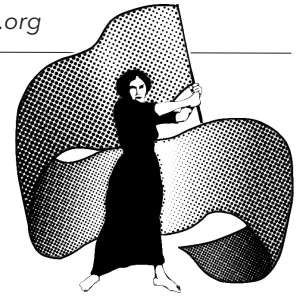


Keep up the fight!



This year's pay campaign has taught us many things. 1. Strikes are possible in the NHS. 2. We have huge support from the public, who understand that we're fighting to save the NHS. 3. Strikes work. For months the government had refused to negotiate on pay, insisting that the PRB process was the sole mechanism for these discussions. Strikes broke that view and won a pay rise: a step towards the pay rise we deserve and need.

But we have not yet achieved what we set out for. The government's pay offer is nowhere near the original claims of any of the health unions. It does nothing to redress long-standing pay erosion and it will do nothing to address the vacancy crisis that is crushing the NHS. The unconsolidated payment for 22/23 is nothing more than a bribe to make hard-pressed workers accept a shoddy deal.

The fantastic vote to reject the offer shows

us that RCN members are taking strike action seriously. We didn't strike for crumbs, but to fight for pay restoration, for patient safety and to save the NHS.

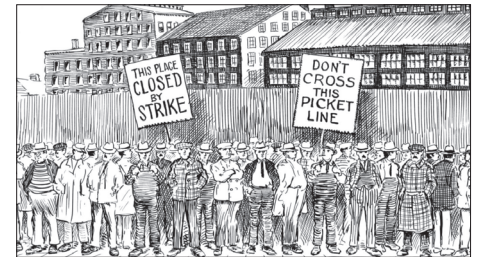
Ballot

The next step from here is to win the strike ballot, running from 23rd May to 23rd June. The reject vote was achieved by union members organising themselves at the workplace level, against the recommendation of the RCN Council. Winning this strike ballot needs another huge effort: mapping workplaces, ward-walking, and winning support for action on every shift. It is a numbers game: the more conversations taking place at work and the bigger the buzz around the ballot, the more votes will be cast.

As this strike ballot is aggregated (England-wide, rather than Trust-by-Trust), we need at least 50% of all eligible members

to cast their votes for the ballot to count, as per the government's anti-strike laws. The 50% threshold is a tall order in a union the size of the RCN, but beating it will give us the opportunity to escalate, bringing nursing staff from every single NHS Trust in England out on strike in the next round.

United action across the RCN, alongside the BMA and Unite, can win more from the government and lay the basis for rebuilding the NHS we all want to see – one that supports its workers, is well funded, safely staffed and provides the best care for patients. 🐾



Power to the workers

As our dispute goes forward, increasing members' control is key. Members are the ones taking action and the ones who face the reality of daily life in a broken NHS. Strike Committees will be crucial to a well-organised, impactful strike.

The RCN introduced Strike Committees for the first rounds of strikes, but when the decision was made to shift to a tactic of no "derogations" they were disbanded. This was a mistake, as we can see from the strikes on 1st May, when last-minute "mitigations" were introduced without any reference to members on the ground. In many cases, Trust managements were able to out-manoeuvre the union and undermine our action. But well-organised Strike Committees, comprising members and activists from across our workplaces, would give us the tools to strike effectively and safely. On strike days these committees can be a source of intel and information.

But Strike Committees can also be the engine that organises workplaces between strikes too. Recruiting to the strike and strengthening our action; sharing information; identifying cases of bullying by

anti-strike managers; raising money for the strike fund; co-ordinating with other unions – the list goes on, but these are all activities best led by members themselves.

Self-organising

We need to push the RCN leadership into reinstating Strike Committees, led by members and given real decision-making power. But even if they don't, that's not so important as members self-organising now.

Over the course of the strike ballot, we will see another big mobilisation of members. We will discover where in our workplaces we have active members, and which areas need more support. Now is the perfect time to start building these member-led Strike Committees, to get us ready for the next round of action.

Member-led strikes can then be based on a strategy to win, including:

- A clear demand for pay restoration.
- A strategy of escalating action, single days of strike action here and there were not effective;

- Unite with the other Health unions in dispute: joint action with Unite and the BMA
- Open and transparent negotiations, regular input from members on decisions, local campaign and strike committees with decision-making power. 🐾

About Workers' Liberty

We are a socialist group active in the labour movement and in campaigns in Britain, fighting for a revolutionary alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and workers' democracy.

To find out more about our ideas and activity visit workersliberty.org, email awl@workersliberty.org, or phone 020 7394 8923. 🐾



@workersliberty

Unite all healthworkers!

Across the NHS workers are stressed, under pressure and underpaid. Allowing either the government or our union leaders to divide us on the basis of which trade union we belong to is foolish beyond measure. Competition and rivalry between trade unions only benefits bosses.

The BMA are still in dispute and likely to take more action. Unite is running its own strike ballot. The Podiatrists' and Radiographers' unions also voted to reject the government offer. The RCN should co-ordinate with these unions in future action.

The other health unions voting to accept was disappointing, but many members in those unions voted to reject it and

continue to support our action. There are thousands of Unison, GMB and RCM members who will be keen to stand in solidarity with us if we take action again.

A united NHS pay scale can serve us well, and we must organise to ensure that this dispute doesn't lead to its breakup. That would play into the government's divide-and-rule agenda. Re-banding can be a way to correct unjust pay suppression, but unless we win pay restoration and future inflationary pay rises these gains will always be whittled away.

We need cross-union workplace-based networks to ensure we keep up this fight. The NHS Workers Say NO and 'Vote Reject' campaign has laid a basis for this



across the country. This campaign has leafleted and talked to members of all the unions during the consultations, explaining the facts of the offer, countering national union propaganda, and discussing a future strategy to win. We need to keep this cross union organisation going. 🐦

Campaign against anti-trade union laws!

The government's legal challenge to the RCN's last strike day on 2nd May exposed the reality of the anti-trade union laws. They exist to stop democratically-agreed action and to clamp down on workers' collective strength.

The law that the government's case relied on, which stipulates that industrial action mandates expire and must be renewed on a six-monthly basis, is part of a complex network of bureaucratic and administrative restrictions placed on unions designed to slow down and obstruct strikes.

Other laws include the requirement for ballots to be conducted by individual postal ballot, rather than electronically or by votes in workplace meetings; minimum notice periods prior to ballot-

ing and taking action; and restrictions on the issues over which unions can strike, including a prohibition on striking in support of other workers.

We need direct confrontation with anti-union laws. Almost all unions have policies committing them to campaign for the abolition of these laws, but these policies are rarely acted on.

With the Tories planning to impose yet more restrictions, the labour movement must urgently step up our collective efforts to campaign against anti-strike laws. 🐦

• Check out "Free Our Unions" at freeourunions.org

Conference Debates

There will be some important debates at congress, covering many of the issues that have arisen in this important year of the union:

PRB – The PRB has been shown up for what it has always been – a tool of government. A body cannot be independent or objective when its members are appointed by, its timescale is dictated by, and its agenda is set by – the government! The strikes have smashed its credibility as the mechanism for agreeing pay across the NHS. We need direct negotiation with the government on pay. Unison has voted to pull out of the PRB, RCN should do the same.

HCA members – Opening the union to HCAs was a huge step forward for the union. Now we must ensure these members have their say and take their place fully. One Industry – One Union has long been the call from socialist trade unionists who see the logic of uniting all workers in the same industry within the same organisation. Although a long way off, one union to represent all NHS workers would make

us stronger. For now fully involving HCAs and building links across all grades is an important move forwards.

TUC – We have seen that our fight for decent pay is not an isolated one. Hundreds of thousands of other workers have also been striking. The RCN should join the TUC to stand alongside these other trade unionists. 🐦



Ideas for Freedom 2023

Ideas for Freedom is a weekend of socialist discussion, debate, and education hosted by Workers' Liberty.

This year it will take place on 15-16 July at CSG, London. There will be a free professionally-staffed creche and crash accommodation on request.

As the biggest upsurge in workers' struggle for a generation continues, how can we renew socialist politics?

Ideas for Freedom will discuss struggles in the UK, as well as workers' and democratic struggles in Ukraine, Iran, China, and elsewhere.

If you believe in a better, more equal world, join us to discuss how we can fight to win it.

Advanced Early Bird ticket prices (up to 26 May): waged, £30, low-waged/HE student £15, unwaged £7. 🐦

More info and tickets: bit.ly/iff23