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UK's biggest union is preparing to ballot NHS staff for industrial action

4 June 2007

Unite, the UK's biggest union is preparing to ballot its members working in the NHS for industrial action.

If members vote yes, the union will canvass for selective action and plan for rolling disruption across trusts where emotions are running high. Selective action also reflects the members' desire to ensure that the health of patients does not suffer as a result of any action.

The ballot is planned to commence in mid August and conclude in mid September.

Unite has rejected the staged payment of 2% imposed by the Government, which overrode the Pay Review Body's award of 2.5%. Unite's position reflects the view that the integrity of the PRB should be upheld and maintained by the Government and that it is our job, as a union, to ensure this. In conjunction with the joint staff unions, Unite have asked for a meeting with the Chancellor, Gordon Brown to discuss the staging of this years pay award. To date we have received no response to this request.

Unite's, Head of Health, Kevin Coyne says,

"NHS Trusts and the Government now face the prospect of a 'yes' to industrial action in mid September. Unite's position reflects the view that the integrity of the Pay Review Body should be upheld and maintained by the Government and that it is our job, as a union, to ensure this. Our members are doing a great job under very difficult circumstances and they will not accept paltry pay. Nor will they accept the Independence of the Pay Review Body being compromised.

The unions are seeking a meeting with the Chancellor to discuss the staging of this years pay award. We hope to receive a positive response to this request in the near future.

The NHS unwittingly ended the financial year in March with a £500m surplus. If the NHS can misplace so much money, so easily, they can surely reward their staff fairly."

The Unite section of Amicus is the third biggest health sector union representing 100 000 health sector workers including; theatre nurses; estates and maintenance workers; pathology; health visitors; chaplains; pharmacists; mental health practitioners; health care scientists; sexual health advisors, dental professionals, opticians.