

2% pay rise for dentists in Wales condemned by BDA

Dentists in Wales will receive a 2% pay rise backdated to 1 April 2018 but the increase has been described as 'a cut in all but name' by the BDA.

Welsh Health Secretary Vaughan Gething announced a new pay deal for doctors and dentists in Wales on 25 September 2018, which included a higher salary increase than the deal agreed in England but only for doctors.

Gething confirmed the Welsh Government had agreed in full the recommendations of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) for:

- A 2% base increase for salaried dentists and doctors, salaried general medical practitioners (GMPs) and independent contractor GMPs and general dental practitioners (GDPs)
- An additional 2% for independent contractor GMPs, salaried GMPs and to the GMP trainers' grant and the GMP appraisers' rate.

Gething said: 'This pay rise, which will be backdated to 1 April 2018, recognises the

value and dedication of hardworking doctors and dentists and their key contribution to the NHS in Wales. This deal goes beyond what was agreed for doctors and dentists over the border and is yet another reason why Wales is



a great place to train, work and live.

'Following years of austerity, imposed by the UK Government, we have committed additional funding to fulfil the DDRB recommendations. The reality remains, however,

that our budgets are limited and so meeting a pay deal resulting from the lifting of the UK Government's pay cap without appropriate funding to follow presents a risk to the future funding of NHS Wales.'

The BDA was unimpressed, saying that 'austerity pay' and the Welsh Government's refusal to let go of a system of rigid targets was leaving the future of the service in doubt.

Earnings for dentists in Wales were currently 30% less than their opposite numbers in England, said the union.

Tom Bysouth, Chair of the BDA's Welsh General Dental Practice Committee, said: 'The Welsh Government's below-inflation pay deal is another pay cut in all but name.'

'Morale in the dental profession is at an all-time low, thanks to a failed contract and real terms pay squeeze without parallel in the UK public sector. It's bad news for patients that Ministers remain so wedded to a system that actively penalises prevention, and a pay policy that undermines the very sustainability of NHS services.'

©JOHNGOMEZPIV/istock/Getty Images Plus

Dentists and doctors unite to seek reform on pay review process

The dentists and doctors' trade unions have made a joint call to overhaul the present pay review process led by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB).

Both the BDA and BMA (British Medical Association) said the DDRB's role to guarantee the independence of pay awards had been eroded over time and the current process was no longer acceptable to their professions.

GDPs in England still do not have clarity on whether the anticipated 2% uplift will be delivered from 1 October, added the BDA.

In a joint statement issued on 27 September 2018, both associations set out key principles they said needed to underpin the reform process, raising these issues directly to government in open letters to Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock.

Currently, the DDRB advises governments in Westminster, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh on rates of pay for doctors and dentists. It was established in 1960 following

a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration.

The Commission stated that such a body was necessary in order to give the medical and dental professions 'some assurance that their standards of living will not be depressed by arbitrary Government action', as well as achieving 'the settlement of remuneration without public dispute.'

The view expressed by the Royal Commission was that this procedure would 'give the professions a valuable safeguard' because their remuneration would be determined, in practice, by a group of independent persons of standing and authority not committed to the Government's point of view.

Each year, both the BDA and BMA provide evidence to the DDRB as part of the process for determining the annual pay uplift for dentists and doctors.

However, the view of the unions now was that the DDRB process had been gradually modified beyond recognition from its original purpose, they said in their statement to Hancock.

It says: 'The BDA has issued a joint statement with the BMA calling for fundamental reform of the pay review process for dentists and doctors, on the basis of the following principles:

- Restitution of the DDRB's independence and return to its original purpose
- Revision of its terms of reference to narrow the DDRB's focus purely on pay uplifts rather than making recommendations on wider contractual matters
- Clear timetables for submission of evidence and publications of the report, and an undertaking that government(s) must not fetter the parameters of the DDRB's recommendations
- Re-establishment of the undertaking that government(s) will respect and implement the DDRB's recommendations.

1. BDA. Open letter to Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock (27 September 2018). Available at <https://www.bda.org/news-centre/press-releases/Documents/letter-matt-hancock-ddrb-270918.pdf> (accessed 1 October 2018).