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30th November 2018

Statement in response to HSC pay offer

The pay offer announced by the Department of Health last Thursday does not currently meet the expectations of our members.

If implemented it will ensure that staff here, like colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales, will be paid the national living wage. Morally and ethically this is the right thing to do for low-paid workers.

Whilst the Department's pay offer proposes some improvements in pay, a significant number of staff will only receive a 1.5% pay rise which is below the rate of inflation.

The detail of this pay offer was not shared with the Trade Unions in advance of the Departmental press statement released last Thursday, and has been made in the absence of any agreement with the Trade Unions.

Unlike England, Scotland and Wales, this offer does not deliver a three-year pay deal. Neither does it meet the joint Trade Unions formal proposal for an interim pay increase which we submitted to the Department of Health on 26 September 2018, or address the equal pay issues that have been identified in the pay framework.

The pay gap between staff in the HSC in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK will increase again in April 2019. The Trade Unions have completed their consultative ballots of their members. There was an overwhelmingly positive response, with 92-98% of members

indicating that they wished to be balloted formally for industrial action if the HSC staff side organisations are unable to reach agreement with the Department and employers. The Trade Unions will be engaging with our membership about next steps.

Good policies are made when Departmental officials, employers and Trade Unions work together in the best interest of the public and staff.

We recognise the difficulty and constraints that yearly budget planning cycles present. The impact of this is that finance drives decision-making that balances the books in the short-term, but has significant financial implications in the longer-term.

In relation to the workforce, the consequences of short-term decision making, from which the Trade Unions were *excluded*, can be seen clearly in staff shortages and escalating costs associated with increasing sickness, absence and Agency costs which were £156 million in 2017/18.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin McAdam

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