, operations cancelled, emergency demand intensifying and ambulance trusts under pressure.

The NHS needs more investment to cope with the pressures that it is under. It needs a fully funded plan to provide quality care and bring expanding waiting lists down. And it needs the Government to provide the money required to give staff a pay rise.

Our NHS entered the pandemic with a record 100,000 vacancies. Years of pay freezes and pressures are affecting hard-pressed staff; work-related stress has increased, and mental health is consistently the most reported reason for staff absence.

A fair pay rise and conditions are therefore not just a moral imperative but also crucial for the future functioning of our NHS. The Government should recognise and reward the bravery and sacrifices of all NHS staff.

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