

Implementation of the pay award 2024 - the 36 hour week 'non-pay' element

1. As agreed in the pay award, Government, unions and employers jointly explored the potential to reduce working week 36 hours and worked in partnership to identify what this could entail and what may be the benefits and hurdles.
2. All three partners agree there could be significant positive well-being impacts for NHS Wales staff as individuals and resultant positive impacts on morale, retention, recruitment and service quality. We are all agreed that, in principle, a reduced working week would be beneficial.
3. Our detailed work has identified implementation hurdles for NHS organisations which are not easily overcome including; capacity issues post-covid, increased service demands, the feasibility of not creating a 'two tier' workforce in terms of different staff groups being able to benefit from working fewer hours.
4. It is apparent that the severe financial challenges for NHS Wales and the funding of wider Welsh public services are a significant barrier for implementing a reduction in work hours. These are not short term challenges and the economic climate / UK financial outlook do not project well for an improved situation.
5. The potential to reduce the working week to 36 hours remains a particular priority for trade unions and their members in NHS Wales. We are jointly agreed to continue to pursue that potential in partnership and to explore what a future reduction would look like and how the practical hurdles to reduced hours could be overcome.
6. Reluctantly there is joint acknowledgement that the obstacles to implementation are too significant to be overcome in the short term. However, there is a continued commitment to longer term pay restoration and, if there was joint agreement to introduce a 36 hour working week, this may go some way towards achieving this.
7. The next steps below are the agreed partnership approach to keeping these issues in development and we believe that this will place us in a positive position longer term to consider implementation in a better financial climate.

Working hours next steps

Action	Responsible persons	Completion/key date
1. The Scottish union, employer and government partnership leads will be invited to present to WPF Business Committee their assessment of the impacts, costs, benefits and challenges faced by NHS Scotland in the process of reducing the working week.	WPF BC joint chairs	May WPF BC T&Cs meeting
2. Wales partnership formally request that the UK Staff Council explore the potential to consider the opportunities and impacts of a working week reduction at UK level.	WPF BC joint chairs	Immediately following the April BC meeting
3. It is accepted that the additional pay bill cost of a working hours reduction will have an impact on finance available for any pay increases. Therefore continuing consideration of the potential to reduce to 36 hours without loss of earnings will be developed in the partnership work around long term pay restoration – utilising the pay modelling framework development work already undertaken.	Pay restoration tripartite group	Special meeting of the group following the April BC meeting to feedback initial views to the May/June BC T&Cs meeting
4. Further consideration (without prejudice) will be given to how the IMTP cycle could be utilised to prepare for a working hours reduction and over what period.	EC in consultation with planning colleagues	Input for May/June BC T&Cs meeting