Above-inflation pay rise could cost a day’s holiday

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Nurses have reacted furiously to suggestions a pay rise could come at the expense of a day’s annual leave, as pressure mounts on negotiators to secure a deal.

A leaked report earlier this month suggested the government has offered a 6.5% pay rise for Agenda for Change staff, spread over three years.

In the spring statement last week, chancellor of the exchequer Philip Hammond said he was keen to see a deal between the government and unions, praising staff for their work during tough winter conditions.

Shadow chancellor John McDonnell retorted: ‘We are expecting the pay offer to NHS staff shortly – forced on the chancellor by the Labour Party’s and trade unions’ campaigns against the pay cap.

‘Let me say to him, taking away a day’s holiday from those dedicated staff is mean-spirited and I ask him now, will he drop this miserly demand?’

The chancellor did not respond directly but said the government had invested £9 billion in the NHS since the 2016 autumn statement.

According to the Guardian newspaper, the leaked pay offer consists of a 3% rise for non-medical staff in the first year, followed by rises of between 1% and 2% in the following two years.

Seven-year wait

Staff-side unions are currently negotiating the first annual pay offer in seven years of above 1%. Mr Hammond committed to scrapping the pay cap in the autumn budget, after a ‘summer of protest’ by health unions.

Nurse Danielle Tiplady, who started the ‘scrap the cap’ petition that led to a Westminster Hall debate early last year, said of the leaked deal: ‘We do not owe this government a penny.'
We should reject the offer. We deserve a proper, above-inflation pay rise with no strings attached after years of pay restraint. They need to treat us with respect.’

London-based community nurse Annique Simpson told Nursing Standard: ‘Neither retention nor recruitment will improve with a pathetic pay offer that is actually a pay cut. We are giving hundreds of hours in unpaid overtime and now the government want us to give up an annual leave day.’

Children’s nursing student Daniel Gooding said: ‘The pay rise shouldn’t be dependent on annual leave, especially as MPs and Nursing and Midwifery Council members have received pay rises above inflation. We’re offered 6.5% over three years, which is still below inflation.’

Community nurse Drew Payne said he was angry at the suggestion nurses may be ‘robbed of a day of annual leave’ to get a long-overdue pay rise.

‘Reject the deal’
An unofficial poll on the RCN members’ Facebook page received 1,462 responses telling the college to reject the deal, as opposed to 29 responses in favour of accepting.

The RCN said discussions are ongoing and when a deal is agreed it will be put to members.

Unite national officer for health Sarah Carpenter said: ‘The details in the article are incomplete, unconfirmed and inaccurate in part.’

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Survey suggests widespread use of instant messaging apps to discuss patient care

Nurses are using publicly available instant messaging apps to discuss or organise work, despite their use being banned by many NHS employers.

Research published by mobile technology firm CommonTime suggests 43% of NHS staff in England use instant messaging such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger at work.

Some 800 staff working in clinical and non-clinical roles in acute hospitals, GP practices, ambulance, community and mental health trusts, and other parts of the NHS, were questioned. More than one in 50 respondents said they were facing disciplinary action over instant messaging. Use of the apps was highest among staff aged 18-24.

Many organisations do not permit use of publicly available messaging apps for work, but the survey found 39% of respondents were not aware of their employer’s data protection rules.

Eight people said they knew of cases in which patient information had been sent to the wrong person.

One respondent said a patient’s details had been posted on social media, while another reported pictures of patients being sent to others for ‘entertainment purposes’.

Others revealed staff took photos of patients without permission, complained about patients, discussed deceased patients, gave access to patient details, and shared X-ray images.

RCN e-health lead Ross Scrivener said there was clear Nursing and Midwifery Council guidance on use of social media, saying nurses risk their registration if they share confidential information or post pictures of patients without consent.

Find out more at rcni.com/IM-poll