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01 MAY 2008

Dear Kevin

Proposed Long Term Pay Agreement for 2008/2009/2010

Thank you for your letter of 17 April about the proposed three-year pay deal for Agenda for Change staff and the process by which it was agreed.

We see this as a good negotiated deal that will ensure security for NHS staff, and allow them to plan for their future and the future of their families. It will help those on the lowest wages, increase the earning potential for hundreds of thousands of staff and allow quicker progression up the pay ladder. This is in line with concerns raised by Unite and other unions throughout the multi-year talks.

As you know, this deal will give staff a headline pay rise of 2.75 per cent in the first year – which is the highest in the public sector. The package as a whole is worth 8 per cent over the next three years (and considerably more to some grades), with additional benefits in year 4. It also offers a number of other significant pay and non-pay benefits, which would not be available through the annual Pay Review Body process.

In respect of your concerns about the process by which this agreement was reached, it is our understanding that the lead unions negotiated with a full mandate from the other unions, as set out in the recent letter from NHS Employers to you. In any case, this is an inter-union matter, and something you will need to discuss with the other unions.

We negotiated in good faith and in absolute accordance with precedent. The pay deal is not up for renegotiation and therefore a meeting on this matter would not serve any constructive purpose. Indeed, there is nothing further that could be extracted from us; your lead negotiators did their job very effectively. It is now for all NHS trade unions involved to proceed to some form of wider consultation on the proposed three-year settlement in accordance with their normal procedures.

I would wish to reassure you that the Department remains committed to continuing to working in partnership with NHS unions on the full range of workforce and employment issues. The Social Partnership Forum provides the basis for that work, provides an environment for key issues to be raised, and Ann Keen has a key role given her ministerial

lead on workforce matters. I know that NHS Employers remain committed to work in partnership with the NHS joint unions, through the NHS Staff Council, on a range of Agenda for Change terms and conditions aspects.

Yours sincerely

Alan

ALAN JOHNSON

cc Lesley Mercer, CSP
 Jon Skewes, RCM
 Peter Allenson, TGWU
 Eddie Saville, SoCP
 Sharon Holder, GMB
 Rosie Auld, BOS
 Debbie O'Rourke, BDA