

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Mr Mark Hoble
Chair of the Review Body for
Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration
3rd Floor, Windsor House
42-50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

ddrb@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

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Dear *Mark*

I am writing following my recent appointment as Minister of Health to formally commence the 2027/28 pay round for doctors and dentists in Northern Ireland and provide you with an update on the implementation of the 2026/76 pay award in Northern Ireland. I wish to begin by thanking the Review Body for Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) for its invaluable work on the 2026/27 pay round and the recommendations contained therein. I have accepted the recommendations made in the report.

I am committed to continuing the approach taken by my predecessor by implementing the pay award recommendations in full and to do so as promptly as possible,

Work is ongoing to secure an agreed Executive budget and there is ongoing engagement between the NI Executive parties and the NIO/HMT. In recognition that it may still be some time before these discussions reach a conclusion and an Executive budget is agreed my predecessor issued a Ministerial Direction to implement both the DDRB pay recommendations. I am fully supportive of this. This Direction is currently with the Executive for consideration and I will continue to press my Executive colleagues to take a prompt decision on the direction. I am due to meet BMA and BDA Trade Unions in the coming weeks to discuss the current position regarding the implementation of the pay award and will continue to engage constructively with them.

Ensuring that our staff are fairly rewarded for the vital work they do remains a key priority. In support of this, I want to see pay awards in Northern Ireland implemented as promptly as possible, with the aim of achieving timescales comparable to those in England.

I must also be clear that the draft budget proposals which have been consulted upon by the NI Finance Minister will require very considerable savings required across Health and Social Care to meet the deficit.

The imperative is to seek to agree a three-year budget for my Department which would provide much needed certainty and greater freedom to plan ahead and progress with the necessary changes as to how health and social care will be delivered in the future.

The evidence my department will provide to you will set out the funds available to the Department of Health in Northern Ireland for 2027/28 as well as the recruitment and retention context alongside, earnings data and our plan for building a HSC fit for the future.

My department will seek to work collaboratively with you to meet your timelines and bring forward the provision of evidence. This will help to support the aim of enabling earlier pay announcements.

I would therefore welcome your pay recommendations for Medical and Dental staff in Northern Ireland for 2027/28. The Department will, of course, keep you updated in regard to any progress made in respect of 2026/27 awards.

Yours sincerely



Robbie Butler MLA
Minister of Health