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The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
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19 December 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy concluded ballots for industrial action across the NHS in England on 12th December. This is the first time in the history of the CSP that we have balloted members for industrial action on pay. As I am sure you can appreciate this is not a decision taken lightly by any NHS staff.

The ballot has resulted in a mandate for strike action across 112 Trusts in England, and action short of strike in a further twelve Trusts. This includes the twelve largest employers of physiotherapy services. This shows the strength of feeling there is currently about the levels of pay and the impact that the cuts in real terms pay for health workers are having during a cost of living crisis.

Physiotherapists and physiotherapy support workers are a crucial part of the workforce, whether it is in providing the necessary rehabilitation to both prevent admission and speed up discharge, or working as first contact practitioners addressing some of the crisis within general practice. The importance of maintaining and increasing a highly skilled workforce has never been more critical and yet without pay levels that properly reward committed NHS staff we will see more and more leave. This is at a time when we already have 133,000 vacancies throughout the healthcare workforce.

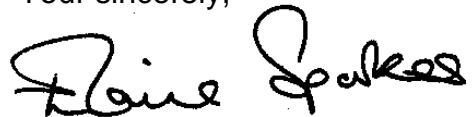
The CSP believes it is still possible to avert further strike action in the NHS through meaningful discussions and a real investment in NHS pay. We have seen in Scotland an offer of at least £800 more to every health worker - an offer that CSP members in Scotland have voted to accept.

In Westminster, the government position has been to continue to refer to the NHS pay review body recommendation and refuse to enter into any dialogue around pay. However, it is absolutely clear that the pay review body is significantly influenced by government pay policy and therefore lacks the real independence that would allow it to address the workforce needs. The recommendation for this year failed to come even close to addressing the cost of living crisis and therefore has done nothing to retain staff who increasingly can find better paid and less stressful work elsewhere.

You will know from when we met in November that the CSP and colleagues from other unions are keen to resolve issues throughout the NHS, but that pay must be a central part of any discussion. The current mandates for strike action show just how difficult the situation is for health workers – none of whom want to take industrial action.

The CSP would welcome an opportunity to discuss in more detail the pay that is needed to avert further strikes and address the recruitment and retention crisis within physiotherapy and across the wider health care workforce.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elaine Sparkes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elaine Sparkes
Assistant Director, Employment Relations and Union Services